



JESUS LOVES PORN STARS BIBLE

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XXXCHURCH.COM

THE NET BIBLE, NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION

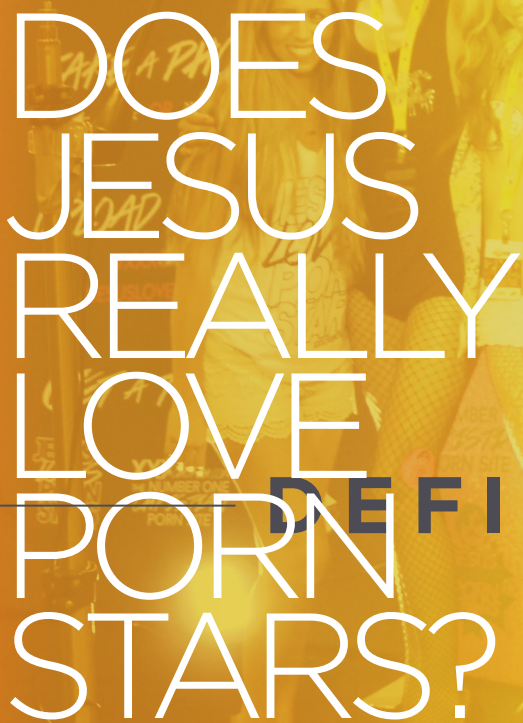
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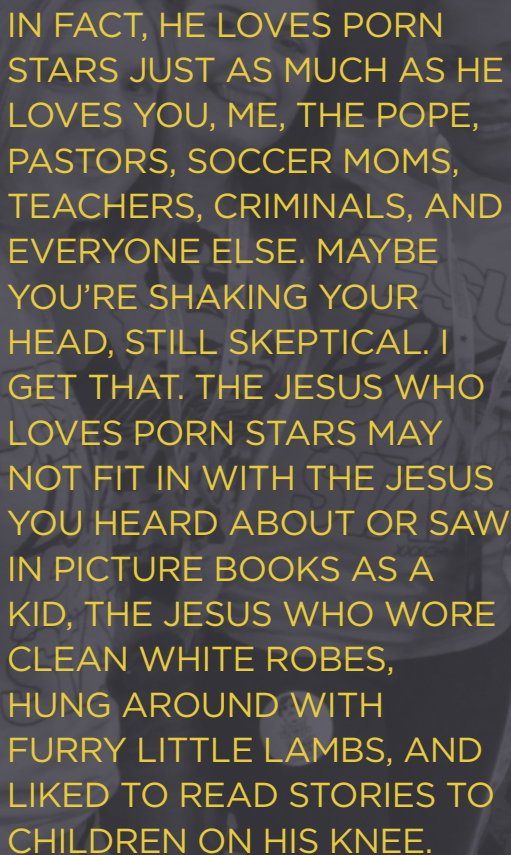
The background is a collage of a red carpet event. It features three celebrities: one in the top right, one in the center, and one in the bottom right. They are wearing formal attire and have their hair styled. Overlaid on the top left are three circular social media icons: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Below these icons are some text elements, including '@XOXO', 'XOXO', and 'XOXO'. The main text is in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the word 'DEFI' in a smaller, dark blue font. The overall color scheme is warm, with orange and yellow tones.

DOES
JESUS
REALLY
LOVE
PORN
STARS?

DEFI



NITELY! —————



IN FACT, HE LOVES PORN STARS JUST AS MUCH AS HE LOVES YOU, ME, THE POPE, PASTORS, SOCCER MOMS, TEACHERS, CRIMINALS, AND EVERYONE ELSE. MAYBE YOU'RE SHAKING YOUR HEAD, STILL SKEPTICAL. I GET THAT. THE JESUS WHO LOVES PORN STARS MAY NOT FIT IN WITH THE JESUS YOU HEARD ABOUT OR SAW IN PICTURE BOOKS AS A KID, THE JESUS WHO WORE CLEAN WHITE ROBES, HUNG AROUND WITH FURRY LITTLE LAMBS, AND LIKED TO READ STORIES TO CHILDREN ON HIS KNEE.

Or maybe the Jesus you've come to expect is some guy who only wants to deal with people who have their crap together... right? He can't possibly love a porn star, or an addict, or maybe even you?

I HAVE NEWS FOR YOU; HE DOES.

You see, the Bible says we've all blown it. Whether we're making porn, working at a coffee shop, or running a church, we are all sinners who have "stuff" we need to clean up. It doesn't matter how much stuff we have; it all makes us imperfect.

The good news is that Jesus knows this and loves us anyway. It doesn't matter if you got high yesterday or masturbated five minutes ago. He still loves you. In fact, he desperately wants to have a relationship with you. Your "stuff" doesn't change this fact.

Knowing Jesus isn't about rules, checklists, or keeping a certain list of friends. It's not about

how many times a month you go to church or how much money you give to the poor. It's about engaging with a Person who loves us and wants to show us that the life we know can be so much more with him involved.

What you're holding in your hands is the radical message of Jesus, as told in the Gospel of Luke and translated into a contemporary language. It has not been altered or changed. Sorry, there are no pictures for those who prefer comic books.

THERE IS JUST PURE TRUTH.

HE DESPERATELY A RELATIONSHIP

You'll discover who Jesus was, where he was born, how he lived, and why he died. You'll read stories about how Jesus went against cultural norms, rebelled against the religious leaders, and went out of his



**WANTS TO HAVE
WITH YOU.**

way to love people whom everyone else (including the most religious, God-fearing people of that era) had no time for. As you read through this book, you'll discover what Jesus really thinks about people like you and me. You will see how he had incredible love and compassion for those whose lives were full of "stuff." The way Jesus handles these people might surprise you.

It is my hope that you read this book with an open mind. Put aside your preconceptions about Jesus and identify with the people Jesus met and loved. See what it says to you and ask yourself if what you are reading could apply to your life situation.

It is my prayer that this book and the story of Jesus impacts you the way it has impacted so many others.

Jesus was radical & counter cultural. He impacted the lives of everyone he met and I assure you, one way or the other, he will impact yours as well.

**JESUS LOVES
PORN STARS.**

HE LOVES YOU.

