

Know Him, Love Him

by debi

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Beginning Bible Study

- B basic
- I instructions
- B before (I don't know who wrote that, but it is perfect)
- L leaving
- E earth

The Bible is a book of books. We share certain passages by naming the book then the chapter, then verse using this form: John 11:35. That is; the book of John, Chapter Eleven and verse Thirty-Five. It reads, "Jesus wept."

The Bible is divided into two sections: The Old Testament and the New Testament. (The word testament means the truth told or to tell the truth about something you have seen). The Old Testament tells what happened before Jesus was born and tells us that He will be born. The New Testament is all about Jesus.

The Old Testament begins with the book of Genesis (means beginning). The first three words of Genesis are: "In the beginning..." Who wrote that? Moses was a friend to God and spoke with Him often. God told Moses what to write.

Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament. Together, the first five books are what the Jews call the Torah or Pentateuch (pen-tah-tuke).

These first five books are followed by 12 historical books in (almost) the order of events. Then we have the 'poetry' section of five books, followed by the major prophets and then minor prophets, not minor in importance but in length.

The New Testament begins with Jesus, so does the Old Testament still have meaning for us? Yes, it is relevant! There is so much inspiration inside the old books, you will feel God's Spirit! There are lessons, prophesy and instruction; some clear, some not so clear you have to think about it but the wisdom of God is in there.

Jesus is Jewish

Jesus studied the same Old Testament we do. His "Bible" was written onto scrolls and was presented with a different order to the books, but they are the same content, identical word for word to the book we use today.

The difference between Jew and Gentile (means heathen) is that the Jews possessed the word of God and it was not shared with the Gentiles (non-Jews). The Jews copied by hand the Word to the letter, but they couldn't obey it. As thousands of years passed, the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai (pronounced: Sign-eye) were expanded by the Jewish religious leaders, to over 700 laws!

All this changed when Jesus was born. He came to show the Love of God and the purpose God intended when He created us: for fellowship, relationship, praise and glory and...just wait till you grab hold of this!!!

The Jews of His day were not pleased with this man, Jesus, who tried to change the way people thought about *their* God, who they had come to see as demanding and exact. They considered Jesus to be evil for claiming to forgive sin and to be the Son of God. They thought of themselves as being closer to knowing God than this heretic, (a person who holds different religious beliefs), even if he did make the blind see, the lame walk and bring Lazarus back from being dead four days. They witnessed these miracles for themselves, but did not believe Jesus was sent from God. They thought Satan helped Jesus with the miracles. The 12 disciples (students) of Jesus Christ knew the truth.

The New Testament

The first four books are called “The Four Gospels” because they each tell about His birth, life events, His teachings, death and the resurrection of Jesus from four viewpoints. They are not identical. Such is life.

If four people walk down the same road together and you ask each of them at the end, “How was the journey?” You will get four different answers. One will say it was a lovely walk and will tell you the flowers in bloom they noticed. They will surely tell you about the rabbit that skipped across the road in front of the group and may mention the conversation of the group. Another one may say she was hot, it was miserable and nothing good happened except some good chatting. The third may mention the possum that crossed the road and how the clouds looked like rain. Surely, the fourth will tie some of that together.

The Four Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

Matthew:

Matthew was a tax collector before following Jesus. He looks at the factual side of things and begins his book with the lineage of Jesus, beginning with Abraham. Every Jew of that day knew the lineage from Abraham back to Adam, the first man God formed from the ground, so Matthew starts with Abraham and ends with Joseph as the father of Jesus. But Joseph is the step-father of Jesus, making a strong point, I think, about the importance of fatherhood whether you are married in, adopted or the biological parent.

God is the true father of the baby Jesus, by His Holy Spirit. Those details are given in the 1st chapters of Matthew, Luke and elsewhere in the New Testament.

Mary, Jesus’ mother, was also of the lineage of Abraham through King David. This is important because of prophecy, the predictions of the coming Messiah (anointed one). All had to be fulfilled to the jot and tittle. I’ve heard scholars claim over 300 prophecies but 43 to 48 very specific prophecies mentioned in the Old Testament that are considered an astronomical test as to the authenticity

of Jesus, as the Messiah, Savior and Redeemer. He passed them all! Matthew gives details of seven of these tests in his first two chapters.

Matthew goes on to tell us of miracles and so many teachings of Jesus, the book of Matthew is considered the disciple's manual.

