

Day One: Someone Worth Listening To

If you want to follow a healthy diet, odds are you won't consult a five-year-old for advice. "How about we eat Mac and cheese for breakfast lunch and dinner every night?"

If you need surgery, you probably wouldn't ask the deli clerk at your local grocery store to perform the operation.

If your marriage is in trouble, you probably would not seek the counsel of someone whose only credentials are based on scoring, "You'd make a great partner!" on an online marriage quiz.

If you needed help with something important, wouldn't you seek the aid of a person who is an authority on that subject? This should be especially true when the area needing attention has to do with the course of your life.

If you want to know the meaning and purpose of your life, the best person to ask and from Whom to get the answers is Jesus.

Why? He knows why everything exists, and the purpose for which they were brought into existence. He is the One through Whom all things were made.

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth.” – Colossians 1:16

Who would be better able to understand the meaning of life than the One Who gave all things life? He made every created thing and every single person that has ever existed, with meaning and purpose—including you.

Jesus Christ is God’s Son, and is Himself, as the Second Person of the Trinity, God. John called Him the Word, as in the very Word that spoke everything into being.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
– John 1:1

You might be thinking, “Well, I don’t know. Jesus was a good teacher. I know Jesus had some things to teach about life and loving people, and I think He was a good man, but God? I think that may be a bit much.”

You are not alone in thinking this, but does this opinion square with what Jesus said about Himself? After all, there is no better authority on Jesus than Jesus: Listen to what He said:

- “I and the Father (God) are one.” – John 10:30
- “The Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” – John 10:38
- “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes. to the Father, but through Me. – John 14:6

Jesus was not just a teacher, a philosopher, or a “good person.” Jesus Christ was (and is) God! Those who followed Him knew it, and related to Him like He was Who He said He was.

The Apostle Paul refers to Jesus as “... our great God and Savior.” – Titus 2:13

Thomas said to Jesus, when he saw Him resurrected from the dead, “My Lord and my God!” – John 20:28.

The Bible shows angels and believers bowing to Him in worship worthy of God alone. (See Revelation 5:8-14)

When Jesus received honor and worship as God, He never said, “Stop Brethren! Why would you worship Me? You have misunderstood Me and My teachings. Each one of us shares divinity; there is nothing different between us, we are all gods.”

Nor did He redirect those worshipping Him to seek salvation by contemplating nature’s wonders, or living in harmony with the earth, or meditating on light flickering in the eyes of babies. No, Jesus received and still receives all worship given to Him as God Himself.

Jesus boldly preached:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son (“Me, Jesus, I’m talking about Myself here”), that whoever believes in Him (“Again, Me”) should not perish but have eternal life.

– John 3:16 (with added commentary)

C.S. Lewis, who was a professor at Cambridge, and a one-time agnostic, put it this way:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.

[...] You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (Mere Christianity, pp. 40, 41)

There are many who claim that they can transform lives, filling them with meaning and purpose—from weight loss apps and healthy meal delivery services to info commercials which declare that “just doing this one thing will make you young again!” But when Jesus Christ promises to give someone a new life, He is not speaking in clever metaphors.

He can change lives.

He does change lives.

He is able to change your life today.

All we need to do is turn to Him and listen. He can do what He promises. He fulfills His word, because He is not just a teacher. He is God, the Son. Jesus Christ is the best One to go to as you seek the meaning and purpose of your life.

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Pray This Today

Jesus, help me to see that You can be trusted.

Help me to see that You are able to do what You promise. From this moment on, give me a deeper insight and conviction about both who You are and Your power and ability to transform lives.

Open my eyes, ears, and heart that I may receive the life that You came to give.

Amen.

Day Two: Fantasy or Reality: In Which will You Place Your Faith?

Some people think that to be a “true Christian” requires going to a brain surgeon and having the "thinking" portion of the brain removed. Others feel that it is pious to believe something that contradicts reality, as if the more foolish the belief, the greater the faith. There are even those who believe that to give oneself to Christ requires “a leap of faith;” like jumping into a black abyss hoping that there will be something "out there" to catch them. None of these thoughts, feelings, or beliefs have anything to do with Christian faith.

Without question, it does take faith to believe. But the faith that God asks of us is not the faith of one who hurls oneself under a truck in the belief that it will jump over them. Faith is not another word for "stupid."