**HE LOVES ME,
TOO.**

Craig Gross
A.K.A. THE PORN PASTOR
& the XXXchurch Team

FOR MORE, CHECK OUT
XXXCHURCH.COM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

12 **WHAT IS
XXXCHURCH?**

18 **CHAPTER 01**

34 **CHAPTER 02**

44 **CHAPTER 03**

52 **SAVED BY CANCER
STEPHANIE'S STORY**

58 **CHAPTER 04**

68 **CHAPTER 05**

78 **CHAPTER 06**

88 **JESUS**

92 **CHAPTER 07**

104 **CHAPTER 08**

116 **CHAPTER 09**

130 **LOVE**

136 **CHAPTER 10**

144 **CHAPTER 11**

156 **CHAPTER 12**

168 **YOU**

174 **CHAPTER 13**

182 **CHAPTER 14**

190 **CHAPTER 15**

198 **AN ESCORT'S STORY
MEET ANNIE**

206 **CHAPTER 16**

212 **CHAPTER 17**

220 **CHAPTER 18**

228 **IVY FAULKNER A CAM GIRL & ESCORT'S JOURNEY**

234 **CHAPTER 19**

242 **CHAPTER 20**

252 **CHAPTER 21**

260 **A MESSAGE FROM BRITTNEY**

266 **CHAPTER 22**

280 **CHAPTER 23**

292 **CHAPTER 24**

302 **WE'VE GOT ANSWERS**

310 **JESUS LOVES RON JEREMY**

330 **JESUS LOVES YOU**

334 **KNOW THAT WE LOVE YOU**

335 **CONTACT US**

XXXCHURCH.COM

PRAYER



JESUS

PO

WHAT IS XXXCHURCH?



YOU MAY BE WONDERING:
WHAT IS XXXCHURCH ALL ABOUT?

**ARE WE A CHURCH
THAT LIKES PORN?**

ARE WE EVEN A CHURCH AT ALL?

**EVEN BETTER,
WHY DO WE GO TO
PORN SHOWS?**

IS IT TO POINT FINGERS?

**ARE WE THERE
TO PREACH, JUDGE,
AND YELL INTO
MEGAPHONES?**

**OR IS IT ALL JUST
A BIG GIMMICK?**

HONESTLY, THESE ARE ALL FAIR QUESTIONS.

HERE ARE, HOPEFULLY, A FEW ANSWERS:

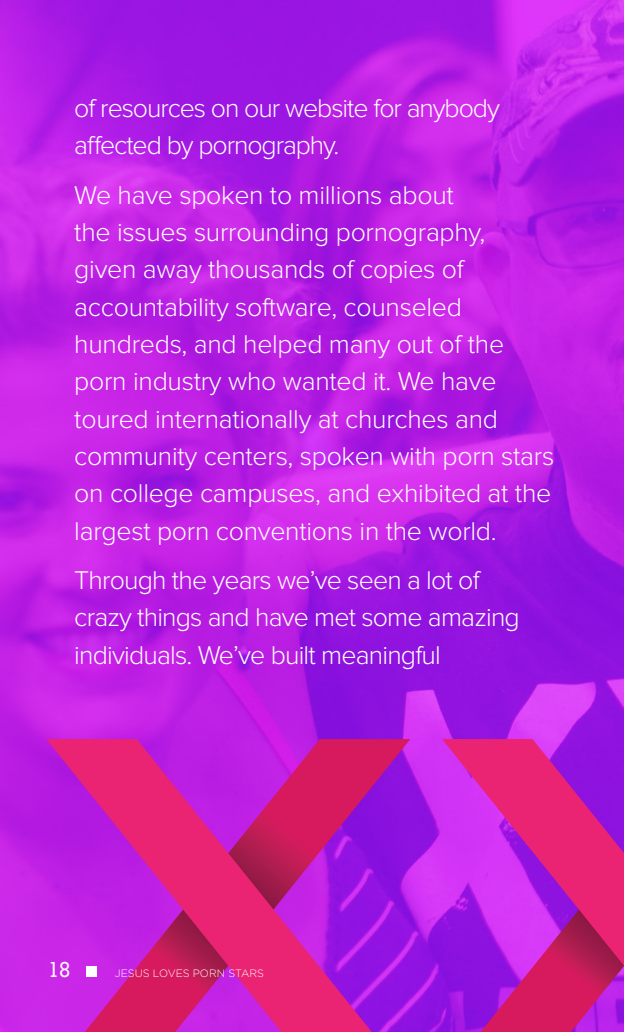
In 2002 we started XXXchurch.com to help those who were in over their heads with pornography. We decided to launch the site by exhibiting at the AVN Adult Entertainment Expo in Las Vegas. We didn't come to shut down the porn industry or protest. We weren't "those people." We weren't even there to tell people about our resources. We came for one reason: to tell people in the porn industry and those consuming porn that Jesus loved them.

WHY? BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE WAS DOING IT.

We call ourselves "XXXchurch.com – The #1 Christian Porn Site." Many different people now visit the site because they're looking for porn; others come because they're looking for help. We get nearly **10 MILLION VISITORS A YEAR** and offer a wide range

**WE JUST
WANT
PEOPLE
TO KNOW
THAT JESUS
LOVES
THEM.**

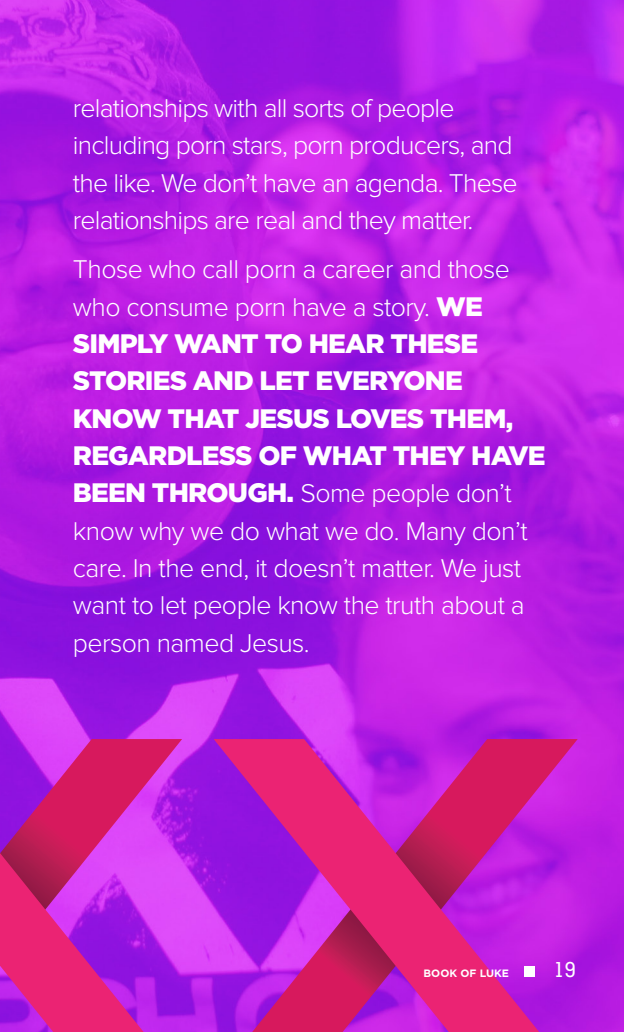




of resources on our website for anybody affected by pornography.

