

A DEVOTIONAL

30 DAYS TO

GLORIOUS FREEDOM

BASED ON *MORE THAN GOLD*

BY BRYAN ELLIOTT



The rarest treasures of life are found in His truth.

That's why God's Word is prized like others prize the finest gold.

*Sweeter also than honey are His living words—sweet words
dripping from the honeycomb!*

PSALM 19:10, TPT

CONTENTS

Introduction	v
1. It's About Loving Jesus	1
2. Why Jesus?	4
3. The Good News Gospel	7
4. The Fall of Mankind	10
5. Son of Man	12
6. Doubt and Pride	14
7. A Simple Choice	17
8. Salvation Is Ours	20
9. Choosing to Follow Him	23
10. Baptism in Water	25
11. An Act of Surrender	28
12. Known by Their Fruit	31
13. Disciple-Makers, the (Often) Missing Link in the Church	33
14. Setting the Prisoners Free	36
15. Blinded by the Age	38
16. Dethroned	40
17. From Bondage to Freedom	43
18. Deliverance	46
19. Contending for Freedom	49
20. The Religious Spirit and the Counterfeit	52
21. Religion vs. Relationship	55
22. Out of the Box God	58
23. A God Without Limits	61
24. Becoming and Beholding	63
25. No Other Name	66
26. Finding Him	68
27. Becoming Like Jesus	70
28. Sons and Daughters	73
29. Learn From the Best	75
30. Chosen Leaders	77

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has experienced tragedy, suffering, and periods of doubt.

Knowing Jesus doesn't mean you'll never experience pain, but rather, when you go through great periods of hardship, you will come out with the joy and strength of the Lord on the other side. It means you can face a firing squad, a life-threatening diagnosis, or an unthinkable tragedy and still hold on to the joy of your salvation.

There is glorious freedom awaiting everyone who turns to Jesus.

The Bible tells us that there is peace promised to those who put their trust in Jesus. It is a peace that surpasses all understanding. It is a peace unlike anything else found in this world because He is the Prince of Peace.

I've experienced this peace in the midst of the most difficult seasons of my life, and I've written about it in my book, *More Than Gold: Reflections on Living in Glorious Freedom*, as a testimony to God's great love.

No matter your story or how near or far you may be from the Lord, my story and my family's story is a testament that you are *never* too far gone.

In fact, most of *More Than Gold* was written during the Covid-19 pandemic in Canada under intense lockdown, with my daughter Abbe's murder trial, a divorce, the sale of our family home, and a lawsuit all running in parallel. In the midst of it all, I discovered that God is my source and through Him, I can live above my circumstances and thrive no matter what I may be facing. I discovered His love. A love that is merciful and just. A love that brings comfort, which pales in comparison to anything the world has to offer. A love that redeems and makes all things new. A love that brings glorious freedom!

All are welcome to join the family of believers. God invites those who have experienced great suffering to lean on Him for comfort. He is a good God who desires good things for His children. However, in order to experience the goodness and the freedom He offers, we need to A) see Him rightly and B) believe rightly. God isn't distant and far off; He is with us and for us! As we come to know the truth of who God is and who we are, we bring heaven to earth in the here and now.

30 Days to Glorious Freedom contains some of the most meaningful parts of my journey shared in *More than Gold*. As you study the pages ahead, I pray that you will see yourself more clearly and understand God more fully because of the work He is already doing. May His peace be upon you.

Blessings,

Bryan Elliott

ONE

IT'S ABOUT LOVING JESUS

“Christianity is about loving Jesus.” — Bryn S. Elliott (my daughter, proud dad)

IF YOU KNEW my daughter's story, you would come face to face with the redemptive power of Jesus. Bryn's life was unimaginably difficult. She was abused in secret from early childhood on for almost a decade, experienced multiple parental divorces, years of addiction and rehab, rapes, mental torment to the point of thinking she was insane, physical deterioration, loss of health, made countless bad choices, and lost her sister to murder when she was just 19. For years she woke up screaming that she wanted to die.

Now, at age 22, Bryn radiates the peace, love, and joy of the Lord. She is filled with the Word of God; the love of Jesus pours through her. She is an example of the radical transformation that happens when you give your life to Jesus. (Bryn's book, *Dying to Live*, shares her amazing testimony of God's goodness with the world.)

Like Bryn, God will redeem your story and use everything for your good, propelling you into your purpose and destiny. God has done it throughout

the ages, and He's done it for my daughter and for me. He will do it for you, too, because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Just as He knew Bryn, God knew you before the creation of time! He knit you together in your mother's womb. God loves you and has an incredible plan for your life. More importantly, God wants a relationship with you! He sent His Son as our Saviour to die on your behalf so you could be included in His family. Faith comes by hearing and encountering the outrageously generous gospel of grace. It is a free gift available to everyone.

Before accepting Jesus, every person on earth longs to find purpose and feel complete. We have a God-sized hole that only He can fill through His Son, Jesus. Only Jesus can meet the deepest longing of your heart. God freely gave everything (His Son) as proof of His incredible love for us. Through His sacrifice, we get to step into our purpose: to know, love, and glorify God as He intended from the beginning.

God sent and sacrificed His Son out of His great love for you and all of creation. We deserved nothing, yet He gave us everything. And He offers this perfect redeeming love to everyone. Jesus' teachings, life, death, and resurrection are a testament to God's character and the length to which He will (and does) go for His children.

Choosing to believe in Jesus and accept His love gives us the ability to love as He does. 1 John 4:19 reads, "We love because He first loved us." Everything flows from simply loving Jesus and abiding in His presence. As Christians, in union with Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit, we have the enormous honour of being the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus, growing in holiness as we become more like Him. We are being radically transformed every day. The gospel dramatically transformed my life, and He wants to transform yours, too! God is good! My life is a testimony of His goodness and how He makes all things work together for our good.

I invite you to join me as I continue to explore the goodness of God in the land of the living!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Has your life been radically transformed by the gospel?
How so?
- How might God redeem your story?

For Further Reading: Psalm 139:13 and Hebrews 13:8

TWO

WHY JESUS?

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

—*John 14:6*

REGARDLESS OF WHAT the world says, there is only one road to salvation, and His name is Jesus.

“Why is Jesus the only way?” is an excellent question with several clear answers throughout God’s Word and Jesus’ life and teachings. Jesus was only 33 years old when He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended to heaven. He didn’t start His ministry until He was 30. In just three years, Jesus set into motion a faith that spread across the world. Despite intense persecution against Christianity, more than 2.5 billion believers in Christ are alive today.¹

Why is this the case? Jesus.

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

—C.S. Lewis²

Jesus is not just another man. He is the Son of God. His life, ministry, and resurrection provide ample evidence of His deity. Through His resurrection, Jesus literally *conquered death* because He was sinless. (No other religious leader has predicted his death or resurrection, much less fulfilled that prophecy!) The resurrection is the foundation for the good news. Without it, there is no hope for humanity as there would be no cure for sin. Because Christ conquered sin and death, those who submit to His Lordship have been given eternal life and are granted the right to be His co-heirs.

Jesus came to show us the Father. He came to bring an entirely new covenant and reveal the true nature of God to the world, to see Him rightly. Jesus is the perfect image of the Father, who unconditionally loves every person on earth, and passionately desires to restore relationship with His created family. His life is a testimony of love, humility, mercy, compassion, and grace. He perfectly fulfills scriptural prophecies referring to the Messiah. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus alone, and those who know Him know what it means to be saved. No other religion has a sinless saviour who sacrificed everything to redeem those he loved. Jesus came as a man to show what is possible when we surrender and partner with God.

And by the blood of His cross, everything in heaven and earth is brought back to Himself—back to its original intent, restored to innocence again!

—Colossians 1:20, TPT

I know Jesus and want others to know Him because He has powerfully transformed my life. People who know me have witnessed the deep change within my heart over the past few years as my faith and relationship with Jesus has become more intimate. I know that my Redeemer lives, and through Him, I have life! Beyond a shadow of a doubt, I am confident that Jesus is the only way to salvation and the Father.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What ways does the world say lead to truth?
- What happens when we try to find life in things of the world?
- What do you know about the love of Jesus? Why is He the only way?

For Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:17 and 2 Timothy 1:10

1. Aaron Earls, “7 Surprising Trends in Global Christianity in 2019,” *Lifeway Research*, accessed February 18, 2022, <https://research.lifeway.com/2019/06/11/7-surprising-trends-in-global-christianity-in-2019/>.
2. Harry Farley, “10 times C.S. Lewis made the case for Christ,” *Christianity Today*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/10.times.c.s.lewis.made.the.case.for.christ/96030.htm>.

THREE

THE GOOD NEWS GOSPEL

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

—John 3:16-17

THE GOOD NEWS gospel is the story of creation, the fall of man, and man's redemption through the sacrificial death and resurrection of God's one and only Son, Jesus, as told in the Bible.

God is perfect in nature. He sets the standard, and His standard is perfect holiness. In our sinful state, His standard is unattainable. Think about it, how can any darkness be mixed with perfect, glorious light? They cannot exist together, which is exactly our problem.

Sin separates us from God. Jesus tells us there is no one good, not even one. When sin separated humanity from God through Adam and Eve's rebellion, He set a plan in motion to restore what they lost in the fall. It was a plan that necessitated sacrifice, the forgiveness of sin, and the restoration of innocence.

God's love is relentless. His goodness is limitless. His faithfulness is unquestionable. His peace goes far beyond circumstance. His justice is perfect. It is not subjective. It is righteous. He is merciful. So, while we deserve eternal punishment, God provided His Son as a way back to our original place as righteous sons and daughters made Holy through Jesus' sacrifice. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He took our punishment.