Mark:

Mark was not one of the 12 original disciples but walked with them later. Peter helped Mark write this gospel that focuses on the miracles of Jesus describing 19 of them. He also retells four parables of Jesus. Parables are stories with a moral Jesus used to teach us a lesson, like mine about four people walking along a road, except my story doesn't hold eternal significance as does the meaning behind the parables of Jesus.

Luke:

Luke was a Gentile doctor who was not a disciple of Jesus, but Luke knew His disciples and His mother, Mary. Luke was a knowledgeable man and a believer that Jesus was the Son of God. He tells us of the heart of Jesus.

The book of Acts follows the four gospels and was also written by Luke. He describes what the followers of Jesus did after watching Jesus ascend (float up) into the clouds, on to heaven and the coming down of the Holy Spirit a few days later. That is when the Gospel began to be preached by His disciples.

John:

This is a unique look at the life of Jesus because John, a disciple of Jesus all three years, is writing to the Greeks; foreigners, a people who knew nothing of the Jewish religion and had not ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth. John begins like the book of Genesis, "In the beginning..."

John uses the word, "Word" to describe Jesus. Verse 5 tells us the people of the area did not understand who He was. Then he goes on to describe John the Baptist, who is a different person than the author. (Luke tells us all about John the Baptist in his first chapter beginning in verse 5.)

To recap, we have the four gospels presented first in the New Testament; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, then the book of the Acts of the Apostles (an Apostle is a believer, teacher and preacher dedicating their life to going many places to spread the good news of the gospel).

Paul was Saul

It is in the book of Acts we meet Saul, as a young man, holding the garments of the people who were in the act of stoning Stephen to death in Acts 7:58. He was a strictly Jewish, educated man, called a Pharisee. He went about persecuting those followers of that heretic, Jesus of Nazareth by beating them, dragging them in the street behind the chariots and gathering some to take to Rome, to be fed to the lions – a royal pastime treat.

Everywhere the gospel was preached, Saul was soon to follow and test men

of their faith. If you believed in Jesus, you suffered sometimes to death. On the road to Damascus, to persecute new believers, Saul begins a new chapter in his life. He is blinded by a light coming from heaven at noon but soon begins to “see the light.” (Acts 9: 3-22)

As a firm believer that Jesus is the Christ, Paul, as he is now called, writes letters to the believers in Rome to encourage their continued faith in Jesus, the Son of the Living God. Those letters become the next book in the New Testament, Romans.

The next two letters are to the believers in the city of Corinth so; we get the next two books of the New Testament, First and Second Corinthians and from his letters to Galatia is Galatians, and so on. Some of Paul’s letters were to people he taught the faith, Timothy and Titus. No one knows for sure who wrote the letter to the Hebrews but it points to Paul. Hebrews is often quoted for strong faith verses.

James and Jude are (half)-brothers of Jesus. It must have been the family secret because they didn’t know He was the Son of God while Jesus walked in His ministry those three years, but when Jesus was resurrected (raised from the dead) and they saw Him, they believed! They became apostles and each wrote their piece for our New Testament.

Giving us two books in the New Testament, Peter was an outstanding disciple of Christ. His is a fantastic story! His love and his dedication to Jesus is heart warming and heart-wrenching at the same time. He was crucified for his faith but felt unworthy to die like His Lord, so they crucified him upside down.

First, Second and Third John is by the same John who wrote one of the first four gospels, the gospel to the Greeks. He continues to clarify the gospel for them (and us) with these letters.

John was taken as the lone prisoner to the island of Patmos and gives himself to continuous devotion there. He was “in the spirit” when he was given the experience he reports in Revelation. Revelation is about Jesus Christ and what He urges us to know to become more like Him, faithful and true, with the words of advice to the seven churches. Revelation also describes the events of the end times, sure to come and all indications are soon and very soon.

Now

Your study will illuminate the truth. Please feel free to talk (pray) to God, or to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. They have the same mind and heart, the same will and desire. It is all about love and don’t let the darkness tell you any differently.

“Jesus, let me feel Your Spirit around me. Please help me be the person you made me to be, living with Your mercy, grace and forgiveness. Thank You, Dear Lord.”

Amen

The Question

Has anyone ever asked you the question, “If you died tonight in your sleep, do you know for a certainty you would go to heaven?” That person wanted to tell you more about Jesus. Do you have more questions than answers about this Jesus? Is He the Son of God or the Son of Man? (Both). Is He the Lion or the Lamb? (Yes, both). Is Christ His last name? How many names does He have? And finally, Why did he have to die anyway and why such a gruesome, bloody death? Didn’t God love his son? (That was my first question as a beginning Bible student.)