We have spoken to millions about the issues surrounding pornography, given away thousands of copies of accountability software, counseled hundreds, and helped many out of the porn industry who wanted it. We have toured internationally at churches and community centers, spoken with porn stars on college campuses, and exhibited at the largest porn conventions in the world.

Through the years we've seen a lot of crazy things and have met some amazing individuals. We've built meaningful



relationships with all sorts of people including porn stars, porn producers, and the like. We don't have an agenda. These relationships are real and they matter.

Those who call porn a career and those who consume porn have a story. **WE SIMPLY WANT TO HEAR THESE STORIES AND LET EVERYONE KNOW THAT JESUS LOVES THEM, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN THROUGH.** Some people don't know why we do what we do. Many don't care. In the end, it doesn't matter. We just want to let people know the truth about a person named Jesus.

CHAPTER
01

Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning. So it seemed good to me as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know for certain the things you were taught.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

During the reign of Herod king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah, and he had a wife named

Elizabeth, who was a descendant of Aaron. They were both righteous in the sight of God, following all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. But they did not have a child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both very old.

Now while Zechariah was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the holy place of the Lord and burn incense. Now the whole crowd of people were praying outside at the hour of the incense offering. An angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, appeared to him. And Zechariah, visibly shaken when he saw the angel, was seized with fear. But the angel said to him,

**“Do not
be afraid,
Zechariah, for
your prayer
has been
heard,**

and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son; you will name him John. Joy and gladness will come to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go as forerunner before the Lord in the spirit

and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.”

ZECHARIAH SAID TO THE ANGEL, “HOW CAN I BE SURE OF THIS? FOR I AM AN OLD MAN, AND MY WIFE IS OLD AS WELL.” THE ANGEL ANSWERED HIM, “I AM GABRIEL, WHO STANDS IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, AND I WAS SENT TO SPEAK TO YOU AND TO BRING YOU THIS GOOD NEWS. AND NOW, BECAUSE YOU DID NOT BELIEVE MY WORDS, WHICH WILL BE FULFILLED IN THEIR TIME, YOU WILL BE SILENT, UNABLE TO SPEAK, UNTIL THE DAY THESE THINGS TAKE PLACE.”

Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they began to wonder why he was delayed in the holy place.

When he came out, he was not able to speak to them. They realized that he had seen a vision in the holy place, because he was making signs to them and remained unable to speak. When his time of service was over, he went to his home.

After some time his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and for five months she kept herself in seclusion. She said, *“This is what the Lord has done for me at the time when he has been gracious to me, to take away my disgrace among people.”*

■ BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

verses 26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. The angel

came to her and said, *“Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!”* But she was greatly troubled by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. So the angel said to her, *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! Listen You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.”* Mary said to the angel, *“How will this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?”* The angel replied, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.”*

“And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old

age – although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month! For nothing will be impossible with God.” So Mary said, “Yes, I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

■ MARY AND ELIZABETH

verses 39-45

In those days Mary got up and went hurriedly into the hill country, to a town of Judah, and entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She exclaimed with a loud voice, *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child in your womb! And who am I that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me? For the instant the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for*

MARY TO ELIZABETH:

“My soul e
the Lord,
spirit has
to rejoice
my Savio

exalts
and my
loegun
in God
”
r.”

joy. And blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

■ MARY'S HYMN OF PRAISE

verses 46-56

**AND MARY SAID, “MY SOUL
EXALTS THE LORD, AND MY SPIRIT
HAS BEGUN TO REJOICE IN GOD
MY SAVIOR, BECAUSE HE HAS
LOOKED UPON THE HUMBLE
STATE OF HIS SERVANT.**

For from now on all generations will call me blessed, because he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name; from generation to generation he is merciful to those who fear him.

He has demonstrated power with his arm; he has scattered those whose pride wells up from the sheer arrogance of their hearts.

He has brought down the mighty from their

thrones, and has lifted up those of lowly position; he has filled the hungry with good things, and has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

So Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

■ THE BIRTH OF JOHN

Now the time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother

replied, *"No! He must be named John."* They said to her, *"But none of your relatives bears this name."* So they made signs to the baby's father, inquiring what he wanted to name his son. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, *"His name is John."* And they were all amazed. Immediately Zechariah's mouth was opened and his tongue released, and he spoke, blessing God. All their neighbors were filled with fear, and throughout the entire hill country of Judea all these things were talked about. All who heard these things kept them in their hearts, saying, *"What then will this child be?"* For the Lord's hand was indeed with him.

■ ZECHARIAH'S PRAISE AND PREDICTION

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, *"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because*

He has come to help and has redeemed his people.

For he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from long ago, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us.

He has done this to show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant – the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham.

This oath grants that we, being rescued from

the hand of our enemies, may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him for as long as we live.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High. For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

Because of our God's tender mercy the dawn will break upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And the child kept growing and becoming strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he was revealed to Israel.

CHAPTER
02

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to register all the empire for taxes. This was the first registration, taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David. He went to be registered with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him, and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT

Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. But the angel said to them, *“Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people. Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”*

Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**“GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST,
AND ON EARTH PEACE AMONG
PEOPLE WITH WHOM
HE IS PLEASED!”**

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has made known to us.” So they hurried off and located Mary and Joseph, and found the baby lying in a manger. When they saw him, they related what they had been told about this child, and all who heard it were astonished at what the shepherds said. But Mary treasured up all these words, pondering in her heart what they might mean. So the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything was just as they had been told.

At the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

■ JESUS' PRESENTATION AT THE TEMPLE

verses 22-24

Now when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses,

Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (just as it is written in the law of the Lord, *“Every firstborn male will be set apart to the Lord”*), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is specified in the law of the Lord, a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

■ THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON

verses 25-35

Now there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon who was righteous and devout, looking for the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So Simeon, directed by the Spirit, came into the temple courts, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary according to the law, Simeon took him in his arms and blessed God, saying,

“Now, according to your word, Sovereign Lord, permit your servant to depart in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light, for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

So the child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary,

“LISTEN CAREFULLY THIS CHILD IS DESTINED TO BE THE CAUSE OF THE FALLING AND RISING OF MANY IN ISRAEL AND TO BE A SIGN THAT WILL BE REJECTED. INDEED, AS A RESULT OF HIM THE THOUGHTS OF MANY HEARTS WILL BE REVEALED – AND A SWORD WILL PIERCE YOUR OWN SOUL AS WELL!”