Jesus is the only sinless person to have ever lived, making Him the perfect sacrifice. Jesus is THE WAY, the truth, and the life. There is no other saviour. There is no other messiah. There is no other adequate sacrifice other than God's one and only Son. No one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus made the way for us to return to the Father, and we get to decide where we will spend eternity based on our choices concerning Him.

Salvation has nothing to do with your ability and everything to do with His ability and His righteousness. It's received by faith in Jesus. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and experience eternal life. (Romans 10:13)

What does it cost? It will cost you everything. It cost Jesus His life! It will cost you yours too, but in a different way. Salvation requires you to make Jesus the Lord of your life. It requires a divine exchange, your life for His, your pain for His healing, your ashes for His beauty, your control for His Lordship, your plans for His *better way*.

God loves you. You are His workmanship. You are needed, special and unique by design. He has a beautiful plan and purpose for your life. He wants to meet you exactly where you are, *here and now*, regardless of your past or present situation. Jesus is in the business of making all things new! This is the good news gospel!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- When has someone sacrificed something for you? What was their motivation?

- How does it feel to know that God sacrificed Himself so that He could have a relationship with you?

For Further Reading: John 1:14; 19:1, Matthew 1:18; 26:67, Hebrews 2:9, Romans 5:8 and Luke 22:44

FOUR

THE FALL OF MANKIND

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

—*John 3:16*

IN THE BEGINNING, when God made the earth and everything in it, He created a garden filled with trees of all kinds called Eden. Eden was the idyllic home for Adam and Eve, the first man and first woman. God placed two specific trees in the middle of Eden: the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God specified that the first tree's fruit was good to eat, but the other should be left alone.

The fallen archangel, Satan, convinced Eve to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and told her she would not die as God said. Instead, he tells her in Genesis 3:4, "...God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Eve shared the fruit with Adam, and their eyes were immediately opened. As a result, sin entered the world in the forms of pride, deceit, and rebellion.

The word "sin" comes from the Greek word *hamartia*, meaning "a tragic flaw" or "to miss the mark." The "mark" in this context is God's perfect

holiness and righteousness reflected in the person of Jesus Christ. Sin separates us from God. The original sin in the garden is the root of all evil, sickness, and death (both spiritual and physical). To sin means to live in opposition to God's original design. It means to live a lie or in a distorted, darkened understanding of our true identity. Darkness is the absence of light. Similarly, a lie is an absence of truth. When we receive the truth of who we are in Christ and the truth of our loving heavenly Father, the light switches on. The lie no longer exists, like the darkness.

It is important to understand that Adam and Eve experienced God in perfect relationship before the fall—safe, secure, filled with love, peace, and joy. They saw God rightly. God designed us in His image with free will for His glory and the joy of relationship. When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's wilful act of rebellion, God had His redemption plan in place already. For thousands of years, God's people continued to rebel against Him. Regardless of how far His people strayed, God promised to send a Saviour that would redeem their brokenness once and for all. Because He is a perfect, faithful Father, God sent His Son, Jesus, to bear our punishment and destroy the work of sin and evil once and for all! Jesus, the only one without sin, became the ultimate sacrifice so that we could live in union with the Father once again.

God's love never changes. He could never love you more. He could never love you less. God sees you through the finished work of Jesus on the cross—when you receive Him, you become one with Him. No matter your sin, no matter how far you have fallen, He wants to restore you. He wants a relationship with you!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What are the characteristics of a “perfect” relationship?
- How did pride play a part in the fall of mankind?
- Why does God work so hard to reconcile His children back to Him?

For Further Reading: Genesis 1-3

FIVE

SON OF MAN

For He knew all about us before we were born and He destined us from the beginning to share the likeness of His Son. This means the Son is the oldest among a vast family of brothers and sisters who will become just like Him.

—Romans 8:29, TPT

JESUS GETS US. He is fully man and fully God. Born into the world in a first-century version of a barn to parents who were by all means average, Jesus lived, learned, worked, suffered, and existed on this physical earth.

Yet, Jesus lived the human experience *without sin*. He experienced the pain, rejection, betrayal, and temptation we all face. But because Jesus is also fully God, He was and is completely sovereign, perfect, and holy.

He is the divine portrait, the true likeness of the invisible God, and the firstborn heir of all creation. For in Him was created the universe of things, both in the heavenly realm and on the earth, all that is seen and all that is unseen. Every seat of power, realm of government,

principality, and authority—it all exists through Him and for His purpose!

—Colossians 1:15-16, TPT

Jesus is the “firstborn” of all creation. All creation originates in Him and through Him. When sin entered the picture in Genesis 3, His relationship with creation was broken, and subsequently, all relationships became compromised. However, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, He reconciled creation to Himself once more. We can stand firm in the truth of Jesus’ words in John 11:25-26, “...I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

He adopts anyone who submits to His Lordship into His family and conforms them into His image. The deeper their relationship with Jesus grows, the more like Him they will become. And because He is love, those who follow Him will eventually look like love too, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of my countless mistakes and shortcomings, I know that Jesus loves and accepts me with the tender love of a perfect father. Because I am fully known, accepted, loved, and forgiven, I am free to be myself without the need to hide. I know He understands what I am going through and makes me more like Him every day. It is a journey, and He is the destination.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- How does it feel to know that Jesus experienced life on earth just like you and me?
- How would you describe the perfect love of a father?
- What gets in the way of you living and loving like Jesus (i.e., representing Jesus on earth)?

For Further Reading: Matthew 16:27; 24:30 and John 16:7

SIX

DOUBT AND PRIDE

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 6:23

PRIDE IS OFTEN easy to see in others but is very difficult to see in ourselves. It is a state of deception (which is why it is not always obvious). Even when our pride is exposed, we often justify and rationalise it. According to C.S. Lewis, “Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind... it is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.”¹

Strangely enough, pride often seeps in through Satan’s primary weapon: doubt. Doubt attempts to erode our trust, which leads to unbelief. That unbelief creates independence from God, which is a form of pride. This was the original temptation, to doubt God in the garden, and the result was pride and the fall of man.

We all experience different forms of doubt from time to time, but it wasn’t doubt that caused the fall. It was Adam and Eve’s response to doubt that resulted in separation from God. The same is true for us.

Unlike us, Jesus meets God's perfect standard. He paid our debt so we can enter the presence of a Holy God. We have a chance to accept this gift only while we are alive on earth (and we all know how fleeting that is). The other option is an eternity in hell, separated from God and His goodness, grace, and mercy. There is no in-between.

Jesus came as a perfect sacrifice for our sins through grace by faith alone. We deserved hell, but Jesus took the penalty for our sin upon Himself. His blood paid the full price of our redemption. No shame—ever. No condemnation—ever. We are now in Him! From this point, we are holy, and step-by-step, we are renewing our minds to this truth. The truth sets us free!

In a 2019 interview, Jordan Peterson, a clinical psychologist, indicated that people have a great capacity for evil and that it is dangerous to think we are good. Instead, he says we do things that “approximate good.”²

No doubt, there is potential for good in human nature, but we are all greatly flawed. Even a good person is only good *most* of the time. Every one of us is sinful some of the time. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says, “We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.”

The standard of perfection is our problem. It cannot be earned or measured by human standards. Romans 6:23 says, “...the wages of sin is death...” No matter how big or small, any sin qualifies us for death. Therefore, we are all equally guilty and owe a debt that is impossible to pay on our own. This is a terrifying concept and leads to my immense gratefulness that Jesus paid my debt in full!

Before I made Jesus Lord of my life, I seemed good by the world's standards. I was nice, generous, honest, fit, and wealthy. But, I had no idea of the true condition of my heart. After I made Jesus Lord, the process of transformation began. I am a different person filled with His peace, compassion, and love more than I could have ever imagined. The Lord is my best friend, my Father. I spend time with Him, no longer out of a sense of religious obligation but out of love and genuine enjoyment.

Just think, while we were wicked and rebellious, Jesus loved us so much that He died for us! We become one with Jesus in His death and permanently unite with Him in resurrection life. We get to see God rightly and experience Him once again! Freedom!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- How has pride kept you from knowing and experiencing the fullness of God?
- What does the world say is good? What is *actually* good according to Scripture?
- How does it feel to know that Jesus died for your freedom? How does knowing that change your way forward?

For Further Reading: Matthew 27

-
1. Thomas A. Tarrants, "Pride and Humility," *C.S. Lewis Institute*, accessed November 23, 2021, https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Pride_and_Humility_SinglePage.
 2. Jordan Peterson, "The Universal Ethic of Approximating Reciprocity," *YouTube*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xahmyVtzuNE>.

SEVEN

A SIMPLE CHOICE

If my people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

—2 Chronicles 7:14

OUR FREE CHOICE and response to God determine our eternal outcome. *It's that simple.* We have the decision to receive the loving, healing power of Jesus... or not. It's our choice to return to Him and receive the embrace, the ring, and the robe like the prodigal son in Jesus' parable... or not. In the end, there are only two options: a reunion with God or separation from God, where no good exists. The choice is ours. God has given us free will and the ability to make choices with consequences, good or bad.

As C.S. Lewis said, "There are two kinds of people in this world. Those who bend their knee to God and say to Him, 'Your will be done,' or those who refuse to bend their knee to God and God says to them, 'Your will be done.'"¹ He also went on to say, "...the damned are in one sense successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the

inside... just as the blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.”²

Because God is holy and cannot go against His own nature, He is committed to righteousness. In fact, He loves righteousness more than His own creation and will protect it at all costs (go back and read the story of Noah’s Ark if you aren’t convinced). God is a fiery, *holy* God who cast Satan out of heaven in an instant like a lightning bolt, never to return because of his unrighteousness. As such, the cross is about righteousness as much as it is about love. Jesus submitted to being crucified because He loves us and so we could receive His righteousness.