God does not ask us to put faith in fantasies. To give your life to a lie or make-believe doesn't make you a saint. In some cases, it makes people have to check

in to certain secure facilities where they take your belt and shoes and you have to wear socks with little rubber spots for traction.

The truth is that many refuse to trust Christ, not because they are “grounded in reality,” but because they have come to prefer fantasy. Like watching a movie that never ends or being glued to their phone, they are caught up in the action, drama, and images all the while unaware that they are sitting mindlessly for countless hours while real life is happening without them.

Yes, there is a nice side to fantasy. It can be comforting. It can be entertaining. But it also can hypnotize one into believing that the illusion is the reality, when all it is, is a narrow projection of light beamed through a piece of plastic and glass with images on it.

Let's step out of the theater and into the daylight. Let's put the phone down. Let's take a hard look at what God has revealed about Himself, the One Who is the very essence of Reality.

When we think hard about who Jesus must be, we are led to either one of three conclusions:

1. He was a liar and a con; someone who presented himself as Divine when all the while he was much, much less.

2. He was a lunatic who believed that he was God, like someone who thinks they're Napoleon or related to Kanye West.
3. He was (and is) the Lord of the Universe made flesh, the Man He claimed to be.

1. A Liar and A Con:

If Jesus made the claims He did and He knew that He was not Who He said He was—He was a liar. There can be no other conclusion.

But not only a liar. If He perpetuated such a deliberate deception, then He was hypocrite as well. Like those in the Old West who sold shoe polish and claimed that it could cure tuberculosis, Jesus peddled Himself as Savior and God, when all the while He was the same as any other person.

If we follow this logic a step further: if He was only pretending to be God, He was not just a liar and hypocrite, but He furthered the purposes of evil by blaspheming God with His own mocking charade.

And here we are left with one last conclusion: If He was not Who He said He was, He was a fool. A man who dies for claiming to be something he himself does not believe can't be called anything else.

All of this, of course, is ridiculous. Don't you think that if someone were to nail spikes into an impostor's hands for being something he knew he was not, he would not take the nails in stride and continue the lie. He would scream, "STOP! STOP! It was all a hoax. I'm not God's Son!"

2. A Lunatic:

What about the idea that Jesus was sincere, but deluded? Certainly, if someone sincerely believed that he could forgive people of their sins, and bring them into a union with God; our initial reaction would be to call him either a liar or a lunatic. Can this be true regarding Jesus? To view Christ as a lunatic and yet praise His moral teaching certainly seems contradictory. Are there many people in long term psychiatric hospitals that you would like to visit for wisdom and moral direction?

He did not rave on about flying mice in pink dresses; He spoke of love, forgiveness, and a wisdom that even ardent atheists recognize as inspired. In addition, from the accounts in the Scriptures, there is nothing in Christ's disposition or personality that would lead one to question His calm level-headedness. Even in the most dangerous situations, Jesus showed peace and a sense of purpose. Neither was He given to false illusions about His abilities. He not only claimed to heal, but hundreds testified to actually experiencing His healing touch.

The noted church historian, Philip Schaff, draws a similar observation:

Is such an intellect...sharp and penetrating as a sword, thoroughly healthy and vigorous, always ready and always self-possessed—liable to a most serious delusion concerning His character and mission? Preposterous imagination!
(The Person of Christ, pp. 97-98)

3. The Lord:

This is the only reasonable conclusion. Jesus is the Son of God; the Man He said He was. Now, every person, that includes you, is confronted with a choice: to be reasonable and sane and trust Jesus as Savior, or to entertain fantasies and acknowledge Him through the lens of one's own illusions.

Jesus' claims of being God Himself are true, as are His claims to give us life. If one denies this, one must question one's own sanity and sincerity. Those who choose illusion over Jesus must admit they have chosen self-delusion. Those who choose falsehood over truth can no longer claim they are above hypocrisy.

Fantasy or reality. Everyone has faith. Where will you place your faith?

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Pray This Today

Father, help me to discern the difference between illusion and reality.

Give me the courage to face You for Who You are, and to trust You in a way that makes sense.

Let me live a life that is sane. Grant me the strength to walk in integrity.

Give me the wisdom to accept Your love as You gave it through Jesus.

Amen.