THE TESTIMONY OF ANNA

There was also a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old, having been married to her husband for seven years until his death. She had lived as a widow since then for eighty-four years. She never left the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment, she came up to them and began to give thanks to God and to speak about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So when Joseph and Mary had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Now Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. But when the feast was over, as they were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but (because they assumed that he was in their group of travelers) they went a day's journey. Then they began to look for him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Jesus were astonished at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were overwhelmed. His mother said to him, *"Child, why have you treated us like this?"*

Look, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.” But he replied,

“Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Yet his parents did not understand the remark he made to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. But his mother kept all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and with people.

CHAPTER
03

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan River, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, *“The voice of one shouting in the wilderness ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low, and*

the crooked will be made straight, and the rough ways will be made smooth, and all humanity will see the salvation of God.”

So John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, *“You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit that proves your repentance, and don’t begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones! Even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

So the crowds were asking him, *“What then should we do?”* John answered them, *“The person who has two tunics must share with the person who has none, and the person who has food must do likewise.”* Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, *“Teacher, what should we do?”*

He told them, *“Collect no more than you are required to.”* Then some soldiers also asked him, *“And as for us – what should we do?”* He told them, *“Take money from no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your pay.”*

While the people were filled with anticipation and they all wondered whether perhaps John could be the Christ, John answered them all,

“I baptize you with water, but one more powerful than I am is coming

– I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the

Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clean out his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire.”

And in this way, with many other exhortations, John proclaimed good news to the people. But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil deeds that he had done, Herod added this to them all He locked up John in prison.

■ THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

verses 21-22

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. And while he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, *“You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight.”*

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

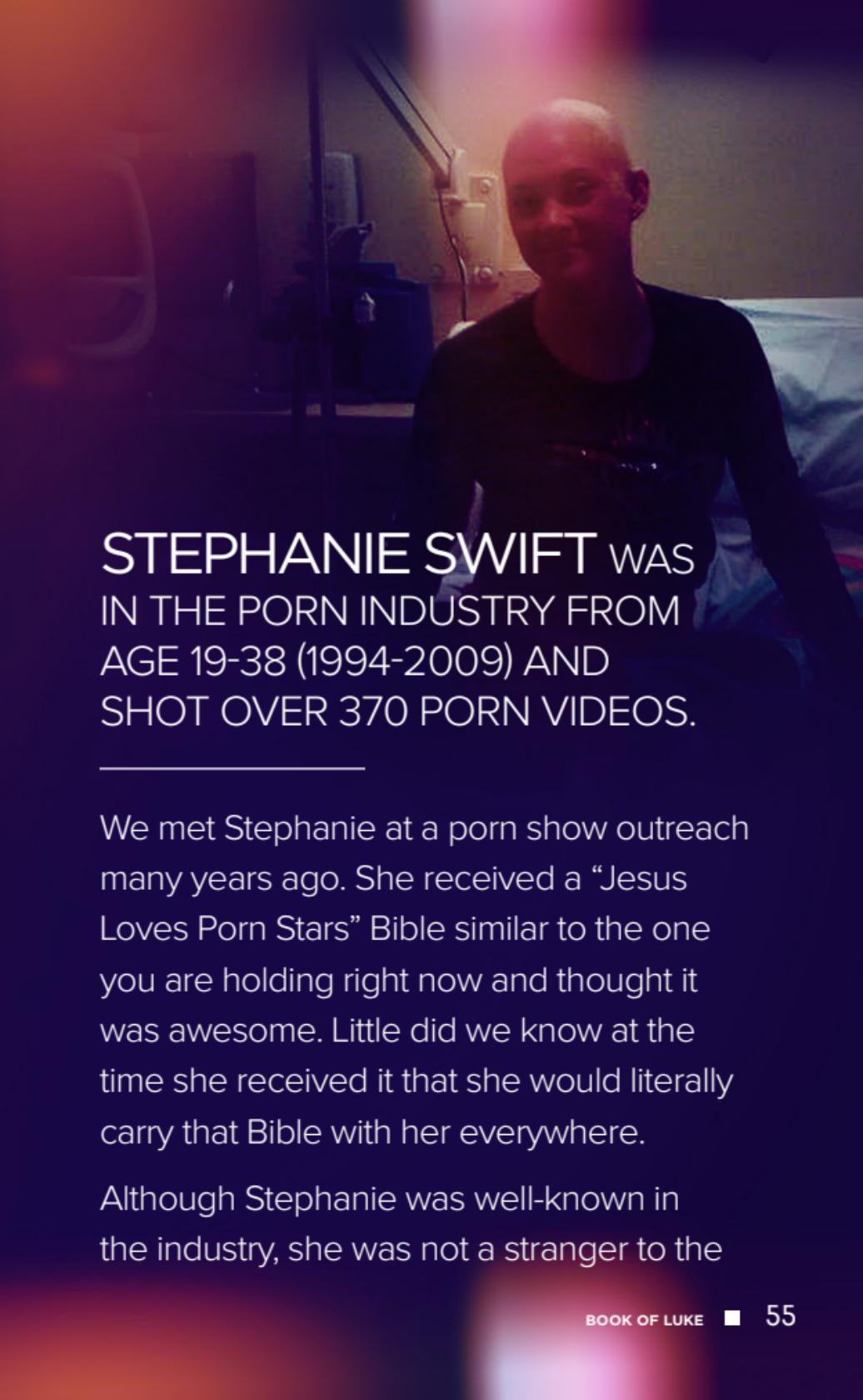
So Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years old. He was the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse,

the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan, the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.



SAVED — BY — CANCER





STEPHANIE SWIFT WAS
IN THE PORN INDUSTRY FROM
AGE 19-38 (1994-2009) AND
SHOT OVER 370 PORN VIDEOS.

We met Stephanie at a porn show outreach many years ago. She received a “Jesus Loves Porn Stars” Bible similar to the one you are holding right now and thought it was awesome. Little did we know at the time she received it that she would literally carry that Bible with her everywhere.

Although Stephanie was well-known in the industry, she was not a stranger to the

Bible. She had grown up in the church and attended vacation bible school as a child. Sadly, Stephanie was sexually abused as a child for many years – and in her own words, her “sexuality was scarred from the time she was a child.” Even though she had always wanted to wait until she was married to have sex, it didn’t quite turn out that way.

At age 19 she got a job as a dancer; after dancing for 6 months, she felt empowered, like she created another personality to be able to perform. From there, she went into making adult videos. In 1997 she won AVN’s performer of the year and soon afterward signed a contract with Wicked Entertainment from 1998-2004. She believed that she was in control, yet she knew she wanted more out of life.

Marriage and family were some things she always wanted, but that didn’t seem to fit what she was doing with her career. Her

relationships within her own family had become estranged and the industry to which she now found herself in seemed to become her new family. Even though she secretly desired to leave the business, she remained for another five years until cancer struck in 2008, attacking the body that once made her a lot of money and a name in the sex industry.