According to Brian Simmons, author of *The Passion Translation*:

In essence, “sin . . . righteousness . . . and judgment are related to three persons.” Sin is related to Adam, for it was through Adam that sin entered humanity (Romans 5:12). Righteousness is related to Christ, because it comes through Him, and He has become our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Judgment is related to Satan, for the pure works of Christ bring judgment to the works of Satan. If we do not embrace Christ’s righteousness, we will share Satan’s judgment.³

God is a God of perfect justice, and justice means you get fair treatment (or you get what you deserve). The suffering of Jesus, one without sin, demonstrates the seriousness of God’s judgement. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it, and when we accept Jesus, He becomes our righteousness.⁴ We are either in or out, saved by grace with eternal life or condemned to hell for our sin. The choice is ours.

Jesus took the death penalty for our sins. To come under the judgement of the Living God is the most terrifying thing of all! But by His mercy and grace, we have the opportunity to choose Him and receive what we don’t deserve: eternity with God. We never know when our time will come to an end on the earth or when Jesus will return. Our eternity all comes down to a decision. Not making a decision is still a decision. We get to choose heaven or hell by conscious decision or no-decision. It is a revelation of His love, kindness, and compassion that leads our hearts to repentance. My prayer is that all will choose Jesus.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Have you submitted yourself to God, or are you living in rebellion?
- How does submission lead to freedom?
- What areas of your life are difficult to surrender? Why?

For Further Reading: Luke 15:11-32, Hebrews 10:31 and Genesis 6-9

-
1. “Book Review: The Great Divorce,” *Presbyformed*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://presbyformed.com/2016/10/05/book-review-the-great-divorce-by-c-s-lewis/>.
 2. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002), 419–20.
 3. “John 16:11, *The Passion Translation*,” <https://www.bible.com/bible/1849/JHN.16.TPT>, Biblegateway.com, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+16%3A11&version=TPT#en-TPT-8087>.
 4. “The Law” refers to commands given to the Israelites in the Old Testament in order to uphold their covenant with God. Hebrews 10 describes the New Covenant in Christ based not on merit, but the freedom offered through God’s grace and forgiveness. For more, see “The Old Covenant vs. The New Covenant” on page 68.

EIGHT

SALVATION IS OURS

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

—Romans 10:9

SALVATION IS the inception point of our journey with God and the unveiling of the fullness of the glorious gospel. At its core, the gospel is about how much God loves people and much less about how lost they are, although the Bible is clear about the cost of sin (the things we do against God’s commands that separate us from Him). Think about how short life is in the context of eternity. If the gospel is true, then it’s the most important truth we could ever know. We should approach our salvation with fear and trembling.

If you are not sure if you are saved, you can give your life to Jesus right now, wherever you are, whatever condition your life is in. God sees your heart and wants a relationship with you! His forgiveness is for all. His grace is limitless!

I was 13 when I first gave my heart to the Lord. It was a simple moment. I had a strong feeling to tell my parents my decision to become a Christian, and so I did. Not long after, I was baptised at our Baptist

church... and that was about it. There was no dramatic change in my heart or spirit. Life went on as usual. For a while, at least.

Later that year, my brother accidentally shot himself, and my parents' marriage fell apart in the aftermath. My small flame of faith slowly burnt out, though I would continue to call myself a Christian.

More than 30 years later, *everything* changed in November 2015 when my daughter Bryn and I visited a prayer group in New Brunswick. It was there that a community of mature and passionate believers welcomed me in and began to mentor me. A deep hunger to read the Bible filled me, and gradually, my relationship with Jesus was rekindled. This was the first time that I truly made Jesus the Lord of my life and made my faith my own, not based on the beliefs of my family or anyone else.

In November 2019, Bryn and I again visited the prayer group. This was during Bryn's most intense transition period that began a month prior to a deliverance session. During this stay, I attended an in-depth teaching on grace over a three-day period with Dean Briggs, an intercessory missionary, author, and speaker.

As the flame within me grew stronger, and with a new understanding of baptism, I decided to be baptised again alongside Bryn, who had decided to give her life to the Lord. Going under the water, my old self died with Christ on the cross. I came back up as a new man and a new creation, alive in Christ. I look back on that fall day as one of the sweetest moments of my life. Although there were no fireworks or obvious power encounters, Bryn and I were on a totally new life trajectory.

"The kingdom of God is for the brokenhearted."

—Fred Rogers¹

The broken-hearted are the people aware that they are spiritually bankrupt and helpless, humble and remorseful over their sins. These are the ones who will inherit the kingdom of God. They know they need a saviour and are ready to receive the gift of salvation expressed through the gospel.

If we truly believe that we are sinners in need of a saviour and that Jesus Christ is our risen Saviour, all we have to do is simply declare it out loud and receive His salvation by faith. This is the gift of grace through faith.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the risen Saviour? Why or why not?
- Read Matthew 5:3-12. How does your heart reflect the eight qualities outlined in Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount*?
- If you want to make Jesus the Lord of your life, see “A Prayer for the New Believer” on page 44 and “Next Steps for the New Believer” on page 45.

For Further Reading: Romans 10:9 and Matthew 5:3-12

-
1. Geoffrey James, “45 Quotes from Mr. Rogers We All Need Today,” *INC*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/45-quotes-from-mr-rogers-that-we-all-need-today.html>.

NINE

CHOOSING TO FOLLOW HIM

Because His heart was focused on the joy of knowing that you would be His, He endured the agony of the cross and conquered its humiliation, and now sits exalted at the right hand of the throne of God!

—Hebrews 12:2b, TPT

WHEN SOMEONE truly gives their heart to Jesus, everything changes from that point on. There is a heartfelt desire and commitment to leading a new life, living in God's ways. The process of becoming more like Jesus is not optional. The Bible says that faith is an actual "substance" and the evidence required to prove the unseen.

When I finally made Jesus Lord of my life, the Holy Spirit began to transform everything about me. Before then, I had not experienced the unshakable kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit that I do now. I had no idea such peace was possible while on earth.

Salvation begins with a choice to believe and a heart of repentance that acknowledges our sinful nature. It comes from a desire to turn from sin and towards God in humility, choosing to love what God loves and hate what God hates. Repentance turns our hearts to God and aligns us with His truth, from our ways to God's ways.

Those of us who know Jesus are set free from the slavery of sin. However, that does not mean we are free from temptations the enemy puts in our path. The Bible is clear that the enemy roams the earth looking for someone to devour like a lion. In these moments, we have the opportunity to turn our face to Jesus to receive His strength and grace. Difficult circumstances help us face our weaknesses and teach us to increasingly rely on the Lord.

Salvation is much more than just a prayer. It marks the day you become a disciple of Jesus. As you grow in awareness of your identity in Christ, you will awaken more and more to God's original design for you. In other words, you will still sin, but you will sin less and less as your mind, emotions, and spirit are made more like Christ through abiding in Him. From the moment you choose to believe and turn to Jesus, He gives you the faith needed to walk in His footsteps.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

—Hebrews 11:1

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Have you made Jesus the absolute Lord of your life? If not, what's stopping you?
- If you already know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, what do you remember about the day you invited Him into your life? What has changed since then?
- Pause and check in with the Holy Spirit. How is He calling you to grow in faith and maturity?

For Further Reading: Hebrews 11:1, Romans 6:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:8

TEN

BAPTISM IN WATER

Now, if anyone is enfolded into Christ, he has become an entirely new person. All that is related to the old order has vanished. Behold, everything is fresh and new. And God has made all things new, and reconciled us to Himself, and given us the ministry of reconciling others to God.

—2 Corinthians 5:17-18, TPT

WATER BAPTISM IS a powerful physical sign of Christ's transformative power. The Bible is very clear that water baptism is necessary. John the Baptist baptised Jesus. It marks someone as a Christian and a member of the family of God. Just as we celebrate the resurrection of Christ from the grave on Easter, coming out of the baptism water is a celebration of the new life of a believer.

When I was baptised at 13 in my family's Baptist church, I didn't have a true understanding of the power of baptism. I thought it was simply a public expression of my faith as part of my salvation experience. This is undoubtedly true, but not at all complete. Baptism is much more than a public expression.

Salvation comes from faith through grace. The biblical practice of baptism, as modeled in Acts 8:26-40, is necessary to mature us in our faith and in the process of sanctification. When I truly understood the significance of water baptism, I enthusiastically chose to be baptised again as an adult alongside my daughter, Bryn, on November 27, 2019. This moment was not about seeking an emotional experience or engaging in a religious act. Rather, it was an exclamation mark on my faith, being co-crucified and co-resurrected with Christ. It was my moment to lay down my life once and for all for the freedom Christ died to give me.

The Passion Translation refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Grace” in Hebrews 10:29. The Holy Spirit is the dispenser and Lord of grace. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means that He fills you with the grace (spiritual power) to live pure, holy, and undefiled. Baptism gives us every reason to rejoice. It symbolises the new life we receive when we submit to the lordship of Jesus. It signals that we are purified from the effects of sin, reborn in Christ, and are now His co-heirs.

Water baptism brings us into the deeper realms of Christ through symbolic co-crucifixion. Immersion unites us in the death of Christ. Under the water, our sins are symbolically “buried and the power of sin is broken. Fully identified with Christ, they are buried with Him and [we] are raised to a new life in the power and resurrection of Jesus.”¹

When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and submit to His transformative power, our spirit becomes a new creation that is one with Christ. The act of baptism allows us to literally die to our old self and be raised to new life in Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ death destroyed the grip of Satan. The old self is now dead. Believe it! Sin has no dominion over you. That being the case, we must surrender our lives, hopes, and dreams to Jesus.