Maybe you have heard of John 3:16,

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever (that covers every one of us) believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John sums the whole Gospel in that one sentence, and Max Lucado wrote an entire book about that verse, 3:16 Numbers of Hope.

It might help here to know God, the Father, is a spirit (John 4:24). He does not have a body but His spirit is in every one of us (Eccl. 12:7) as He gave us life. (Having His Holy Spirit in us is different. It’s a gift, I will explain soon.) Jesus was in the beginning with God. (John 1:2) He had no doubts about who God was. Jesus was in complete agreement, totally faithful and obedient. The premiere facet of God, filled to the brim with God, so much so as to say, He IS God! He even said,

“I and my Father are one.” John 10:30

That means they have the same mind, goals, heart, and motive - to love and be loved. Just like a married couple is meant to be ‘one flesh’ (Matt 19: 5-6), (Mark 10:8), (Eph 5:31).

Jesus goes by many names and has earned every one of them! John, the beloved disciple, calls Him,

“...the Word” (John 1:1).

“The Word became flesh” (John 1:14).

He took on the form of a man, coming to us as a baby. He lived a sinless life. Wolves would like to trash that idea for you, saying nobody can do that, because we can’t, but we aren’t God. Jesus knew as a boy of 12 he must be about ‘His Father’s business’ (Luke 2:49). He humbled Himself to this earthly existence.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Luke 2:52

We don't hear about Jesus again until he was 30, the age a Jewish man can become a priest, when he walked up to John the Baptist at the river Jordan to be baptized (John 1:33-34) beginning His mission to save the world from the mess it was in, fulfilling the plan formed from the beginning by God.

Jesus even said,

“...My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” (John 7:16).

The word doctrine means a teaching or something taught. Jesus came to tell us of the great love God has for us. That was the doctrine, that God loves us. We call it the Gospel (good news) or the Gospel's Truth. God loves us. He desires a relationship with us, His creation. Isn't that completely understandable? It is simple and sweet.

Jewish religious leaders had taken that simple desire of the Almighty and over a couple thousand years added to it, laws and rituals, over 700 of them, overly complicating matters. In the days Jesus walked the earth those leaders; the Scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees, were prideful. Pride is an abomination (that is the worst insult possible) to God. Pride says you know what is better for you, when what you want is different than God's Word. In Proverbs we read about the 7 things God hates. Pride is at the top of the list.

“These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” (Prov 6:16-19)

Ever hear that God is love? He is pure and holy, too. Arthur Burt writes in *Prove Me Now*, “God is not more wise than He is loving. God is not more merciful than He is wise. The severity of God is as perfect as the goodness of God.” (pg 13). Ever wonder why Jesus went around healing people and showing compassion everywhere he went? He said,

“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19).

Also in John chapter 8 beginning in verse 26 to 29 but, I will paraphrase, “...He (God the Father) that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. When ye have lifted up (on the cross) the Son of man, (Jesus) then shall ye know that I am he (the Christ-Messiah-Savior), and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.”

To answer an earlier question, Christ is a job description and a title, like Captain, Coach or Mr. President. Lord is also a title, used in that day to show

respect to someone, as we use Sir. The Old Testament also uses the title, Lord, to denote God. Messiah means the anointed one in Hebrew. Christ means the anointed one in Greek.

The common Jews of Jesus' time were looking for a Redeemer to save them from Roman oppression and become their king. He did not come to save us from tyranny but from slavery, the bondage of sin. (Who do you listen to?) Learned Jews expected a Savior by the Old Testament's prophecies to redeem mankind from his fallen state of sin, but they did not know when He would come or how He would behave. They knew Jesus came from Nazareth but did not know He was born in Bethlehem, one of the prophecies.

When Jesus was asked one Sabbath, in the synagogue, to read from the Torah, he chose Isaiah 61:1 This was his job description:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord (God) hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;”

When Jesus finished reading that passage in the synagogue, he said,

“This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Luke 4:21

That struck discord among those in the Synagogue. We know He is the Son of God but the religious leaders of that day did not. He said a few other things, too, and by verse 28 they were...

“filled with wrath and rose up, and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.”

Yes, Jesus was misunderstood but that, too, was prophesied in the Old Testament.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; and he was despised, and we esteemed him not”. Isaiah 53: 3

Why? He wanted to cancel all those manmade rules! He said loving God was all that was important. He talked with common people, those declared sinners and the unclean lepers...and finally, because He claimed to be the Son of God!