STEPHANIE BELIEVES THAT CANCER, IRONICALLY, SAVED HER LIFE.

Cancer was the catalyst which God used to move her from a place she knew she really didn't want to be. Cancer pointed her back to that little Bible that offered her hope in the midst of uncertainty, in the midst of the unknown. Because even though she did have some friends in the industry, ultimately the sex industry would not be there for her after her body was no longer able to perform. But God? God would remain faithful to her.

In the 61st chapter of the book of Isaiah, it says that **GOD HEARS THOSE WHO GRIEVE AND CRY OUT TO HIM,** and that he will bestow on them beauty instead of ashes and give them a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Stephanie is a testimony of this grace. She says “Being in the sex industry is a false accomplishment. I know all there is to know about being in that industry and I know it takes small steps to get the courage to finally leave but I have no regrets in walking away.”

Since Stephanie left the sex industry, she was baptized and attends a local church. She found a good mentor through XXXchurch, someone who would walk through the next steps with her, without judging her as she slowly began rebuilding her life. She currently embraces Bible study and women’s ministry events – things she

didn't see herself doing when she once worked in the industry.

It has not been an easy road for Stephanie. There were certain sacrifices she had to make to achieve her goals.

BUT SHE DID IT.

Stephanie was married in January of 2012. She is living a life that she always desired deep in her heart. One step at a time has taken her there.



Watch Stephanie's story at
<http://x3.cm/stephswift>

CHAPTER
04

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he endured temptations from the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were completed, he was famished.

The devil said to him, *“If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”* Jesus answered him, *“It is written, ‘Man does not live by bread alone.’”*

Then the devil led him up to a high place and showed him in a flash all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, *“To you I will grant this whole realm – and the glory that goes along with it, for it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. So then, if you will worship me, all this will be yours.”* Jesus answered him, *“It is written, ‘You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’”*

Then the devil brought him to Jerusalem, had him stand on the highest point of the temple, and said to him, *“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘with their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”* Jesus answered him, *“It is said, ‘You are not to put the Lord your God to the test.’”* So when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him until a more opportune time.

■ verses 14-15

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE

Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the surrounding countryside. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by all.

REJECTION AT NAZARETH

Now Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES AND THE REGAINING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE YEAR OF THE LORD’S FAVOR.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to tell them, *“Today this*

JESUS

“He has s
me to p
release t
captives

sent
proclaim
to the
”
S.

scripture has been fulfilled even as you heard it being read.” All were speaking well of him, and were amazed at the gracious words coming out of his mouth. They said, ***“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”*** Jesus said to them, *“No doubt you will quote to me the proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ and say, ‘What we have heard that you did in Capernaum, do here in your hometown too.’”* And he added, *“I tell you the truth, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s days, when the sky was shut up three and a half years, and there was a great famine over all the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to a woman who was a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, yet none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”* When they heard this, all the people in the synagogue

were filled with rage. They got up, forced him out of the town, and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.

■ verses 31-44

■ MINISTRY IN CAPERNAUM

So he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because he spoke with authority.

Now in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,

“HA! LEAVE US ALONE, JESUS THE NAZARENE! HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US? I KNOW WHO YOU ARE – THE HOLY ONE OF GOD.”

But Jesus rebuked him *“Silence! Come out of him!”* Then, after the demon threw the

man down in their midst, he came out of him without hurting him. They were all amazed and began to say to one another, *“What’s happening here? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!”* So the news about him spread into all areas of the region.

After Jesus left the synagogue, he entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he stood over her, commanded the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

As the sun was setting, all those who had any relatives sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus. He placed his hands on every one of them and healed them. Demons also came out of many, crying out, *“You are the Son of God!”* But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

The next morning Jesus departed and went to a deserted place. Yet the crowds were seeking him, and they came to him and tried to keep him from leaving them. BUT JESUS SAID TO THEM,

“I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, for that is what I was sent to do.”

SO HE CONTINUED TO PREACH IN THE SYNAGOGUES OF JUDEA.

CHAPTER
05

THE CALL OF THE DISCIPLES

Now Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing around him to hear the word of God.

He saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, *"Put out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch."*

Simon answered, *"Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing! But at your word I will lower the nets."* When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets started to tear. So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they were about to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,

**“Go away
from me,
Lord, for I am
a sinful man!”**

For Peter and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's business partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, *“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”* So when they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

HEALING A LEPER

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came to him who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down with his face to the ground and begged him, ***“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”*** So he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, *“I am willing. Be clean!”* And immediately the leprosy left him. Then he ordered the man to tell no one, but commanded him, *“Go and show yourself to a priest, and bring the offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”* But the news about him spread even more, and large crowds were gathering together to hear him and to be healed of their illnesses. Yet Jesus himself frequently withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

JESUS TO THE PARALYZED MAN

“Friend,
your sin
forgiven

ns are

”

n.

HEALING AND FORGIVING A PARALYTIC

Now on one of those days, while he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting nearby (who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem), and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. Just then some men showed up, carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and place him before Jesus. But since they found no way to carry him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down on the stretcher through the roof tiles right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith he said, *“Friend, your sins are forgiven.”* Then the experts in the law and the Pharisees began to think to themselves, *“Who is this man who is uttering blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* When Jesus perceived their hostile thoughts, he said

to them, *“Why are you raising objections within yourselves?”*

WHICH IS EASIER, TO SAY, ‘YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN,’ OR TO SAY, ‘STAND UP AND WALK’?

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” – he said to the paralyzed man – “I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher and go home.” Immediately he stood up before them, picked up the stretcher he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all, and they glorified God. They were filled with awe, saying, *“We have seen incredible things today.”*

■ THE CALL OF LEVI; EATING WITH SINNERS

verses 27-32

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax

booth. *“Follow me,”* he said to him. And he got up and followed him, leaving everything behind.

Then Levi gave a great banquet in his house for Jesus, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. But the Pharisees and their experts in the law complained to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered them,

“Those who are well don’t need a physician, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW

Then they said to him, *“John’s disciples frequently fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours continue to eat and drink.”* So Jesus said to them, *“You cannot make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But those days are coming, and when the bridegroom is taken from them, at that time they will fast.”* He also told them a parable *“No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old garment. If he does, he will have torn the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. Instead new wine must be poured into new wineskins. No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’”*

CHAPTER
06

■ LORD OF THE SABBATH

Jesus was going through the grain fields on a Sabbath, and his disciples picked some heads of wheat, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. But some of the Pharisees said, *“Why are you doing what is against the law on the Sabbath?”* Jesus answered them, *“Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry – how he entered the house of God, took and ate the sacred bread, which is not lawful for any to eat but the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?”* Then he said to them, *“The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”*

■ HEALING A WITHERED HAND

On another Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching. Now a man was there whose right hand was withered.