In Christ, there is no condemnation. We fully join Him in His death and are now one with Him. As we come out of the water, we experience the fullness of how God created us to live. Our new self naturally follows God in righteousness and holiness.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Have you been water baptised? If not, what is holding you back?
- Do you walk in the confidence of your new life as a believer?
Why or why not?
- In what ways can you open your senses to experience the presence of Jesus and to hear His voice?

For Further Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17 and John 3:5

-
1. “Baptism,” *Fuller*, accessed December 30, 2021, <https://www.fuller.edu/next-faithful-step/resources/baptism/>.

ELEVEN

AN ACT OF SURRENDER

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me.”

—*Matthew 16:24*

I ONCE HAD a long talk with a young man in which I answered all of his questions and objections about Christianity. We discussed my story, Jesus, unconditional acceptance, grace, eternity, heaven, hell, the history of the church, science, etc. In the end, I asked him, “If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?” His answer totally shocked me. He said no. He wanted to do life his own way, no matter the consequence. He was a bright, engaging man who represented a tragically large portion of the population.

Why might this be the case? Several reasons come to mind. The obvious answer is that the god of this age has blinded the eyes of unbelievers. People often hear a message of condemnation, hell, and descriptions of an angry, distant God rather than the true gospel of grace, the gospel that describes how much God loves us. To receive this love, however, entails complete surrender.

Surrendering means giving up oneself to become like Jesus. Anything that doesn't line up with His commands must go. I am a living testimony of what it looks like to give your life to Jesus and can affirm that this is the most freeing experience available to man. Even things that appear good on the outside can be evil and lead to sin. No matter how much pleasure sin may afford in the moment, it always ends in death. In contrast, whatever you give up to follow Jesus now will reap immeasurable rewards forever, including eternal life. (This is counter-cultural to the postmodern focus on the self and individualism.)

Belief in Jesus is offensive to our flesh. The flesh refers to our sinful nature that will not submit to the will of God. Our flesh is at war with God. In order to love God, we must submit to Jesus, who gives us power over our flesh and a new mind and spirit that are one with Him.

Another reason many avoid the message of Christianity is that it hurts our pride to find out we aren't as good as we think we are and that our hard work will never be enough to make it to heaven. If we break any of God's commandments at any point in our life, we are guilty under the Law. It is never about what we can achieve; it's about what Christ has accomplished for us to simply receive.

If we committed a crime and went to court and told the judge that we are a good person and listed all the positive things we had done in our lives, it would not make us innocent of the crime we committed. How much greater is God's standard of perfection? Christ becomes our perfection; His righteousness becomes our righteousness.

As I reflect on my time with this young man, the vast majority of our conversation focused on "facts" and far too little on the love of God and the power of the gospel to save. More importantly, I realize that for much of my life, I was just like him, though perhaps not as overtly. I was not willing to walk out what I believed. There is a very big difference between belief and faith. Belief comes from an understanding of truth and results in head knowledge. But faith is what gives us the confidence and trust to make Jesus the Lord of our lives. Many "believers" do not have faith. We say we are Christians, but we are still the Lord of our own lives. Ultimately, it is our heart position and free will that God honours.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What would it cost you to surrender your life to Jesus?
- What do you risk losing in order to gain what is worth more than gold?

For Further Reading: John 20:20 and James 1:2; 2:10

TWELVE

KNOWN BY THEIR FRUIT

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”

—Matthew 7:18-21

PRIOR TO 2016, I had no idea what being a true believer really meant. The gospel is the power of God to transform and cannot be watered down for our convenience. Accepting the gospel is about accepting the full life-changing invitation into the kingdom of God. It is the small and narrow road that leads to life, and sadly, as Jesus says, very few find it. We are all in or all out.

It is our choice whether to remain the master of our own lives or give everything to Jesus. Scripture says that when we do, we will be known by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are My mature disciples who glorify My Father!

—*John 15:8, TPT*

Giving your life to Jesus is not a casual decision or a partial commitment. When you surrender your life, it means you are no longer your own, and you now live for Him. Far too often, people think they can go back to their lives, feeling good about their supposed eternal salvation, and wind up changing very little about their everyday life. We can't say a quick prayer to avoid hell and still be lord of our own lives. That is not the gospel.

With that said, salvation is a free gift of faith. God looks into our hearts and wants us more than we can imagine. The Lord is incredibly gracious and understands our unique struggles and journey. He is faithful and never gives up on anyone on their path to salvation. Jesus came to seek and save all that was lost. God's will is that none shall perish.

And when we do choose Him, it changes things. It changes things immediately, and it changes things little by little the more we understand our Lord and His ways. With each decision to pursue Him, we become more like Him. We let go of our old ways and are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. We begin to bear good fruit. This fruit not only becomes a display of God's goodness on earth, but it also begins to bless others with its sweetness. After all, what good is fruit if not for sharing?

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Read Galatians 5:22-23. Which fruit do you see in your life? Which fruit do you desire?
- Where do you stand in your walk with the Lord? Are you all in or all out?
- What is God calling you to in this season? Pause to reflect and ask the Holy Spirit to give you clarity and discernment.

For Further Reading: Matthew 7:13-14

THIRTEEN

DISCIPLE-MAKERS, THE (OFTEN) MISSING LINK IN THE CHURCH

Then He said to them all: "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me."

—Luke 9:23

WHY DON'T people always experience transformation after making Jesus Lord of their lives? Why do some people find themselves re-committing their lives to Jesus after repeatedly going astray? The answer is because they have not been disciplined. They have not been parented in the faith, and as a result, they remain "only converts." Salvation is the inception point of entering the kingdom and beginning our journey with God.

In the words of my daughter Bryn, "Salvation is a free gift of justification, a personal revival. But, in order to grow mature believers, conversion must be followed up with discipleship. A personal revival must be followed by personal reformation. Walking in discipleship is the process of sanctification."

Discipleship has nothing to do with religious activity or being a "good" Christian. Rather, it is the biblical method of cultivating intimacy with God while becoming like Jesus and leads to accelerated transformation.

Think of discipleship as a practice. A disciple is a *practicer*. A disciple of Jesus is one who practices what He teaches.

Every Christian is called to be a disciple and disciple-maker, introducing people to Jesus and teaching them to be like Him. Jesus, the ultimate disciple-maker, reproduced Himself in His disciples so they could disciple others to become like Him. We are called to lead and be led just the same.

I tried life and “Christianity” my way for many years, and it did not play out well. In 2016, when I truly made Jesus Lord of my life, my priorities changed to follow suit through the process of discipleship. I discovered the importance of spending time with God in prayer, connecting with believers, reading the Word, worshiping, journaling, and learning to hear the voice of God. In time, I came to value the growth that came from seasons in the wilderness, learning to depend on God, engaging in healing and deliverance, surrendering daily, being mentored, and deepening my relationship with God. In short, abiding in Him and cultivating the manifest presence of Jesus.

All of these practices encompassed my discipling journey. By submitting to godly leadership and practicing spiritual disciplines, I built a deep foundation. Now, I can pass on what I’ve learnt through experience to others. We learn to imitate Jesus and to steward His presence on earth as we are transformed into His image.

Jesus’ greatest commandment is to love. Love is the ultimate result of discipleship and is a sign of spiritual maturity. What’s more, the Greatest Commandment (to love God and others) fuels the Great Commission. Transformed people transform people, families, systems, etc.—everywhere and everything they are called to! We are called to develop relationships with people inside and outside of the church to demonstrate the love of Jesus and manifest the kingdom of God to the world. The best way to disciple is to love others and point them to Jesus to encounter Him personally in relationship.

It's important to remember that good discipleship will always be all about Jesus. Ultimately, we are discipled by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus’ promise in John 14:26 describes, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the

Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” As the Holy Spirit teaches and discipled us, He also wants us to be discipled by other believers and disciple other believers ourselves.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Who has discipled you in your faith journey?
- How can you practice being a disciple?
- If you do not have a spiritual mentor, who could ask to join you on your faith journey?

For Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:1

FOURTEEN

SETTING THE PRISONERS FREE

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

—John 8:36

ONCE JESUS SETS YOU FREE, the world will notice. I will never forget a friend coming up to me after I had spent a week with a ministry called *Restoring the Foundations*, which focuses on inner healing, generational issues, strongholds, ungodly beliefs, soul ties, and deliverance.¹ “What happened to you? You are full of life and light!” she exclaimed. This woman was deeply involved in the New Age Movement and was spiritually sensitive. She could tell that my countenance had changed. She could tell I had a new lease on life. Jesus’ healing touch changed my spirit, stature, and attitude in ways that were noticeable to everyone.

God loves everyone and has a plan for all! No one is here by accident. Submission to Jesus puts you back in alignment with God’s ultimate and beautiful plan for your life and the redemption of the world.

Jesus trained His disciples to set people free because God’s will is for us to be liberated from whatever bondage we are in and to go and liberate others. What does it mean to be free? How do you become free?

When we accept Jesus and are born again, we enter into a process of sanctification (the process of being set apart and made holy as we become more like Christ). As we surrender more and more of our lives to He who reigns, we experience the relief that comes from knowing the Creator of the universe is once again on the throne of our lives. Sin no longer binds us or ties us to the world through His grace. In Christ, we are new creations, once again connected to the Father, made whole and complete in Him.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

—Galatians 2:20

The enemy will try to keep us in the dark about the fact that we were crucified with Christ and our former self is dead. The religious spirit will portray an angry God who demands constant “penance,” or self-inflicted guilt, payback, and punishment.² The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, which refers to a “change of mind.” In other words, it is godly sorrow because we love God. We must continually renew our minds in the process of sanctification to fully grasp the reality and manifest the life of Jesus. We can only be as free as the depth of our surrender and our co-inclusion with Jesus.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What areas of your life does God want to set you free from?
- How are Christians expected to live differently in the world?