Day Three: Everything Stands or Falls on This

Paul the Apostle, a former opponent of Christ turned disciple, wrote the following:

“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins...We are of all men most to be pitied.” – 1 Corinthians 15: 17, 19

Paul knew if Jesus had not risen from the dead there would be no hope of life, either now or after the grave. Christ did rise, and Christ’s rising confirmed what He claimed about Himself:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” – John 14:6

All those who want life, do well to seek it from the One Whose own life could not be stopped by death.

Some might say, “The resurrection is a nice story, but it is obvious that the early Christians made it up to make their claims more credible.” This is hardly possible!

If Christ had not risen from the dead, to claim that He did, would be like an American claiming that President Kennedy rose from the dead. All one needs to do is visit Arlington Cemetery and see JFK’s grave to know he has not risen. Christ’s tomb, in contrast, is empty.

Similarly, the claim that President Kennedy rose could quickly be disputed by those who knew him, those who saw him die, and those who buried him. The New Testament account of Christ’s resurrection was recorded no more than thirty years after His death and resurrection. If the declaration of Christ’s rising were untrue, it could have been easily challenged by those who had known Him.

But one may object, “Sure the tomb was empty. The disciples stole the body!” This is ridiculous.

Every single one of the disciples were willing to die for their faith in the risen Christ. All of them did die for it (except John who miraculously survived after being boiled in a cauldron of oil). To die for something you believe in, is one thing. To die for something that you know is a lie, is quite another.

Who would want to die for something they knew to be a hoax? What benefit could one possibly get out of being crucified, stoned, beheaded, or executed by arrows, as the disciples were, for something they knew was “made up?”

“Well, the disciples were all under the power of hallucination! They wanted Christ to rise so much, they thought He actually did!” To think this requires abandonment of all reason.

In the first place, the disciples were not expecting the resurrection. They had given up all hope and were in hiding, afraid that they might be the next ones executed. Secondly, the New Testament records that more than 500 hundred people actually saw the risen Christ on at least one occasion (1 Corinthians 15:6). Sure, an unbalanced or drug-induced individual may have a hallucination now and then, but it is preposterous to believe all 500 had the exact same hallucination, at the exact same time, at the exact same place, and all for the exact same length of time.

Another might suggest, “The reason He was seen by so many is because He did not really die. Yes, I grant you He was severely hurt on the cross, but when He went into the tomb, the coolness of the tomb revived Him.” If this was the case, that tomb was more advanced than any ICU in existence.

Let's be clear about what happened at the Cross.

Both the Roman soldiers at His cross, and those who buried Him were quite clear that He had died. Such a conclusion was logical. Jesus was beaten, whipped, nailed to the cross, hung for hours in the blazing heat, a spear was pierced through His side, blood and water came from the wound (a sign of cardiac rupture) and in His burial He was mummified from head to foot with strips of cloth, hundreds of pounds of spices and placed on a cold slab in a cave for three days without food and water.

To believe that Christ survived all this, and then, on top of it all, rolled away the huge boulder that sealed His tomb with pierced hands and feet, and proclaim, in the view of all, that He was vibrant and alive, can only be believed by those who have more "faith" in their unbelief, than they do in reality.

The resurrection of Christ is rooted in historical fact. No honest person can escape it. Besides what has already been said, note, these evidences for the resurrection:

The transformation of the disciples.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, explain how else these cowering men, fearful for their own lives, were later willing to lose life, limb, and property for their preaching of the Gospel.

Changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday

For centuries the Jewish people observed Saturday as the day of the Lord, a day of rest where all were to come together for worship. The most sacred of days was changed by Jewish Christians in honor of Christ rising from the dead on a Sunday. If Christ had not risen, what could have justified the changing of this 2,000-year-old sacred tradition?

The birth of the Christian Church itself

If Christ did not rise from the dead, why would any sane person want to believe in a dead Rabbi who claimed that He would rise, but failed to do so? Why would these people want to tell others about Jesus? Why would they be willing to follow the example of the disciples and give up their lives for the Gospel? History tells us that their belief in the risen Christ was the only reason.

Failure to produce "a body"

If Christ had not risen, one would have thought that the enemies of the Christian people would have found the dead body of Christ and paraded Him in the streets. "Hah, here is your savior!" But they did not. They could not. There is no record of anyone producing Christ's corpse, nor any eyewitness report

that could contradict the truthfulness of the claim that Christ had indeed risen from the dead.