The previous verse Isa 53:2, describes his features, his looks:

“he hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.”

So, Jesus looked common or even less attractive? I saw a video animated with computer images from the Shroud of Turin. The form of Jesus stood. Awe! He has that Jewish nose.

What we see most prominently from scripture is that He has His Father's heart - immense love!

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

So Jesus began His priesthood at 30, and is still considered our High Priest. Also, at age 33 and this is important, He became the final sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

...”the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”.
John 1:29

When the first Passover happened (See Exodus 12:1-14 for starters) it was to spare the Hebrews from the death angel, a curse meant for the firstborn of the Egyptians so the Egyptians would free their Hebrew slaves.

Preparation for Passover begins when the family picks out a healthy lamb that is spotless and brings it into their home. Can you imagine how attached each family got to the lamb they hand fed for 4 days?

The night of Passover, the lamb is slain. The lamb's blood is to be smeared on the outside of each door post and over the top of the doorway so the death angel that night would pass over the Jewish family inside, sparing them physical death. The entire lamb is to be roasted and eaten with bitter herbs by the family but could be shared with a neighbor, if their household wasn't large enough to have one of their own. What is left will be burned up with the innards.

The firstborn of every Egyptian family and even of their livestock died that night, the last of the nine plagues. Pharaoh let the Hebrew slaves go and even sent them away with riches the next day. God asked His people to remember and celebrate the Passover every year to teach the children of His miracle salvation from death.

This is also a picture of the future of what Jesus came to accomplish for those of us who love Him. We are like the faithful Hebrews who take in a neighbor but the Egyptians represent worldly people. God does love His Son and it was not easy (bitter) to let Him die a horrible death nor was it easy to be the one responsible for the arrangement of it. The design of the lamb's blood on the doorposts and over the door resembles the look of Christ's blood from His hands and head on the cross. With the blood of the perfect lamb spent, Christ, as our sacrifice, died for our sins. We take Communion in remembrance of His life and death. With Christ's blood as our covering, we will eventually die physically, but never spiritually. We will live all eternity in His loving presence. Only the end result, for us to escape eternal death, makes His sacrifice worthwhile.

Another picture our Bible uses to foretell of His sacrifice was the story of Abraham with his son, Isaac. God told Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Mariah and sacrifice him. That same spot is later where Jesus was crucified. God spared Isaac, but as we read the story, (Gen 22: 1-18) we can understand how God must have felt knowing since the beginning of time what was to come. It was a three day journey for Abraham, thinking all the way he would lose his beloved son.

God knows all things, what was and what is to come. Jesus also knows all things except the hour of His second coming (Matt 24:36). From the beginning of time They knew Adam would fall to disobedience and would need a Savior. Sin has a consequence like every other thing in life has an effect. Adam was told if he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil he would die (Gen 2:17). Eve had never heard a lie before the serpent told her she would not die (Gen 3:4). She liked the look of the fruit and took unwise counsel, relying on her own senses and the temptation of the serpent, Lucifer. Thinking she knew better than God was pride. She and Adam did begin to die physically that day, and they lost the glow of God's glory and soon discovered they were uncovered, as they began to die spiritually. Ashamed for their nakedness (Gen 3: 10), God made them a covering of skins (3:21) but for this, an animal had to be sacrificed.

“For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom 6:23.

Eternal life is given to those who believe and trust in Jesus.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

God is very pleased with His Son and says so at His baptism:

“And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him: and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” Luke 3:22

Also, atop (probably) Mt. Hermon while Jesus was chatting with Elijah and Moses, while Peter, with James and John (two sons of Zebedee) looked on, surely in amazement...

“While he (Peter) yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Matt 17: 5

Those are the words of God: ‘hear ye him’ but Jesus gives all the glory back to our Father,

“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do, for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” John 5: 19, 30.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

When the adulterous woman was brought to Jesus (John 8:3-11) the Scribes and Pharisees reminded Jesus of the law of Moses, that she should be stoned to death, but asked His opinion first, trying to trick Him into blasphemy (speaking words against God).

“But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” John 8: 6

I heard a preacher say this writing in the sand was prayer time and the answer was coming. The wisdom given to Jesus by His Holy Spirit did not thwart the law of Moses but still, taught the mercy and compassion of God in a non-judgmental way. Listen to his answer,

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”
verse 7

When her accusers dropped their stones one by one and left, Jesus released her to, “go, and sin no more.” Do you think she was grateful? He forgave her sin and freed her to live! Now she has choices to make every day, to continue with a grateful heart and sin no more, or succumb to the temptations life offers.