For Further Reading: Galatians 5:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:17

1. Learn more about Restoring the Foundations at <https://www.restoringthefoundations.org>.
 2. See pages 82-95 for more on the religious spirit.

FIFTEEN

BLINDED BY THE AGE

For their minds have been blinded by the god of this age, leaving them in unbelief. Their blindness keeps them from seeing the dayspring light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the divine image of God.

—2 Corinthians 4:4, TPT

WE ARE BORN KNOWING right and wrong. God imprints His moral code into our hearts. Our conscience knows we are sinners and tells us we are accountable to our Creator. Over time, if we choose to continually disobey our conscience, it will become hardened, and our inner voice of truth is lost, desensitised, and corrupted. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes that the god of this age is Satan, who blinds people from receiving the good news of the gospel.

A corrupted conscience perceives good as evil and evil as good. It results in “truth” becoming relative and self-determined. Of course, a corrupted conscience is blind to this reality, and tragically, our culture, education systems, media, and entertainment bombard us with content that corrupts and desensitises our conscience daily.

Those aware of their sinful nature, brokenness, and weakness are prepared to receive the gospel. Jesus came to save those who know they

have a problem, not those who claim to be righteous. We must admit that we need a saviour, and that requires repentance. To turn from our old ways and towards God results in godly thinking.

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

—*Luke 5:31-32*

Jesus loved those rejected by the world with compassion and mercy. He was ridiculed for spending time with prostitutes, tax collectors, the unlovable and the unacceptable... everyone who was rejected by the self-righteous Pharisees whose hearts were hardened by the Law. It is legalism that robs faith of its power and provokes punishment. Everyone is sick. Some self-righteously *think* they are healthy.

Satan, the god of this age, comes to steal, kill, and destroy through secrecy, ignorance, deception, and division. But, thankfully, as 1 John 1:9 explains, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Remember: God convicts us of sin to draw us back to Him.

Conviction moves us towards God and His healing. Condemnation pushes us to hide and drown in guilt and shame. Condemnation is demonic, intending to keep us from experiencing God. The next time you feel a prick of "I did something wrong," ask the Holy Spirit to show you whether you are feeling conviction or condemnation. He will show you what to do next.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Ask the Holy Spirit, in what ways am I blinded by the world?
- Surrender what He shows you and place your focus back on Jesus.

For Further Reading: Romans 4:14-15

SIXTEEN

DETHRONED

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

—Matthew 5:48

HOW MANY TIMES in our lives have we broken God’s standard? Lying, cheating, stealing, having hate in your heart, lustful thoughts or sex before marriage, using the Lord’s name in vain... the list of sins is endless.

Only Jesus lived a perfect life. God sees everything we do, think, and feel, and there is no way to hide from Him.

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? “I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.”

—Jeremiah 17:9-10

The suffering and darkness in the world make it clear that we all need a saviour... *the* Saviour. We deceive ourselves if we think we are without

sin. The fallen human race requires the grace of God to be made into new creations with new natures. This is why I am a Christian.

The point is that we are all desperately guilty, and we get off the hook by pleading guilty!

Salvation comes with a humbled heart that is repentant to God through faith in Jesus. By God's grace, our Saviour closed the sin-induced gap between man and God by coming to earth to do what we could never do on our own—present a perfect and final sacrifice for sin.

We are all born sinners who will come face-to-face with a Holy God one day. To make Jesus our Lord and Saviour, we must humble ourselves and repent (i.e., dethrone ourselves). I have tried to find peace in this world, and let me tell you, the incredible freedom, peace, and joy that awaits you on the other side of submission is unimaginable!

It is prideful to have confidence in our ability to fulfil God's Law, which demands absolute morality with absolute perfection. Jesus says in Mark 10:18, "No one is good—except God alone." Dos and don'ts, rules or formulas, false religions (including works based on "karmic" Christianity, being a "good person," etc.), *anything* relying on our own strength, is religion. If we choose the Law, the standard is absolute perfection. It feeds our pride and removes our dependence on God, the source of our strength and Redeemer who makes all things new. The greater our bondage to religion, the further we get from the genuine relationship God wants with us.

Today and every day, I choose to submit my life and my will to God. This puts me in a place of receiving, not achieving. Being yoked to Jesus and having found rest for my soul, I am empowered to live righteously by grace. Being the lord of my own life was terrible. I can't imagine ever living like that again. I am so thankful that I am no longer on the throne of my life.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Who is on the throne of your life? What areas have you been unwilling to submit to God?
- What role does repentance play in your daily life? What is God calling you to repent from today?
- Spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to reveal how He is calling you to grow in Christlikeness. Ask Him for wisdom and strength to become more like Jesus every day.
- Suggested daily exercise: Close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting on the throne of your own life. Now stand up, get off the throne and invite Jesus to take your place. What happens next?

For Further Reading: Ephesians 2:8

SEVENTEEN

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

—John 8:32

JESUS IS THE TRUTH. If He sets you free, you will be free indeed. To be totally free, we must tear down everything in our lives that opposes the will of God and replace those things with the truth. What exactly are the things that we need to be freed from? Consider the following:

- Self (our carnal mind, self-focus, desires, ways, and independence)
- Participation in the occult (this relates to idolatry, freemasonry, yoga, and being a victim of the occult)
- Deception (self-deception, blindness, denial, or minimising the truth)
- Performance (through comparison, competition, people-pleasing, striving, religious performance, or self-sufficiency)
- Suppressed or blocked emotions, unresolved heart/soul issues, abandonment, rejection, neglect, victimisation, trauma/wounds, and shame (resulting from guilt, regret, self-accusation, or sexual sins)

- Insecurity, fear, and control (manifested through appeasement, denial, a false sense of responsibility, enabling, pride, or controlling others through anger)
- Religion (the Law, sin-consciousness, obligation, or performance)

The above list includes some of the things Jesus set me free from.¹ I've engaged in emotional and heart-healing in my quiet times with the Lord, with different ministries, and with believing counsellors to help me work through generational issues, soul ties, strongholds, deliverance, etc. But of course, there are many more areas of life that hold people in bondage, and areas of my heart and life God continues to reveal and set me from from as I give them over to Him. Jesus' blood sets us free as we appropriate His victory in every area of our lives. It is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us!

Jesus paid the full price for the past, present, and all of eternity. This is grace. That He is our righteousness, holiness, love, joy, peace, and freedom. Grace empowers us through God's love to not sin. When we receive the revelation of Jesus' grace, our motivation to live a godly lifestyle overflows out of love, not condemnation or obligation. As Romans 8:1 declares, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- In what areas of your life are you relying on your own strength?
- What bondage do you need to be set free from? Ask the Lord to reveal any hidden areas. Consider reaching out to a pastor, deliverance ministry, believing counsellor, mentor, or friend for more serious areas. This may be the first step towards a process of healing meant to be done with the support of a community of believers.

For Further Reading: John 8:36 and Galatians 2:20

1. The list of occult activities listed in this reflection require repentance, renouncement, and deliverance in order to be set free. If you have participated in any of the activities listed, I strongly encourage you to seek out a Spirit-filled inner-healing and deliverance ministry to help you with the process.

EIGHTEEN

DELIVERANCE

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

—Matthew 19:14

JESUS TELLS us that we will not enter His kingdom unless we become like children. To be childlike is to become humble, innocent, and teachable. A child is open and trusting, seeking to understand with awe and wonder. Children ask many questions with expectancy and long for love and guidance.

While I became a Christian at a young age and was raised in a Christian home, I did not experience the full freedom Jesus offered until I surrendered my life to Him with childlike faith and trust. As we come to the Lord like children, embracing a lifestyle of repentance and sanctification, we will experience greater levels of freedom. The sooner we repent, the less we will have to deal with the effects of sin, and the doors sin opens to the demonic world. Repentance should be a regular part of our lifestyle as believers, as the truth delivers us from old or inferior mindsets. This renewing of our mind awakens us to see ourselves in Him. The truth sets us free!

The enemy requires agreement to operate in our lives. Deliverance organically occurs as we align our thinking with the truth, replacing lies and ungodly beliefs; address oppression, taking authority over any demonic spirits; and break agreements with the enemy.

No doubt, there are multiple potential causes for the struggles we face, and God uses medicine, therapists, situations, people, natural remedies, etc., to comfort and heal. However, deliverance and inner-healing is required for spiritual struggles that no amount of counselling, medication, exercise, or self-help can fix.¹

These issues include things like but are not limited to poverty, religion, failure, pride, sickness, trauma, mental illness, deception, addiction, substance abuse, involvement in evil/secret societies, ungodly beliefs, soul ties, hurts, unresolved anger, family history, or lack of mercy. At its core, it involves anything that keeps you in bondage to the enemy and prevents you from living a full, joyful, healthy life. However, *Jesus can set you free from all of these things forever.*

God has not only healed me but He has set me free from experiences and memories that held me back, and now I can press on knowing God is with me always. And we know that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom! All we have to do is trust Him like a little child, knowing He is a good and faithful Father.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What memories or experiences does Jesus want to deliver and heal you from? Who can you reach out to for prayer over these areas?
- What would it feel like to be set free from the chains of the enemy?

For Further Reading: Psalm 144:2; 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 3:17

1. Soul (mind, will, and emotion) care is critical as is our physical health. However, we must be aware of the spiritual forces at play. Emotional traumas are open doors that must be healed.

NINETEEN

CONTENDING FOR FREEDOM

At last we have freedom, for Christ has set us free! We must always cherish this truth and firmly refuse to go back into the bondage of our past.