The experts in the law and the Pharisees watched Jesus closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they could find a reason to accuse him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, *“Get up and stand here.”* So he rose and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, *“I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy it?”*

AFTER LOOKING AROUND AT THEM ALL, HE SAID TO THE MAN, “STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND.” THE MAN DID SO, AND HIS HAND WAS RESTORED. BUT THEY WERE FILLED WITH MINDLESS RAGE AND BEGAN DEBATING WITH ONE ANOTHER WHAT THEY WOULD DO TO JESUS.

■ CHOOSING THE 12 APOSTLES

Now it was during this time that Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent all

night in prayer to God. When morning came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles Simon (whom he named Peter), and his brother Andrew; and James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

■ THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN

verses 17-36

Then he came down with them and stood on a level place. And a large number of his disciples had gathered along with a vast multitude from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. They came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and those who suffered from unclean spirits were cured. The whole crowd was trying to touch him, because power was coming out from him and healing them all.

**THEN HE LOOKED UP
AT HIS DISCIPLES AND SAID**

“Blessed are you
who are poor, for
the kingdom of God
belongs to you.

“Blessed are you
who hunger now, for
you will be satisfied.

“Blessed are you
who weep now, for
you will laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you and insult you and reject you as evil on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and jump for joy, because your reward is great in heaven. For their ancestors did the same things to the prophets.

**“BUT WOE TO YOU WHO ARE RICH,
FOR YOU HAVE RECEIVED YOUR
COMFORT ALREADY.**

**“WOE TO YOU WHO ARE WELL
SATISFIED WITH FOOD NOW, FOR
YOU WILL BE HUNGRY.**

**“WOE TO YOU WHO LAUGH NOW,
FOR YOU WILL MOURN AND WEEP.**

**“WOE TO YOU WHEN ALL PEOPLE
SPEAK WELL OF YOU, FOR THEIR
ANCESTORS DID THE SAME THINGS
TO THE FALSE PROPHETS.**

*“But I say to you who are listening Love
your enemies, do good to those who hate
you, bless those who curse you, pray for
those who mistreat you. To the person who
strikes you on the cheek, offer the other
as well, and from the person who takes
away your coat, do not withhold your tunic
either. Give to everyone who asks you, and
do not ask for your possessions back from*

the person who takes them away. Treat others in the same way that you would want them to treat you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, so that they may be repaid in full. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to ungrateful and evil people. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

■ DO NOT JUDGE OTHERS

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be

*forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you
A good measure, pressed down, shaken
together, running over, will be poured into
your lap. For the measure you use will be
the measure you receive.”*

*He also told them a parable “Someone who
is blind cannot lead another who is blind,
can he? Won’t they both fall into a pit? A
disciple is not greater than his teacher, but
everyone when fully trained will be like his
teacher. Why do you see the speck in your
brother’s eye, but fail to see the beam of
wood in your own? How can you say to your
brother, ‘Brother, let me remove the speck
from your eye,’ while you yourself don’t
see the beam in your own? You hypocrite!
First remove the beam from your own eye,
and then you can see clearly to remove the
speck from your brother’s eye.*

*“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again
does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each
tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are*

not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from brambles. The good person out of the good treasury of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasury produces evil, for his mouth speaks from what fills his heart.

“WHY DO YOU CALL ME ‘LORD, LORD,’ AND DON’T DO WHAT I TELL YOU?”

“Everyone who comes to me and listens to my words and puts them into practice – I will show you what he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep, and laid the foundation on bedrock. When a flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the person who hears and does not put my words into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against that house, it collapsed immediately, and was utterly destroyed!”

PROPHET

TEACHER

RABBI

LEADER

REVOLUTIONARY

TROUBLEMAKER

SAVIOR

WHO WAS

JES

IT'S A QUESTION THAT HAS BEEN DEBATED FOR THE LAST 2000 YEARS. Even some in the church can't agree on the answer to this question completely! And there's a very good chance you likely have your own ideas about who Jesus was.

He's been called an ordinary man, a prophet, a good teacher, a rabbi, a leader, a revolutionary, a troublemaker, the savior of the world, a crazy man, and a fraud.

The book you are reading will present its own case for who Jesus was and is. One thing that we can agree on is this Jesus was unique.

Many religions have a leader they look back on who anchored their movements, and most of these men are considered great prophets. Few have dared to call

US?

themselves God, but Jesus is one who did just this. He not only claimed to be a man and the Son of God; he claimed to be God himself.

Something else unique about Jesus was his heritage. Unlike many religious leaders, Jesus didn't grow up in a wealthy family or have the best education; he grew up poor and was born in the lowliest of conditions. In fact, he carried this low status into his three-year ministry, where he often hung out with the fringe of society and basically lived homeless while teaching, healing, and loving those society had forgotten.

HOWEVER, PROBABLY THE MOST UNIQUE ASPECT OF JESUS IS THE WAY HE DIED. We don't want to ruin the ending for you (you can read about it later in Luke), but his death is one of the most well-recorded and most talked-about events in the history of mankind. What's so incredible about Jesus is this fact when he died, his movement didn't die with him. In fact it grew rapidly and gained momentum for the first and much of the second century.

You see, Jesus' death is a vital part of his life story. Why? Because that's the reason he came! Understand, Jesus didn't come to build a successful business, or start a money-churning religious movement. He didn't even come so he could be one of the most talked-about men in the history of mankind. He came to die. He came to do what needed to be done so we could live a full life.

OF COURSE, NONE OF THIS WOULD MATTER IF HE STAYED DEAD. Another unique thing about Jesus is that he came back to life after three days in the grave. He conquered death so we could too. Of course, this part may lose you, and we understand that.

This is why we just ask you to do one thing; continue reading this book with an open mind. Because at the end of the day, it's not the history of Jesus that will change your life; it's experiencing him.

CHAPTER
07

■ HEALING THE CENTURION'S SLAVE

verses 1-10

After Jesus had finished teaching all this to the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave who was highly regarded, but who was sick and at the point of death. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. When they came to Jesus, they urged him earnestly, *“He is worthy to have you do this for him, because he loves our nation, and even built our synagogue.”* So Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, *“Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not presume to come to you. Instead, say the word, and my servant must be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another,*

'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him. He turned and said to the crowd that followed him, *"I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith!"* So when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.