Common things like doubt, anger, gossip, swearing a little...aren't really little. They are deliberate steps away from love, ways we were accustomed to in our old way of life that kept us in darkness.

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Isaiah 9:2

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” John 1:4

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
The words of David in Psalms 119: 105

“For thou art my lamp. O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness.”
The words of David in II Samuel 22:29 (Read entire chapter 22).

Yes, God loves us so much! He doesn't want us to stay in darkness forever. To be reunited with our Holy, Pure God, we must be holy. Sin can not be in His Presence. (And that is why Jesus couldn't feel His Father's Presence when Jesus became sin for us, on the cross.)

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we do all fade as a leaf; and all our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Isaiah 64:6

How *can* we be holy? Try thinking only pure thoughts! Enter Jesus. He humbled himself to live obedient to His purpose to leave His Glory in heaven to come to earth in a body, to preach His good news all the way to death on the cross, not for Himself but for us, to give us His Goodness in the eyes of our Father God.

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock (another name for Jesus) *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.” Isa 51:1

I love the King James Version for words like ‘whence’ (from when in that time past) used first here to remind us, we were made by God, for God. And secondly, like the adulterous woman, to remember looking at the stones being waved at her in clenched fists by revengeful men and to remember the mercy of her Redeemer, our Redeemer. We have to remember (recall, don't dwell there) from whence we came, to appreciate the freedom of where we are and how we got here, by Christ's choice. He substituted His pure life for our ragged one, willingly. Sure, His Father, God, wanted Him to do it, but like us, He had a choice. If He had not done it, we would have no hope of eternal life in heaven. Jesus couldn't bear the thought of letting us all die in darkness with no power to rise above the grasp of temptation. Instead, He took all the punishment we deserve and substituted His pure life, for ours. So God can view our lives as if we are His Beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased. He paid our fine and set us free. We are free to choose to return to our previous ways or take on His Holy Spirit, filled with His love, to live higher, happier, in contentment with the peace that only comes from knowing God is our only judge and He loves us no matter what. No matter where we have been, who we are, what stuff we are into and what we are going to do next, be it a right choice or not, He still loves us.

Hallelujah! (means, ‘praise the Lord’ in every language). Jesus came to tell us God hears our prayers, He loves us! There is freedom in knowing God, our Father, is with us. He wants us with Him for eternity! When Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sin, then rose from the grave to conquer death, He also broke the chains and set us free of every evil that besets us. If we ask Him for help,

He will immediately!

Sin does separate us from the presence of God, but that can be forgiven for the asking. Pride causes sin, thinking we can do it our way. He doesn't forgive us from pride, but gives us the opportunity for us to overcome it, (ask Jesus to help), to remember from whence we came and humble ourselves in the sight of the Almighty, to give our life to service for God's Glory to shine all over our part of the earth; to be like Christ. He made us for that purpose.

“Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” I Peter 5:5b-7

Thank you, God!

Finding a Bible-based church home is crucial to your revival. Listen to the elders teach the Bible. I would like to explain here, all of us, younger and older, need to listen to someone strong in faith, if they speak to us in love, for direction, urging us to correct a behavior.

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Proverbs 27:17

We don't always see for ourselves when we are heading down the wrong road. So, listen to a word of Godly counsel even if from an unlikely source, like a donkey (Num 22: 5-34). Take a few minutes to consider it and be grateful for your church family's instruction. Pray for guidance or confirmation, if you need to. The next few verses in that first book of Peter explain why.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (The devil is) whom (to) resist (by being) stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” I Peter 5:8-9

In other words, and these are my thoughts, be on the lookout for evil and resist it using your faith in the power of Jesus. Your church family friend has; has been there and done that victoriously and wants the same for you.

Also note, this 'roaring lion' is not the Lion of Judah (King of Praise). This roaring lion beast, I am taught, wants to scare you away from His protection, so that he (the devil) may devour you more easily. If a lion can roar and scatter a herd of sheep, he has a better chance of singling out a weak one to devour. Evil wants to destroy you. If you live according to the Word, you will live. If you are lured away...you are easy prey.

Peter (above) is using the example of sheep and didn't need to explain it, as

it was common knowledge for the people of that time. Jesus often compares himself to the shepherd of a flock. Still, in many countries, the shepherd will walk before the sheep and they follow, knowing and trusting his voice. The story of ‘the lost sheep’ (Matt18:10-14 & Luke 15:3-7) is something they could all understand as each lamb is valuable, so Jesus taught them (and us) how each one of us is precious in His sight.