—Galatians 5:1, TPT

JESUS MAY ASK you to contend for your freedom, alone or with others. There was a time when a wonderful group of believers prayed and fasted for 28 days over my daughter, Bryn. Following Abbe's death, Bryn woke up every morning screaming and crying that she wanted to die in the midst of drug addiction, depression, and grappling with the deep scars left by repeated sexual abuse by someone who was once close to our family.

By His grace, God set Bryn free from the spirit of death (forever!) at a deliverance session. There is a moment that stands out to us when we both realised those dark, terrifying days were coming to an end. On the way home from a deliverance session, I moved too quickly into another lane on the highway, and Bryn called out, "Dad, be careful! I don't want to die!"

Bryn and I both went silent, then looked at each other and laughed in shock. *My daughter didn't want to die. She wanted to live! Jesus had set her free from the spirit of death!* To this day, she has never been the same. And at the time of writing this book, Bryn serves full-time at a missionary base in Hawaii.

This started a new process of progressive freedom and relationship for Bryn. Jesus stepped in and transformed her life to one on fire for Him, full of life and joy. She embraces abundant life, increasing in truth and freedom more and more each day.

The point is, becoming a Christian is about so much more than securing your “ticket to heaven.” Instead, Jesus wants you free to live a full, beautiful, profoundly powerful life that brings healing and freedom to others.

Repentance is about reconciling our relationship with God. Repentance is a lifestyle of renewing our mind (changing our thinking), and Jesus offers it to us daily. I love repentance because I have experienced the fruit of turning from sin and towards Jesus so many times in my life. When something surfaces, through His grace, I repent, renounce, receive forgiveness, declare the truth, and choose to realign that area of my life with Jesus because I desire to protect our relationship. Once again, I choose to agree with God's ways, to think like Him and awaken to the truth of who I am in Christ and the power of His blood. This process constantly refocuses me on the things above. It helps me not get distracted by my physical circumstances or allow a wedge to come in between God and me. By His grace, I am not subject to the wages of sin. I get to experience the gift of eternal life in Him!

I do not want to revert to my old ways. I repent to return to the innocence of my new nature that Jesus purchased. I want to stay free and progressively become freer by renewing my mind to the truth! We are already perfected in Christ and must awaken to this reality. I never want to be bound to anything or anyone other than Jesus ever again. When I receive greater freedom, I can freely give to others. What I overcome through Christ's power in me, I have authority over.

I hope that my story and what I've learnt will inspire and ignite a hunger in you to pursue Jesus for yourself. I pray that you would experience the freedom He has for you by constantly receiving the truth of God's Word and learning to apply the victory of Jesus to every area of your life. In Christ, we are free. We have the Holy Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. As Jesus proclaimed, it is finished!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Repentance is a daily choice to turn from our old ways and choose Jesus. Looking back, how have you grown in Christ-likeness?
- What area of your life is God calling you to contend for? Pause and ask the Lord to search your heart.
- Is there someone else in your life God is calling you to contend for? Take time to pray for clarity in this area.

For Further Reading: Romans 6:23

TWENTY

THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT AND THE COUNTERFEIT

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

—Galatians 2:20

CHRISTIANITY IS TECHNICALLY a religion in that it is an organised set of beliefs focused on worshipping a god or gods (in this case, the one true God). However, it is much more than that.

As believers, we know that Christianity is more than a set of rules, rituals, traditions, or even what you choose to believe. While belief in Jesus is the only way to receive eternal life, God is really after a relationship with us. It's when we get stuck on "religion" (the Law) and forget about having a relationship with God our Father that we really get into trouble. Jesus did not come to create a Christian "religion" but to fully reveal God and redeem all of creation, defeating sin once and for all. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection fulfilled the Law, transferring His righteousness to us by grace through faith. His blood paid the full price that we could never pay because no human being could ever fully fulfil the Law.

When I first tried bringing Christianity into my company, it was more religion-focused than relationship-focused because I was religious (not the pure, unblemished religion Paul writes about in Galatians, but the legalistic, religious spirit that condemns). The result was a tense, exclusive, and even “weird” culture. It definitely did not draw people into God’s kingdom. However, as I matured in Christ and grew to understand the gospel of grace, everything changed. Now we are actually a “kingdom-company,” and it is incredible! Kingdom culture works everywhere. The difference is operating out of our sonship versus striving as orphans.

The religious spirit replaces relationship with works and wars against the operation of grace in our lives. It makes love conditional and earned. The religious spirit feasts on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (the Law), leading to death and separating us from God, whereas Jesus is the Tree of Life (grace). When you feel offense, judgement, self-condemnation, exhaustion, emptiness, or accusation in your heart, and your experience of God or reading the Word is more of a grind, you have probably allowed the spirit of religion to enter.

I attended a conference once where a Christian leader shared a word from the Lord. “The Lord wants you to sit on His lap, and He wants to tickle you!” Half of the room broke out into laughter. The other half turned sour and judgemental. While the word may have offended some religious people, the reality is that heaven is filled with laughter and joy, and it is our Father’s desire to fill us with His laughter and joy, too.

If the truth resides only in our minds as “head knowledge,” it can easily become legalistic and religious—like the Pharisees. The spirit of religion is Satan’s counterfeit of the real thing. It steals the joy of our relationship with God. Thankfully, the cross plundered the religious spirit of its authority. We do not have to live under its heavy yoke! Jesus fulfilled the Law on our behalf with His blood. It is finished! Grace through faith in Jesus opens our consciousness to the truth of our new creation life. His righteousness is now ours, once and for all.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- When, where, or how have you fallen into the “religion” trap? What are the consequences?
- Why are legalism and head knowledge often easier to rely on for truth?
- Do you enjoy God? How is God calling you to experience more of His goodness?

For Further Reading: James 1:27 and Isaiah 29:13

TWENTY-ONE

RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

—1 Corinthians 13:4

A RELIGIOUS SPIRIT can slowly choke out the kingdom of righteousness and our peace and joy in the Holy Spirit if we choose to agree with it. A religious spirit can seep in anywhere, especially impacting our relationships and union with God and His people. Jesus offers a relational theology, meaning everything in the kingdom flows from relationships (the chief purpose of theology is to know God). All God requires is faith (again, our job is to believe) as faith accesses His righteousness and His kingdom.

In the church, the religious spirit often shows up as pride in people-pleasing (fear of man) or unresolved heart issues. This usually binds people to the chains of “niceness,” manifesting itself in masks, fake-ness, inauthenticity, and disconnection. To be “nice” is to act pleasant and agreeable. Nice people don’t make waves. They don’t enter into conflict out of fear. They don’t call others out for unacceptable behaviour. I have

seen this happen in my company and my family, so it is not an issue unique to the church.

Niceness hides. It doesn't say the difficult things that need to be said. Niceness is a form of people-pleasing, a facade, and doesn't ask the hard questions. Niceness doesn't hold others to a high standard. It placates, promotes weakness, and allows mediocrity. Niceness creates a false peace, making true unity impossible.

In contrast, kindness emerges from love (which is a fruit of the Spirit and enables others to bear good fruit). Kindness speaks the truth and is unwavering. Kindness is both humble and courageous. It is generous, it is transparent, it is thoughtful and considerate. Kindness says difficult things constructively, embraces conflict to a better end, and takes the initiative because it cares. Kindness holds others to a higher standard, is accountable, provides direct, honest feedback, and serves others. Kindness is authentic, passionate, and rooted in integrity and excellence. Kindness results in genuine connection and unity. Pretending to be kind is a lie. Honest communication is the key to freedom because the truth sets us free.

We cannot make our old nature holy. It is dead. Religion, legalism, and fear of punishment all go hand in hand. Each only produces orphans. A religious spirit is in the head (knowledge of God), whereas Jesus is in the heart (revelation and relationship with God).

We are not called to religion. We are not called to be nice. We are called to true relationships, to pure, unblemished faith in Jesus. And we are called to be kind. There is a great difference between religiosity and relationship and between niceness and kindness. Jesus was never nice. He was *always* kind. So be free, honest, authentic, and kind like Jesus; discard your mask (and religion) and be you! Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Explain the difference between being nice and being kind in your own words. How have you mistaken the two in the past?

- How is God asking you to be kind in light of the gospel?
- Why do you think it feels easier to default to “nice” mode?

For Further Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Ephesians 1:5

TWENTY-TWO OUT OF THE BOX GOD

And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness...”

—Exodus 34:6

THE WAY we see God work in our lives reflects how we view God. If we view God as the all-powerful, wonder-working, miracle-making Creator of the universe, we will see His fingerprints on every area of our lives. In a blog for Newspring Church in South Carolina, AJ Turner writes that if our focus is on “how big our problem is instead of how big God is... we stop seeking. We stop believing. We stop praying. This heart posture does not take away God’s power to act, but it can hinder us from seeing Him move.”¹

“Our image (concept) of God is the most important thing about us. It determines our relationship with God, others, and ourselves. Many people we talk with need healing in their image of God. Do you? Your answer to this question will tell you: Can you look back over your whole life and say, ‘My Father God has always been good to me.’? If not, your heart is hurting and your image of God needs healing.”

—Bill Gaultiere²

Below you will find a list of lies that we are all tempted to believe about God at times. These lies can seem to make sense regarding God's existence and the reason for our suffering. However, when our experiences become the bottom line in our theologies, we put God in a box, ignore Scripture, and are in danger of heresy. Consider the following lies:

- *God doesn't heal anymore.*
- *God isn't interested in my everyday life.*
- *God only speaks through the Bible; He no longer speaks directly to His people.*
- *I can't hear God.*
- *No one could ever love me.*
- *I am not enough... I am not worthy.*
- *My situation is so hopeless; no one could ever rescue me from it!*

Most likely, you resonated with at least one of those statements. Not one is true, but they certainly can feel true at times. Why is that? Ultimately, it is because when we put limits on our relationship with God, we are the ones responsible. We are the ones putting God in a box, not the other way around.