■ RAISING A WIDOW'S SON

verses 11-17

Soon afterward Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the town gate, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother (who was a widow), and a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, *"Do not weep."* Then he came up and touched the bier, and those who carried it stood still. He said, *"Young man, I say to you, get up!"* So the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back

to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they began to glorify God, saying, *“A great prophet has appeared among us!”* and *“God has come to help his people!”* This report about Jesus circulated throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

■ JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

verses 18-35

John’s disciples informed him about all these things. So John called two of his disciples and sent them to Jesus to ask, *“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”* When the men came to Jesus, they said,

“JOHN THE BAPTIST HAS SENT US TO YOU TO ASK, ‘ARE YOU THE ONE WHO IS TO COME, OR SHOULD WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?’”

At that very time Jesus cured many people of diseases, sicknesses, and evil spirits, and granted sight to many who were blind. So he answered them, *“Go tell John what you*

JESUS

The blind
the lame
lepers are
cleansed

d see,
e walk,
e
d,

have seen and heard: The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news proclaimed to them. Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

When John’s messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John
“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What did you go out to see? A man dressed in fancy clothes? Look, those who wear fancy clothes and live in luxury are in kings’ courts! What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

**‘Look, I am
sending my
messenger**

ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he is.” (Now all the people who heard this, even the tax collectors, acknowledged God’s justice, because they had been baptized with John’s baptism. However, the Pharisees and the experts in religious law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

“To what then should I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, yet

you did not dance; we wailed in mourning, yet you did not weep.'

For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

■ JESUS' ANOINTING

verses 36-50

Now one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. Then when a woman of that town, who was a sinner, learned that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfumed oil. As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfumed oil. Now when the

Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, *"If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."* So Jesus answered him, *"Simon, I have something to say to you."* He replied, *"Say it, Teacher."* *"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"* Simon answered, *"I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."* Jesus said to him, *"You have judged rightly."* Then, turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, *"Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of greeting, but from the time I entered she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfumed oil."*

**Therefore
I tell you, her
sins, which
were many, are
forgiven,**

thus she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little loves little.” Then Jesus said to her, *“Your sins are forgiven.”* But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, *“Who is this, who even forgives sins?”* He said to the woman, *“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

GOD ABOUT JESUS

Your
sins are
forgiven

CHAPTER
08

JESUS' MINISTRY AND THE HELP OF WOMEN

Some time afterward he went on through towns and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and disabilities Mary (called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Cuza (Herod's household manager), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their own resources.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from one town after another, he spoke to them in a parable *"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along*

the path and was trampled on, and the wild birds devoured it. Other seed fell on rock, and when it came up, it withered because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among the thorns, and they grew up with it and choked it. But other seed fell on good soil and grew, and it produced a hundred times as much grain.” As he said this, he called out, “The one who has ears to hear had better listen!”

Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “You have been given the opportunity to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that although they see they may not see, and although they hear they may not understand.

“Now the parable means this The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be

saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in a time of testing fall away. As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for the seed that landed on good soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word, cling to it with an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with steadfast endurance.

■ SHOWING THE LIGHT

verses 16-18

“No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand so that those who come in can see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be made known and brought to light. So listen carefully,

for whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."

■ JESUS' TRUE FAMILY

verses 19-21

Now Jesus' mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not get near him because of the crowd. So he was told, ***"Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."*** But he replied to them, *"My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."*

■ STILLING OF A STORM

verses 22-25

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, *"Let's go across to the other side of the lake."* So they set out, and as they sailed he fell asleep. Now a violent windstorm came down on the lake, and the boat started filling up with water, and they were in danger. They came and

woke him, saying, *“Master, Master, we are about to die!”* So he got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they died down, and it was calm. Then he said to them, *“Where is your faith?”* But they were afraid and amazed, saying to one another, *“Who then is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him!”*

■ HEALING OF A DEMONIAC

verses 26-39

So they sailed over to the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As Jesus stepped ashore, a certain man from the town met him who was possessed by demons. For a long time this man had worn no clothes and had not lived in a house, but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before him, and shouted with a loud voice, *“Leave me alone, Jesus, Son of the Most High God! I beg you, do not torment me!”* For Jesus had started commanding the evil spirit to come

out of the man. (For it had seized him many times, so he would be bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard. But he would break the restraints and be driven by the demon into deserted places.) Jesus then asked him, *"What is your name?"* He said, **"Legion,"** because many demons had entered him. And they began to beg him not to order them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and the demonic spirits begged Jesus to let them go into them. He gave them permission. So the demons came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep slope into the lake and drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran off and spread the news in the town and countryside. So the people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus. They found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet,

clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the man who had been demon-possessed had been healed. Then all the people of the Gerasenes and the surrounding region asked Jesus to leave them alone, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and left. The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, *“Return to your home, and declare what God has done for you.”* So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole town what Jesus had done for him.

■ RESTORATION AND HEALING

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, because they were all waiting for him. Then a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue, came up. Falling at Jesus’ feet, he pleaded with him to come to his house, because he had an only daughter,

JESUS

“Daughter
your faith
made you
Go in peace

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”
eace.”

about twelve years old, and she was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds pressed around him. Now a woman was there who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years but could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind

Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak, and at once the bleeding stopped. Then Jesus asked, *"Who was it who touched me?"* When they all denied it, Peter said, ***"Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing against you!"*** But Jesus said, *"Someone touched me, for I know that power has gone out from me."* When the woman saw that she could not escape notice, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. Then he said to her, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."*

While he was still speaking, someone from the synagogue ruler's house came and said, *"Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer."* But when Jesus heard this, he told him, *"Do not be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."* Now when he came to the house, Jesus did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. Now they were all wailing and mourning for her, but he said, *"Stop your weeping; she is not dead but asleep."* And they began making fun of him, because they knew that she was dead. But Jesus gently took her by the hand and said, *"Child, get up."* Her spirit returned, and she got up immediately. Then he told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

CHAPTER
09

THE SENDING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

After Jesus called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He said to them, *“Take nothing for your journey – no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, and do not take an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave the area. Wherever they do not receive you, as you leave that town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”* Then they departed and went throughout the villages, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

HEROD'S CONFUSION ABOUT JESUS

Now Herod the tetrarch heard about

everything that was happening, and he was thoroughly perplexed, because some people were saying that John had been raised from the dead, while others were saying that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had risen. Herod said, *“I had John beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?”* So Herod wanted to learn about Jesus.

■ THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

verses 10-17

When the apostles returned, they told Jesus everything they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew privately to a town called Bethsaida. But when the crowds found out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and cured those who needed healing. Now the day began to draw to a close, so the twelve

came and said to Jesus, *“Send the crowd away, so they can go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and food, because we are in an isolated place.”* But he said to them, *“You give them something to eat.”* They replied, *“We have no more than five loaves and two fish – unless we go and buy food for all these people.”* (Now about five thousand men were there.) Then he said to his disciples, *“Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.”* So they did as Jesus directed, and the people all sat down.