All that came to Him were healed. Many, but not all people revered Him, then as now. When Jesus prayed for God to bring Lazarus back to life (John chapter 11) from four days dead and buried, Jesus soared to the height of popularity with the people and became a sure target for the Pharisees and Sadducees. They had to get rid of this guy who was threatening their hierarchy. The crowd, waving palm branches (Sukkah building material) hailed Jesus as “Hosanna” (the God who saves us) five days before Passover, riding into Jerusalem on a virgin colt of a donkey. (There are several sermons in there). This same crowd would shout, ‘Crucify Him’ a few days later.

The words spoken to His disciples in His last few days are so tender and meaningful, educating them as best He could of what was to come and why. Three years they walked with Him, watching miracles, hearing Him teach the masses but now His words to them came fervently. He urged them to love and trust God and to love and serve each other. He prayed to God to keep them safe from evil. Although most of His disciples suffered unto death, they kept their sights on Jesus, never lost their faith and are with Him in Glory.

I urge you to read for yourselves the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (in their entirety, but especially) as they record His final days, each in their own way, leading to the final moments of that last meal with His disciples, to their walk to the Garden of Gethsemane (Geth-sem’-an-e) and beyond. He taught them so much that last evening!

In the Garden (Matt 26:36, Mark 14:32, Luke 22:39, John 18:1) Jesus prayed, “not my will, but thine, be done” He prayed with His desire to submit to the plan of God the Holy Father. I often wonder what piece of heaven Jesus was shown that night to give Him the fortitude to walk out His destiny.

Finding His disciples asleep was a grievance to Him but, I think, also a good example of the weakness of even the most devoted humans. We need His strength to carry out any desires of His will. It is another reason why He went to the cross.

His prayer in the garden is my personal favorite story of the Bible as we see His human side was suffering but after prayer was able to earnestly walk out His task ahead; from being taken into custody, through the many hours of torment and crucifixion. So much teaching, I cannot do justice here. Seek wise counsel.

‘It is finished.’ First to take our sins to death, then to arise victoriously conquering death, disease, shame - all evil and then ascend into heaven so the Holy Spirit could come with His power!

I will say, the exchange of His life for ours was the greatest feat of all time. As His soul left His body at the cross, many things happened including, His Spirit ripping the veil of the temple in Jerusalem, a heavy curtain 60 feet wide to signify nothing separates us from God now. In the Old Testament, only the High Priest could go behind the curtain once a year. Jesus is our High Priest. We can talk to God anytime and know Him through His Son.

I'm also happy to report, "He is Risen!" He walked and talked with many before He ascended (went to heaven), to sit at the right hand of The Father making intercessory prayer for us. (Rom 8:34) and as my friend, Rabbi Jim says, "He is coming back!"

As in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying for guidance is always a good idea, especially if you think you already know. (There is that humble thing again). Arthur Burt points out in "Surrender - Your Key To Spiritual Success" Jesus humbled himself before His Father, always seeking His Father's Will. If He did that on a consistent basis, shouldn't we? He is our best friend and advisor. By all means, we will benefit from humbling ourselves to seek His advice.

My birthday wish every year is His Will in my life. I am not superstitious, (what Christian can be?) so I am not afraid to tell you my wish. I want what The Father wants for me. I know it is going to be good! He promises to be with me and help me all the days of my life. I know this is true. I'm so grateful. It is the Holy Spirit's job, to teach us and guide us. Feel free to pray (talk) to Him, also.

I recall a teaching from Pastor Grant Thigpen about the lame man who laid outside the Gate Beautiful. Peter healed him after Jesus was ascended. Jesus must have passed that way and passed the man many times on his way into Jerusalem. Sure, there were other ways inside, but the Beautiful Gate was the most popular so, Jesus *had* to pass by. Remember when Peter and John went that way in Acts chapter 3, the man asked for alms. I wonder if that is all he ever asked of Jesus. Pastor Grant says Jesus was saving him for Peter. It was a boost to Peter's faith, using the power of Jesus' name to heal this man and a testimony for all those in Jerusalem to see for themselves (and us to read about) the man they all knew, lame since birth, leap for joy.

Another lesson from the lame man, I think, is, to ask for our needs to be fulfilled. Sure, Jesus already knows everything we need, but His Word says...