The trajectory of your whole life is determined by one single thing; the image of God that you live your life with. Sadly, most people live with a false view of God; that He is irrelevant, critical, distant and not very interesting. It's a lie. It is a tragedy to live with a false view of God, it effects everything in your life.

—Doug Sherman³

I used to see God through my human understanding and resonated with many of the previous statements. The result was that my view of God was small and limited.

Today, I know the truth of our unseeable, supreme, unimaginable, and inexpressible God. He sits on His throne and laughs at the enemy's schemes, and so should we since we sit with Jesus in heavenly places.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What is your view of God? How have you limited Him?
- Which statement listed did you resonate with most? Why?

For Further Reading: Ephesians 2:6 and John 14:6

-
1. AJ Turner, "Are you putting God in a box?" *Newspring Church*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://newspring.cc/articles/are-you-putting-god-in-a-box>.
 2. "Bible Verses on the Father's Love," *Soul Shepherding*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.soulshepherding.org/bible-verses-on-the-fathers-love/>.
 3. Doug Sherman, "About Doug Sherman," *TradingUp.org*, Accessed July 11, 2022, <https://www.tradingup.org/site/about/doug>.

TWENTY-THREE

A GOD WITHOUT LIMITS

Never doubt God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination!

—Ephesians 3:20a, TPT

AFTER MY BROTHER'S ACCIDENT, my family, friends, and church spent much time praying for his healing over many years. Prophets and pastors came to my brother's bedside and then left. Unfortunately, he did not receive healing and passed away after living 25 years in a declining vegetative state. This experience impacted my ability to see God as a healer. At the same time, I also struggled to believe that God was relational and wanted to know me. I knew He was the Creator, but a part of me always worried that some new scientific discovery would prove me wrong. All of that began to change when Bryn and I stayed with my mother in New Brunswick just before she had a very difficult stint in rehab. My mother took us to visit with a gathering of believers for a simple evening worship service. I sat in the back, listening quietly. It had been a tough season with my struggling daughters, and I was exhausted.

The pastor kept looking at me throughout worship. Turns out, the Lord had given him a powerful prophetic word over my life. Finally, he stopped the service and spoke out about what God had shown him about Bryn and me. As he and other believers spoke, many of the boxes I had surrounding God's character began to break. God saw me and knew me. He knew me intimately and had shared details of my life and my daughter's life with a group of strangers. It was a life-changing moment for both of us. My journey towards a deeper connection with Jesus had begun as God connected me with His body in a new way.

Our God can do far more than we could imagine. However, our lives do not always reflect that reality. The reason is that our lack of faith can actually block what God wants to do. We are all guilty of putting God in one box or another at some point in our lives. When God does not answer a prayer the way we want Him to, when a painful circumstance sideswipes us, or when we are faced with the realities of living in a fallen world, we are all too quick to build a theology about God around our experience. To break out of such limiting mindsets, we must come face-to-face with the unimaginable immensity of our awesome God. And the best place to start is the Bible.

Not long after my prophetic experience at the worship night (we eventually all became great friends), I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in a year. If you want to know who God is and what He does, read His Word. Nothing challenges boxes like the truth. I now read the Bible every day to remind myself that our God is without limits. Our God is an Ephesians 3:20 God!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- How familiar with God's Word are you?
- Do you spend time regularly reading and meditating on God's Word? If so, how has it impacted your walk with the Lord? If not, when and how can you incorporate this into your days?

For Further Reading: Romans 5:11

TWENTY-FOUR BECOMING AND BEHOLDING

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.
Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

—1 John 4:16

WE BECOME like the one we behold and what we hold in our hearts will have expression on the earth. For example, if we focus on things that make us anxious, we will become anxious. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we become like Him as our mind renews to the truth of our identity in Him. What is true in Him is true in us! As we abide and live in union with Jesus, His nature becomes our nature. When Jesus was on earth, He only did what He saw the Father doing and only said what He heard the Father saying. In His perfect obedience, Jesus became like the Father.

What's more, we are made in God's image, and Jesus is the perfect image of God. As such, the more we become like Jesus, the more we become as God intended us to be before the fall of man.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 beautifully describes God's nature as demonstrated through Jesus, the perfect visible image of our invisible God. If we replace the word "love" with "Father" in this passage (because God is love), we see His true nature coming alive:

Our Father is patient, our Father is kind. He does not envy, He does not boast, He is not proud. He does not dishonor others, He is not self-seeking, He is not easily angered, He keeps no record of wrongs. Our Father does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Our Father always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

I don't know about you, but I don't know anyone who meets the standard of love set by our Father. Let's behold our Father!

How has spending time with Jesus changed me? The peace I experience is the peace that Jesus says in Philippians 4:7 “...transcends all understanding...” I regularly experience peace even in the darkest of times, from my daughter's murder trial to life and hardships in business. He has my life, and I trust my Dad, my eternal heavenly Father. This is true inexpressible freedom. I have come to a point where I often feel the love of God for the one in front of me, which was previously not my default.

Today, I can confidently say that He is the source of my strength and resiliency. His Holy Spirit living in me gives me encouragement, hope, endurance, truth, perseverance, support, and strength. In other words, focusing on Jesus has changed everything. I am a completely different person, and that is a very good thing. I am coming into a greater consciousness of my union with Jesus, safe and secure, a son who is one with God. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. Christ in me is the hope of glory.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

Set aside some time to journal through the following questions. The answers will prove insightful to who you are and who you are becoming:

1. What do you want most?
2. What fills the majority of your thought-life?
3. What do you spend your money on?
4. How do you spend your free time?
5. Who do you like to spend time with?

6. Who do you admire most?

When you are finished, go back and read through your answers. What themes do you see? What season is God calling you into? Is there anything He wants you to turn from? The more time you spend with Him, the more you will become like Him and see where He is leading you.

For Further Reading: Genesis 1:27 and 1 John 4:16

TWENTY-FIVE

NO OTHER NAME

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

—Acts 4:12

THE BIBLE TALKS about how the “sons of God,” the created gods, *elohim* or spirit beings, rebelled to become the powers and principalities of darkness in high places. These beings are very real; however, there is no other god above our God. No other god who calls himself our father and us, his beloved children. There is only one uncreated being.

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

—1 Corinthians 8:5-6

Many fallen beings make up the gods of this world and are the basis for many myths and pagan religions. Unfortunately, many are unaware that

these spirits can plant thoughts in our minds (which we often mistake for our own thoughts). Of course, these deceiving voices are not just behind other religions but are often behind political or philosophical ideologies. Take humanism.¹ It sounds noble at first glance, but once you start digging, you'll discover that humanism is entirely void of godliness and, as such, is deception. Beware of "isms."

While many knowingly or unknowingly worship fallen, dead, or created beings in pagan religions, others do not believe in the supernatural or the spirit realm at all. This alternative deception is exactly what Satan wants as he continues to kill, steal, and destroy beneath our noses. Satan will do anything he can to blind the eyes of unbelievers.

Supernatural signs are not foundations for faith. Satan may come as an angel of light and perform miracles that we perceive as "good," such as physical healings or shows of supernatural power. Evil is often mingled with good making it difficult to spot. Satan deceives, copies, distorts, and distracts from the truth. This is also why discernment is required regarding miracles, the supernatural, or the spirit realm.

Jesus said in John 14:6 that no one comes to the Father except through Him. There are no other gods before Him. Any spirit or person who does not proclaim and submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ aligns with the enemy. Therefore, we must stay rooted in Scripture and ask God daily for discernment. He will gently guide us on the path that leads to life.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- How aware of the spirit realm are you in daily life?
- What are examples of things the world calls good which are actually evil?

For Further Reading: John 10:10; 8:44 and 2 Corinthians 11:14

1. An outlook that stresses the potential value and goodness of human beings, attaching supreme importance to humanity rather than God.

TWENTY-SIX FINDING HIM

So if the Son sets you free from sin, then become a true son and be unquestionably free!

—John 8:36, TPT

JEREMIAH 29:13 PROMISES, “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.” And when you find Him, you will know Him. Knowing Him is what leads to becoming like Him.

God is after your heart. He promises to always be with you and never leave you or forsake you. And though God is invisible, His Son is not. He suffered as a man, died as a man, and was tempted, just like you and me (though He never sinned).

When I was “lukewarm,” I did not find Him because I was divided. I was not seeking Jesus with my whole heart. Making Jesus the Lord of my life changed everything. I found Him after 46 years of only knowing *about* Him, and now I am being made like Him daily because I know Him. The only thing standing in our way is the “self,” which is why we must be committed to the testimony of Jesus and uncommitted to our own lives. In other words, we must become living sacrifices, trusting in the will and the ways of the Father.

I believe that St. Francis wrote some of the most poignant words describing what a living sacrifice looks like:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;*

*O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.¹*

I prayed this prayer with Abbe every night before bed when she was little, along with Romans 12:21. Today, as I read these words, it reminds me of what a living sacrifice looks like. Jesus only did and said what He saw the Father doing and saying, a perfect model for how we should live. Seek Him, find Him. Find Him, know Him. Know Him, and become like Him, a living sacrifice, pure and holy, tried and true.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?
- What strikes you most about *The Prayer of St. Francis*?

For Further Reading: John 3:30

1. “Make Me an Instrument of Peace, Saint Francis Prayer,” *Catholic Online*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=134>.

TWENTY-SEVEN

BECOMING LIKE JESUS

The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

—Deuteronomy 30:6

I DID NOT KNOW what it meant to love Jesus intimately for most of my life. As an engineer and someone who relies very heavily on logic, I could understand the basic biblical worldview and what it meant to be a Christian, but I found it challenging to comprehend how we could have a real relationship with an invisible God. I didn't understand how you could love someone you couldn't see.