Christ's resurrection is more than fascinating history. The resurrection of God's Son makes it clear: God has come to us. His Son has died for us. His Son has risen for us. Why? So that we might come to know the love and forgiveness of His Father.

What is the significance of the resurrection?

The resurrection tells us that there is more to life than just taking up space. The resurrection tells us that there is a life after death, and that the meaning of this existence is disclosed through the One Who passed through death and returned forever alive. The resurrection has made it clear that we have eternal significance in the eyes of God.

The resurrection also tells us that Christianity is not a "system" of belief as much as it is a relationship with someone Who is still alive. (We do not "remember" a dead Jesus.) A relationship with Christ can impart life, His resurrection life. For as Christ rose from the dead, so those united to Him can know His death-defying power, and be brought to life, both now and for eternity.

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Pray This Today

Lord, thank You for such personal love that You would be willing to take on death itself by defeating it in Your Son.

As the Spirit raised Your body, may He bring life to my mind, heart, and soul.

Give me the ability to perceive and receive the power and embrace of Your resurrection love.

Amen.

**Day Four: If Christ Could
Change This Life,
You Know He Can
Change Yours**

“I know that God changes peoples’ lives, but I don’t expect Him to do anything for me. I don’t deserve God’s kindness.” Have you ever caught yourself thinking anything like this? If you have, you can be encouraged by the Apostle Paul’s story.

If there was anyone undeserving of God’s love and mercy it was the Apostle Paul. Paul’s transformation from persecutor to apostle is one of the most powerful testimonies of God’s desire and ability to love and to transform the life of any person. Paul, a zealous Jew who violently persecuted the Church, not only rejected Christ, but he put his heart and soul into working against His purposes. Paul was unafraid to drag Christians from their homes, put them in chains, and have them publicly executed.

Paul's resistance became an opportunity for God to show His ability and desire to right distorted thinking and set straight a life bent on destruction.

While Paul was journeying to capture Christians in Damascus, Christ interrupted his plans and brought him to his senses. A bright light appeared in the sky. Paul's horse reared, and he was thrown to the ground. As he looked to the sky, he saw the resurrected Christ radiate out from the brilliant light and heard His voice. – Acts 9:6

Paul left the experience blinded and shaken. Upon entry into Damascus, he received Christian baptism and was granted both physical and spiritual sight. From persecutor of the Church, Paul became one of its greatest Apostles and advocates.

Paul is an incredible testimony to God's power and love. He was a man born in Tarsus (a Jewish intellectual center of his day). He studied the Old Testament Scriptures from age five and went to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel (one of the greatest Rabbis of the first century).

He was recognized for being one of the most zealous proponents of Judaism among his peers and gave himself to persecute the disciples of Jesus because he believed Jesus to be a false Messiah. And yet after encountering Jesus, he built churches all around the known world, and wrote almost half of

the New Testament. Truly his life gives evidence of God's power to transform!

Our friends who are cynical objectors may say, "Yes, but how do we know that this account of Jesus' appearance is not just a fictional story made up by the early church?" What other explanation for Paul's changed life can there be? Paul existed; history gives us no room for doubt. It is beyond question that his life was changed dramatically. What other reason for his transformation could there be other than the one Paul himself provides in the following Biblical record?

"I was journeying to Damascus. I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice, 'I am Jesus, stand on your feet; for this purpose I [Jesus] have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness. Consequently, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision.'"

– Acts 26:12-23 (summarized)

His vision of the resurrected Lord transformed Saul (his Hebrew name) the persecutor, to Paul the apostle. He didn't receive any material or physical benefits from following Jesus. In fact, Paul's conversion led him to embrace a long string of trials and suffering:

He was beaten with rods, a victim of stoning, a casualty of shipwreck, imprisoned on numerous occasions, battered more times than he could count, betrayed by false friends, a target of assassination attempts, faced near starvation, prey to exposure, as well as assaulted by a multitude of physical and psychological torments that would make the strongest of us weak with tears.

There is only one thing that could account for his decision to choose this way of life: his very real and personal encounter with the risen Christ.