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh
receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it
shall be opened;"

Matthew 7:7-8

ASK, I was taught, can be an acronym for Ask, Seek, Knock. It is the best choice you can make! It is the one He is waiting on so that he may respond,

graciously into your life. If you believe in Him, you will receive of Him.

The next thing *you* may want to ask, is for Jesus and the power of His Holy Spirit to come into your life and lead you away from darkness and into the land of the spirit-filled, eternally living. The Holy Spirit will be your guide if you are willing to let Him guide you. He will tell you to turn right when there is a promise waiting to be fulfilled for you. Trust Him even when you see no logical reason to turn that way. The Holy Spirit is always right!

He is a great teacher, too! The Holy Spirit will point out virtues for you to work on, usually one at a time, and give you the opportunity to enhance those virtues. Life is not easy but it can be joyful. Life has plenty of trials and temptations from which to learn. His promise is to always be with us. Ask, and the going won't be so bad. I want to hitch up with the Almighty who has the power of the universe at His command.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matt 11: 28-30

You know those spirit-filled joyful people? Yes, you too, can praise Him with unashamed, utter abandonment and sheer delight, as whatever burdens you carried in the past will be relieved from your shoulders and given to your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You feel clean, light and happy, even when you are at work or going through one of life's trials. With all you can learn, nothing is more important than knowing these words spoken by Jesus:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

It is easy for children to believe what they hear. Jesus asked us all to have that kind of faith.

“Verily (truthfully) I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”

Luke 18:17

A child's faith is trusting in what they don't understand. A father who knew of Jesus' miracle healings wanted Jesus to heal his son but first asked Him to help with his unbelief. (Mark 9: 23-24). Having faith is knowing the goodness of a God you can't see. Belief is seeing Him work and taking it in as truth. When you have both, you know who He IS and you know you must follow Him. It is a logical choice. Do you want the best the world (He made) has to offer?

“For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the

sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” Psalms 95: 7-8a

The world tempts us to harden our heart against the love of God. Talk to your heart about it. Ask for the truth. Have you heard of ‘doubting’ Thomas, the disciple that declared he would not believe Christ had risen from the grave unless he put his fingers in the holes made in His hands by the nails? Thomas got the opportunity to do that (John 20:26-29). Take your questions to the throne room of Grace and don’t be surprised when He answers.

All things happened just the way the Old Testament said they would. All those prophesies had to be fulfilled, as the stranger on the road to Galilee told the two men He began to walk and talk with along the way. They were saddened by the empty tomb!

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further, But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another. Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” Luke 24: 25-32

Jesus, Rabbi. He is always the teacher! Always revealing Himself to us in amazing ways if we but ask Him to enter in. This isn’t the first time he ‘vanished’ in the scriptures. Remember when he finished reading in the Synagogue and the crowd wanted to throw him off a cliff? Many times the Pharisees tried to grab Him and he slipped away out of their sight. Jesus created the laws of physics for our benefit, but He is not subject to them!

Love held Him to the cross. It wasn’t the nails. It was His free will of choice to be obedient to Our Father and He did it because He loves us, too.

He showed us His love by showing us mercy for our condition, the tendency to do things our way, by the thoughts of own mind motivated by hunger and other fleshy desires.

The idea of death as the price of sin began with Adam and Eve. By becoming the sacrifice for our sin debt, God blessed Him for that and raised Him from the depths of hell. (Psalms 16:10) If you believe that, you are saved from the tendency to sin. You are given a new heart! The Holy Spirit will fill you,

quicken you and lead your way.

“But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”
Romans 8:11

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”
Rev 3: 10-11

You will continue to have a choice. Weigh the thoughts of your head and body. The Holy Spirit will help you! You will be held accountable for your sins unless you acknowledge them in your mind, confess them with your mouth and make the choice to refrain from doing that again. The Spirit will help you! Repeat this process often before you die but then, only your physical body will die. Your Spirit will be united with the heavenly host, our family! That’s what the Bible says!

I like the way Tim Tebow endears the Gospel in his book, *Through My Eyes*: “If God is your Father and God is my Father, what does that make us?” pg 61. If that does not thrill some of you football fans, Brother, maybe you should read John 13: 34-35 again,

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Those are the words of your Savior. Read them for yourself, in the Bible, His inspired Word, cover to cover. In the book of Revelation Jesus says,

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Rev 3: 20-21

Something else will tell the world you are following Christ - your fruit, (Luke 6:44 & Gal 5:22-23) and your actions.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. II Cor 5:17

Those are the words of Paul who was called Saul before his transformation.