However, over the last few years, I have come to understand this great mystery. The Lord has led me on a profound healing journey. One of the turning points came when I embraced *emotional* vulnerability.

I have always struggled with being able to open my heart to others. But with God's help, I began to explore my emotions and share them with Him and with others. In the process, I experienced a new level of freedom, love for His Word, and encounters with Jesus!

This new freedom allowed me to be fully myself which innately impacted my ability to connect with God. Slowly, I began to experience a genuine internal transformation. Jesus in me is taking up more and more space, and my relationship with others and with God will never be the same.

Jesus embodies the perfect expression of sacrificial, selfless, and unconditional *agape* love.¹ This is the love that heals us from the inside out.

If we look to the person of Jesus, the physical manifestation of our invisible God, if we truly behold His character and His perfect love for us, how could we not fall in love with Him? The more we love Jesus intimately, the more we will naturally emulate Him and look like Him.

The love of God is changing me from the inside out and redefining my experience on earth as someone who has the mind of Christ and wants to please God and fulfil His plan.

I see this transformation daily as I connect with those in great pain, those with intellectual, emotional, or physical disabilities, those who have recently accepted Jesus, and those ahead of me on the journey. God is using me to help others grow, and He is sending others to help *me* grow.

We each have a vital role and purpose that manifests itself through *relationships*. This is one of the benefits of being a member of the family of God.

So today, I encourage you to open your heart to the intimate, *agape* love of Jesus. His love will breathe healing on you, your family, and your friendships. What's more, it will usher you into greater union with Christ, moulding you into His image.

We not only get to know Jesus, we get to be His hands and feet on the earth and experience Him in others and in His glorious creation.

Jesus is the source of all life! He is truth. He is the tree of life!

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- When have you experienced *agape* love (in giving or receiving)?
- In what ways have you experienced healing through Jesus?
- Is there any area you desire healing today?
- What does it mean to be in union with Jesus?

For Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:17

-
1. *Agape* is the Greek word for “love” in the selfless sense; it is a choice and requires nothing in return. (“What does Agape really mean?” *Christianity Today*, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-does-agape-love-really-mean-in-the-bible.html>.)

TWENTY-EIGHT SONS AND DAUGHTERS

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

—Romans 8:15

EVERYONE STARTS out life on earth as a spiritual orphan. But through Jesus, we have the incredible privilege of being sons and daughters of God. As our Father, God is the source, provider, and foundation of our authority. He loves each and every one of us. Just think, we are now all children of God. You and I are family, brothers and sisters, one in the body of Christ.

“For in Him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are His offspring.”

—Acts 17:28

As believers, we have free access to the Father and can confidently approach the throne of grace, just as any child can with a good and loving dad. Imagine, the Creator of the universe’s greatest desire is that

we enter into a relationship with Him as our Father! And when we do, we no longer live as orphans. Instead, God chose to adopt us into His own family by drawing us near to Him. The Bible tells us He was not obligated in any way to do this. It wasn't just by chance or mistake; He wanted to do it... *and it gave Him great pleasure*. That is ultimately who God is: He is our Father, and as Psalm 100:3 explains, "we are His people, the sheep of His pasture."

In the years I lived apart from God (for all the various reasons), I lived as an orphan. I did not find my identity in my Father in heaven. I found it in the things of this world. Knowing God helps us understand who we are. When I could have claimed sonship, I claimed money, success, my titles, abilities, and what others thought of me as my identity. All those things will ultimately fade away and are EXHAUSTING to maintain, but kingdom treasure lasts forever.

The thing about this world is that it is fleeting. None of the things I put my hope in ever truly satisfied, not the way being embraced by the Father does. Even better? God doesn't change. Where the world is wavering and built on shifting sand, a life built on God is solid. He is our rock, our firm foundation. I now live my life as a son, and increasingly, what I do in life flows from the truth of my identity as a son first, living from God's unconditional love, approval, and acceptance through Christ. However, it has been quite a journey. Learning to live as a son is a growing process as we renew our minds. No matter where we are on the journey, we get to come to the Father as His children, safe and secure, resting and at peace in His goodness.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- Are you living as a son or daughter of God?
- Are there ways you are still living independently from God?
- Who do you say you are? Who does God say you are? Take time to ask Him and write down what He says.

For Further Reading: Hebrews 4:16 and Ephesians 1:5

TWENTY-NINE

LEARN FROM THE BEST

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

—James 1:22-25

THE BIBLE IS full of life wisdom and leadership lessons. In fact, John Maxwell, #1 New York Times bestselling author and world-renowned leadership expert, builds his entire leadership, mentoring, and coaching business based on biblical truths. When he and his team go into large companies, executives and staff will sometimes probe him where he got his cutting-edge material. He tells them they don't want to know. But if they press him, John reveals this "cutting edge material" is actually from the ancient teachings of the Bible.

In Scripture, the men and women, kings, queens, judges, military leaders, governors, prophets, teachers, and preachers all serve as examples of

what to do and what not to do as leaders. Some began with promise and ended in disgrace. Others began with less than nothing and rose to great prominence, eventually leading their people to freedom and prosperity.

There is something to be learnt from each leader in the Bible. I personally have always been drawn to King David. A shepherd and musician who became a great warrior, and later, a beloved king, David was a man who experienced both great success and failure while managing to keep his heart after God. The Bible also reveals that David had immense struggles with lust, even resorting to murder to cover up his sin to get what he wanted. Eventually, he fully repented and turned his heart back to the Father. In fact, the Bible calls David a man after God's own heart... he had a New Covenant understanding of the gospel one thousand years before Christ.

Transformation flows, first from our hearts, then to our families, and then externally to things like our communities, businesses, etc. I believe that the life of a company runs parallel to the life of its leader. God can transform and sanctify a business, just like any man or woman. My heart's desire is to run a kingdom business with *a heart after God*. For me, that means I apply the biblical principles of excellence, creativity, and co-creating with God into the daily rhythms and functions of my company. Doing so removes the pressure to perform, compete, or behave in ways that are anti-God or based on human effort alone. With God at the helm, His peace prevails, and all glory belongs to Him.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- How is God a part of your daily life and decision-making?
- What part of your life (work, family, serving, relationships, etc.) can you invite God into in a new way?

For Further Reading: 1 Samuel 13:14

THIRTY

CHOSEN LEADERS

So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

—Ephesians 4:11-12

THE CULTURE in my company has visibly changed since we started to apply biblical wisdom and standards to our behaviour. We are safer and kinder while being more honest, transparent, vulnerable, and direct. We have healthy boundaries and discipline over our time, habits, and communication. We've grown as a team and a family in trust and generosity towards one another. The fruit of these changes shows up in our interactions with each other, our customers, and our suppliers.

God is in the process of building His house, a kingdom company reflecting His nature that glorifies Him. It is a kingdom community where believers and non believers can thrive and enjoy the kingdom. It is a house of prayer, a church, and a business all in one. In short, we are creating a place where God is honored and glorified.

How has this transformation taken place?

We have invited God into every aspect of His company. I say *His company* as I am only a steward of what God has given to me. Many know that our company belongs to God, and we have created space for people to meet with Him anytime, both physically and spiritually. Our work is an act of worship as it is unto the Lord. We have a prayer room available at all times, and we are learning to seek God's wisdom and understanding in every decision, at every level. Our senior leadership team prays together each morning and takes communion together on occasion. God takes precedence in all things. We also have prophetic intercessors who pray for the employees and the business as a whole. The primary fruit and success? Transformed hearts! Transformed people transform their families, workplace, friendships, and beyond.

Biblical wisdom asks believers to run their businesses as their ministry because God sees and values all our work, whether "full-time ministry" or "business," the same. To Him, it's all ministry and what matters most is our love for Him and others. Whether your position is at a church, in a classroom, at the dinner table with your family or at the CEO desk on the top floor of a high-rise, God sees each of us as ministers of His gospel. We are all walking side by side as equal partners in the greater church leadership. God works through whomever He chooses to be a leader, and the way to be a godly leader begins with relationship and is developed through a love and understanding of His Word.

Invitation to Journey Deeper:

- How does the Bible and its wisdom play a part in your life?
- In what areas of your life are you a leader? Is God calling you to lead in a new way?
- If your life is a business and you are its leader, are you running a kingdom business?

For Further Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31

Copyright © 2022 by Bryan Elliott

All rights reserved.

Parts of *30 Days to Glorious Freedom* are excerpted from *More than Gold* by Bryan Elliott, Copyright © 2022 by Bryan Elliott with permission from the author.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This work depicts actual events in the life of the author as truthfully as recollection permits and/or can be verified by research. Occasionally, dialogue consistent with the character or nature of the person speaking has been supplemented. All persons within are actual individuals; there are no composite characters. The names of some individuals have been changed to respect their privacy.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.

The Passion Translation®. Copyright © 2017 by Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. thePassionTranslation.com

*All emphasis in Scripture added by the author.

Cover by Allison Morris

Edited by Jessica Glasner and Allison Morris

Printed in the USA

First Edition

www.m46ministries.com

@M46Ministries

YOU'RE INVITED

ON THE JOURNEY

More Than Gold is a relationally based, personal study and discipleship tool inviting new and seasoned believers to a life of continuous maturing with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, God's Word, and a life connected to a community of believers.

[CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR COPY](#)



Bryan Elliott is an engineer, author, speaker, founder and CEO of Flo Energy Solutions, and Chairman of Bee Me Kidz. Together with his daughter, Bryn, Bryan founded M46 Ministries, dedicated to restoring families through the transformative power of Jesus.

M46MINISTRIES.COM



A BETTER WAY