You might not have a vision of the risen Jesus like Paul did. The absence of such a vision, however, does not in any sense diminish the truth that Christ is alive, and that He desires to intervene in your life just as powerfully as He did in Paul's life.

No matter who you are, no matter what you have done, Christ wants to transform your life.

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Pray This Today

Lord, I thank You that I don't have to wonder about Your presence or Your desire to share Your love.

Your resurrection makes it clear that You have not died, but that You are alive and that You care for me.

Reveal Yourself to me.

Make my life further evidence that You are indeed risen from the dead and that You are the God of lavish love.

Give me the faith to reach out to You.

Give me the courage to allow You to touch my life.

Amen

Day Five: The Truth of Christ and “Happy Feelings”

“There is one thing I hate more than anything else: intolerance. Jesus may have been a wonderful person, but please, don’t say that He is the only way to God. All God really cares about is that one loves people and live a good life. Only a bigot would insist on more than this.”

The above opinion has a reasonable, gentle, and civilized air about it. It basically sums up the thought of the person who says, “Hey, if Jesus works for you, that’s wonderful. Just like other beliefs make other people happy, it’s great you have found your truth. You be you!”

At first such an outlook may sound kind and tolerant; it is neither. Such a point of view says that there is no concrete reality, only happy feelings. Few people would say, “If heroin works for you, that’s wonderful. All that matters is that it makes you happy.” Would that be kind to say to someone you care about? Not in the least.

Reality will not be kind to this person's feelings. Despite the happy or peaceful feelings, one might experience while under the influence of the drug, heroin kills.

In a similar way, a false belief will not become true just because a person is sincere. Medieval doctors were both sincere and well-intentioned when they drained blood from sick patients. Their sincerity did not give bloodletting any power to heal. In most cases, the only advantage was that the corpses were a little lighter to carry.

Now let's turn to the Person and claims of Jesus. If what He said is true, and He is Who He claimed, all competing ideologies are not roads to God, they are detours.

Contrary to the sentiment of many, Jesus did not follow the “whatever works for you” philosophy. He did not take a poll of peoples’ feelings before He constructed His sermons. His views were quite settled, regardless of whether others shared them or not.

Jesus declared:

“No one comes to the Father but through Me.”
—John 14:6

“No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” – Matthew 11:27

“No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.”
– 1 John 2:23

Someone may object, “Oh come on, Jesus. What gives You the right to be so “black and white?” Who are You to say such things?”

Jesus Christ claimed to be God in the flesh. Unlike Mohammed, Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha or any other religious leader, Jesus said He was the very Creator of life itself. And then He proved it by rising from the dead.

Jesus is not just a founder of another religion. Unlike all other religious systems, Christianity stands on who Jesus is. His words are great, but Christianity is not words. In Jesus, God reaches down to humanity in the Person of His Son and offers each of us a relationship with Himself.

Jesus is the only way to the Father. He is the only One Who, in the divinity He shares with the Father and Spirit, took on our humanity.

The person of Jesus is not a compilation of teachings or philosophies. If one were comparing ideas, the topic would be open for philosophical debate. But Jesus is not an idea, He is a historic Person. He is not just one's claims of another spiritual concept. He IS.

That's why He can say what He says. He's not just speaking as another sincere person wanting everyone to be happy and kind. In Jesus, God has literally intervened in human history!

Unlike the mythology surrounding other religious figures, Christ's words and life have been verified by actual historic records. We know where He lived, what He taught, how He both died and rose.

It is not a matter of whether one is sincere, or how one *feels* about Jesus and His words and actions. It is a matter of basing what one believes on what is real, regardless of how one feels about it.

God is not the great Baskin Robbins in the sky,—someone who wanted to give us another of His 31 spiritual “flavors” by offering us His Son for our salvation. The truth is that God gave His Son because *only* the Son of God (Jesus) could offer forgiveness, healing, and eternal life. It all comes down to whether reality is based on what is true, or on the wide range of our ever-changing feelings.

So what then is the basis of reality?

If the God Who made all things gets edged out by what feels best to each of our individual preferences, we are all lost. But if God (Who is Himself Ultimate Reality) becomes our measure, then we can believe His Son, Who said, “I am (Jesus) the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

God’s revelation of Himself in Jesus does not mean a blanket condemnation for those who have never heard about Christ. There is much about how God will judge the earth that remains a mystery, but we do not need to know how to figure this out to know what is real. There is one thing for certain: all who witness His judgment when the world ends will be in agreement. All will think the judgment just. All will think the judgment loving. And no one will evaluate either the quality of His justice or mercy by feeling, but on what each person has done or failed to do with God’s Son.