His story begins briefly in Acts 8: 1-3 but in Chapter 9, it becomes tremendously good news that our old faults will be overcome by handing them over to the Miraculous One. He gives us purpose and a promise to always be there with us. Like in the act of baptism, the old man dies under the water and the new man is raised from the dead as we come up out of the water, into new life. He gives us a new heart and a new purpose, to serve Him by serving each other. The old things that will pass away are worry, addictions, selfishness, depression, that spirit of vengeance and unforgiveness, just to name a few. Some disappear like magic, others take prayer and time but they need to go as we become more like Him. There is no fear in the presence of God. We know He has our back and our future. How great is that?

Speaking of the future, He IS coming back. The only question is, are you ready to run into His arms?

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my brother, Terry Landgrave and my mentors, Scott & Regina Zimmer, each as Bible scholars confirming the accuracy of this text with several others I mentioned next.

With many people to thank for what knowledge I am sharing with you, I have to start with my family, especially my dad from my early youth, who shared his faith and both grandmothers (my grandfathers passed before my birth). In later years, it was my mother's steadfast love for the Lord that inspired me to search the scriptures. What a gift!

With the guidance of spirit-filled teachers, I began to understand the depths of the Bible. Included here is a Beginning Bible Study I know will help you understand but, I urge you to seek more study.

I owe my joy to and would like to thank the most prominent pastors, evangelists and teachers I have sat under, beginning with the oldest and dearest, Arthur Burt from Wales; Grant Thigpen from New Hope Church in Naples, FL. A Charismatic, Andrew DeLong was my pastor for 9 years at the Tree Of Life Church. (I tried going to a church in my neighborhood but that pastor said I belonged in a Charismatic Church. He was right); Pastor Don Tomei and his loving wife, Toni are mature believers in the faith at Restoration Church in Naples. Preaching under them, I have been lifted higher by a young dedicated soul, Lennon "Judah" Cabrera. Also, Kevin Patton, Harry Thomas and Neal Beightol of Restoration Church are great teachers. Katie Frates untaught me evolution. Also on my list of favorites is Rabbi Jim Pickens of Ft. Myers, a Messianic Jew. What a devoted soul he is! I have volumes of notes from him. I cherish the preaching of Dan Betzner, New Life Assembly, in Ft. Myers. I thank God for his faithfulness.

Media by TV, video and books have broadened my knowledge with a variety of teachers and preachers, giving me the best of the best, such as: "In Touch" with

Charles Stanley; Joyce Meyer's teaching is essential. Her book, "Battlefield of the Mind" is a must read (yearly); Billy Graham (doesn't everyone who ever heard him speak owe him for imparting God?); T. L. Osborn brought miracles to life with his testimonies; Ray Comfort; John Bevere's "Bait of Satan" is fundamental; Georgian & Winnie Banov of Global Celebration, know how to praise the Glory of God! Doug Bachelor of Amazing Facts is a great teacher. I hope his perspective of hell is true; Bayless Conley; Dr. John Amstutz brought insight to the New Testament and I now share the passion Rev. Gornold Smith of the UK has for the Old Testament; Les Feldick is easy to understand as he teaches the whole Bible; Irvin Baxter has insight concerning "The End of the Age." Perry Stone is a fourth generation fire ball for God. He knows everything!

Trying to limit to just the highlights of the people who made remarkable contributions to my faith and to those I regularly listen to, all these mentioned above love God and stand firm on His Word. Many more worthy preachers exist. Our greatest guide is His Holy Spirit and IS always with us, so I urge you to pray for His direction and rely on Him with every turn, even when you think you are on the right path. I'm still growing in my faith as I seek His face more clearly.

Would you forgive me if I said, music is instrumental? A necessary element of praise and especially worship, Christian music is a part of my life, like breathing. Find a station or two on your dial and skip back and forth to eternity.

I did forewarn you in the text if I expressed an opinion for something I perceived, something not taught to me. All Biblical quotes are from the King James Version. Most of what is presented here, describing the role of Jesus Christ, our Savior, is what I have learned from the above and others, tried and true believers. What has made them so wise is the whispering of the Holy Spirit during the hours they put into the Bible. I heard of a pastor who read the Bible 90 times and said he got something more out of it each time. I certainly don't know it all yet, but enough maybe, to answer some of your questions, to demonstrate the love of Christ for you and let you understand His role in your life.

Enjoy!

To know Him is to love Him
and to know Him better is to love Him more.

The Root of the Righteous
A.W. Tozer

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