“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name (Jesus) under heaven [...] by which we must be saved.” – Acts 4:12

While we may be unclear about the eternal destiny of those peoples who have never heard about Jesus, what should be clear is what will happen to you.

Clearly, no one who has had the privilege of reading these words of Jesus will be left guessing as to what will happen at the judgment:

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he, who does not believe, has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

— John 3:17, 18

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Pray This Today

God, help me base my life on what is real and not on what I may “feel” for the moment.

Help me leave the world of fantasy that I may receive the real and true life Your Son came to give.

Thank You that You did not provide just another teaching, or another teacher, but that You gave Your very Self in the person of Your Son.

Thank You for the reality of Your love.

Amen.

Day Six: Which God Do You Choose?

Many people do not have a problem believing that Jesus is divine, that He rose from the dead, and that His teaching and life remain unmatched, nor do they have a problem believing that He can change lives. Most people have a problem with allowing Him to guide their own lives.

“Okay fine. I will pray, I will say You are God’s Son, I will even go to church every now and then, but Jesus, after this could You just leave me alone, and let me do what I want, when I want?”

There are a few problems with this attitude. This person fails to understand that God truly loves and wants the best for him or her. This person is afraid that if he or she surrenders fully to God, God will “get ‘em”, take them prisoner, and force them to do all kinds of absurd religious, joy-killing things. This person is concerned he or she may end up looking like the crazy people who hold signs and yell at cars, or find themselves traveling across the world to a country they never wanted to go to.

But God is not cruel, cold, or heartless. He is loving, compassionate, and always personally committed to our best. Jesus said the exact opposite of what many people expect from His reign in their lives:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest [...] I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.” – Matthew 11:28, 29

The fear that leads one to ask God to leave them alone assumes that God will “take over” and make the person to squirm under an unbearably heavy religious weight. But Jesus Christ gives us freedom, not a chain. He takes that shackle that has bound us to fear, and breaks it with His liberating love. He doesn’t give burdens; He takes them from us. This is one of the reasons why He came.

We have nothing to fear about allowing God to love us the way He wants to love.

Our greatest fear should be remaining separate from such love. But, even here, He assures us that separation need not be the case.

Be surprised about it if you want, but God wants you and me to have nothing to do with adopting a belief system that leaves us unchanged or untouched by His personal love. Neither is it God's plan for us to merely “check in” with Him from

time to time (pray, go to church around the holidays, maybe giving donations...), all the while missing out on His personal, guiding love in our lives.

As strange as it may sound, many prefer “religion” over a genuine relationship with God. Why? This way they can do their religious thing and still be in control, effectively being “god” of their own life.

This is not an option for those who open their hearts and lives to God. This surrender invites God to lead and re-direct one’s entire life.

Most would not say that they would make a better god than the True God, but that is precisely the statement one makes when they choose to adhere to religious expectations and rules over yielding to God’s loving leadership.

Most would not say, “I want to run my life because I am wiser, more loving, and more powerful than God.” But the issue is not who is the most capable, it is a matter of control. It is a matter of who will be God: Him, or you?

Or to put it another way, the question might be phrased, “Who will direct my life: this finite self of mine, or the infinite and altogether loving God?” Or better still, “Whose will for my life will I choose, mine or God’s?”

These questions arise because, to be honest, most people want to do what they want, not because it is wisest, or the best course, but merely because they want it.

This brings to mind the self-willed toddler who is led by impulse instead of wisdom. He does not *want* to go to bed. He does not *want* to eat veggies or eggs; he wants to keep eating ice cream and lollipops. He does not *want* to go to the doctor. He does not *want* to wear clothes! He wants to do what *he* wants, *when* he wants—healthy or unhealthy, wise or silly, right or wrong.

It is good to choose. It can even be good at times to make choices from impulse; but to be *led* by toddler impulses will severely hurt us, maybe down right kill us! God desires to free us from the “toddler tyrant” that lives within each of us so we might make choices that would be healthy and life giving.

This does not mean that Christ snuffs out our desires or takes over our wills. He wants to give us options for life that without His guidance would never have presented themselves. He cannot do this, however, if we insist on being the god of our lives and letting irrational feelings rule us.

There is no way that we can rule as the master of our lives and still know the power, love, and healing reign of Jesus. We must make a choice between

rulers. “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24) Will it be Christ, or our ever-changing desires, fears, wants, and impulses?

In the end, it doesn’t even feel good to be our own gods and have our wants command the direction of our lives. Ask any addict if they are better off by answering the immediate hungers of their addiction or refraining from following them. The addict will say that they would be healthier and happier without the addiction. But that person will not stop at least in part because they do not *want* to stop, because to try to stop seems too hard. Instead, that person is driven by every want and that person is miserable because of it.

Those who do not acknowledge Christ as the Lord (the Leader) of their lives, will be pushed and shoved throughout their lives by “want” addiction, and bullied by their own up and down emotions. Whether we took on the responsibility of godhood because we felt we had to or because we didn’t want to trust anyone else, we have yet to take care of ourselves the way God can. So the first step, to be free from the tyranny of impulse and the drive to control, is to recognize that we do an awful job at being god. The second step then is to allow Jesus Christ to lead us to One Who is God, and to see that He Himself is God, not us.

* * *

Pray This Today

God, give me the strength to act with wisdom, not just by my wants and impulses.

Help me see that You do not desire to imprison, but rather set me free.

Help me see that I cannot enjoy the true meaning of life if I insist on being my own god, rather than acknowledging Your compassionate leadership.

Amen.

Day Seven: Curious or Serious?

I remember speaking to a university student who asked me to talk to him about Christ. He expressed great interest, but was reluctant to trust Christ with his life. He told me that he had intellectual stumbling blocks which prevented him from making such a decision. "Would you be willing to spend some time thinking through and discussing some of those objections with me?" I asked him. He said "yes," he would.

For the next month we sat down every week discussing his questions and concerns. At the end of the month, I asked him if I had adequately answered his questions. He said that I had. I then asked him if he was ready to give his life to Christ.

He said no.

I did not need to ask him why. At that moment there was a knock at his door, and in the doorway stood a girl. I might as well not have existed as he stared into her eyes. No, he had no more questions.

Since then I have learned to ask people how serious they are before I begin to talk to them about Christ in a meaningful way.

“If I could show you that Christ is Who He said He was, would you be willing to make Him the center of your life?”

If the answer is no, I tell them that their time would be better spent doing something else other than talking to me.

I have discovered that many, who say they are interested in the truth, really have no interest at all. They are interested in bits and pieces of information, but many are afraid to learn something that may call them to change their life. It has become obvious to me that if someone is not willing to live for what they understand to be true, answering their questions is not going to bring them any closer to the truth.

So these are the questions that I now ask each one reading this book: How serious are you about pursuing the truth? How serious are you about checking out Christ, and what it means to live for Him? Serious enough to spend some time thinking about it? Serious enough that you are willing to change and reorient your life around Him?

Christ did not come to give people something to talk about at parties. He came to give life, forgiveness, and a relationship with His Father, God Himself. He did not come to be interesting; He came to help us see what is true.

If one has an honest hunger for truth, meaning, and reality, God will reveal Himself to that person, and that person will embrace Christ.

The person who is serious, and not just curious, is open to change. This person is not committed to defending their current lifestyle. They are willing to adjust their thinking and life so that it becomes more in line with reality.

How can you know God?

1. You must be serious, not just curious.
2. You must ask God to reveal Himself.

If you want to know God personally, and not just conceptually, you can. Yes, you can. God in Christ has done everything possible on His end to provide that opportunity. It is all up to how serious you are about acting on His loving invitation.

* * *

Pray This Today

God, help me open myself even more to You.

I put aside all pretenses. I put aside all pseudo-intellectual obstacles.

I want to know You. I really do.

I am willing to have You change my life. I am serious about this. I want to live a life that reflects truth. I am serious about accepting Your invitation to become personally involved in my life.

From this moment on, I give You permission to reveal Yourself to my mind and heart, through things I read and see, through people I meet, through circumstances that You orchestrate.

Speak to me, teach me, and guide me. Touch me in such a way that I will never be content with the status quo again. Thank you for hearing and answering this prayer.

Amen