THEN HE TOOK THE FIVE LOAVES AND THE TWO FISH, AND LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN HE GAVE THANKS AND BROKE THEM. HE GAVE THEM TO THE DISCIPLES TO SET BEFORE THE CROWD. THEY ALL ATE AND WERE SATISFIED, AND WHAT WAS LEFT OVER WAS PICKED UP – TWELVE BASKETS OF BROKEN PIECES.

■ PETER'S CONFESSION

Once when Jesus was praying by himself, and his disciples were nearby, he asked them, *"Who do the crowds say that I am?"* They answered, *"John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others that one of the prophets of long ago has risen."* Then he said to them, *"But who do you say that I am?"* Peter answered, *"The Christ of God."* But he forcefully commanded them not to tell this to anyone, saying, *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."*

■ A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Then he said to them all, *"If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but*

whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it benefit a person if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you most certainly, there are some standing here who will not experience death before they see the kingdom of God."

■ THE TRANSFIGURATION

verses 28-36

Now about eight days after these sayings, Jesus took with him Peter, John, and James, and went up the mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became very bright, a brilliant white. Then two men, Moses and Elijah, began talking with him. They appeared in glorious splendor and spoke about his departure that he was

JESUS TO THE DISCIPLES

“But wh
you say
I am?”

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y that

about to carry out at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those with him were quite sleepy, but as they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. Then as the men were starting to leave, Peter said to Jesus, *“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”* – not knowing what he was saying. As he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. Then a voice came from the cloud, saying, *“This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him!”* After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. So they kept silent and told no one at that time anything of what they had seen.

■ HEALING A BOY WITH AN UNCLEA N SPIRIT

verses 37-43

Now on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met

him. Then a man from the crowd cried out, *“Teacher, I beg you to look at my son – he is my only child! A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions and causes him to foam at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves him alone, torturing him severely. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.”* Jesus answered, *“You unbelieving and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you and endure you? Bring your son here.”* As the boy was approaching, the demon threw him to the ground and shook him with convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. Then they were all astonished at the mighty power of God.

■ verses 44-45

■ ANOTHER PREDICTION OF JESUS' SUFFERING

But while the entire crowd was amazed at everything Jesus was doing, he said to his

disciples, *“Take these words to heart, for the Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.”* But they did not understand this statement; its meaning had been concealed from them, so that they could not grasp it. Yet they were afraid to ask him about this statement.

■ CONCERNING THE GREATEST

verses 46-48

Now an argument started among the disciples as to which of them might be the greatest. But when Jesus discerned their innermost thoughts, he took a child, had him stand by his side, and said to them, *“Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me, for the one who is least among you all is the one who is great.”*

“This is my Son,
my Chosen
One. Listen
to him!”

■ ON THE RIGHT SIDE

verses 49-50

John answered, *“Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he is not a disciple along with us.”* But Jesus said to him, *“Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you.”*

■ REJECTION IN SAMARIA

verses 51-56

Now when the days drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus set out resolutely to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead of him. As they went along, they entered a Samaritan village to make things ready in advance for him, but the villagers refused to welcome him, because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. Now when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, *“Lord, do you want us to call fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”* But

Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went on to another village.

CHALLENGING PROFESSED FOLLOWERS

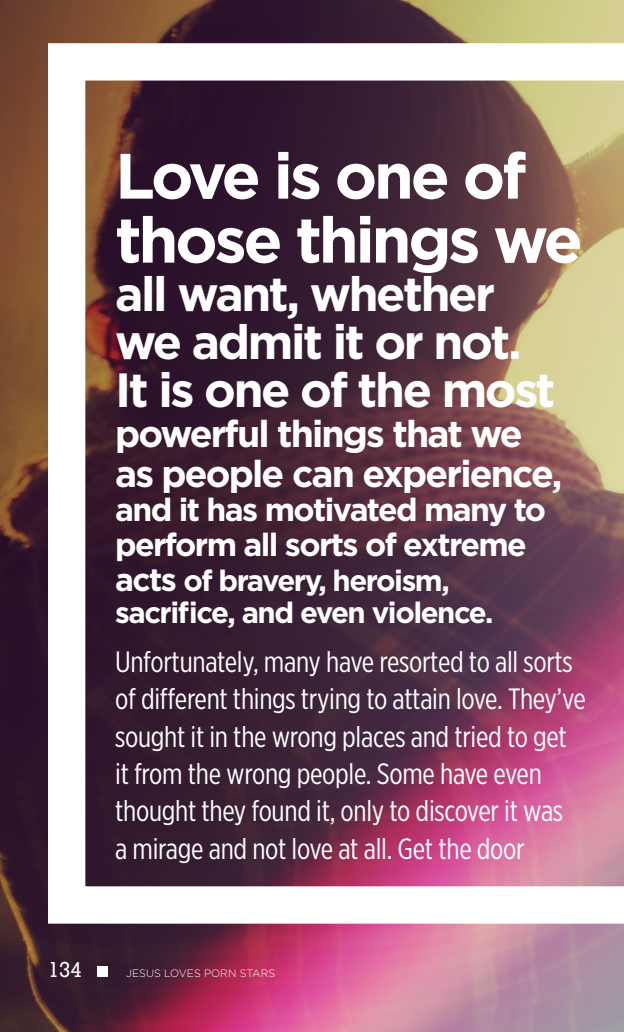
As they were walking along the road, someone said to him, *"I will follow you wherever you go."* Jesus said to him, *"Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* Jesus said to another, *"Follow me."* But he replied, *"Lord, first let me go and bury my father."* But Jesus said to him, *"Let the dead bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."* Yet another said, *"I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say goodbye to my family."* Jesus said to him, *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*



A hand is shown holding a magnifying glass, focusing on a central point. The background is a vibrant, abstract blend of green, yellow, and orange hues, suggesting a natural or organic theme. The entire composition is framed by a thick white border.


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Love is one of those things we all want, whether we admit it or not. It is one of the most powerful things that we as people can experience, and it has motivated many to perform all sorts of extreme acts of bravery, heroism, sacrifice, and even violence.

Unfortunately, many have resorted to all sorts of different things trying to attain love. They've sought it in the wrong places and tried to get it from the wrong people. Some have even thought they found it, only to discover it was a mirage and not love at all. Get the door



slammed in your face enough times and you stop looking. You put up the defenses and say, “I don’t need love. It’s just not worth it.”

The problem is that you can’t buy or earn true love. It just doesn’t work that way. Love is something beautiful, and true love looks very different from what we often picture it to be.

In the Bible, love is described as something that is patient, kind, sacrificial, enduring, humble, just, ever-faithful, and that never keeps a “score.” That type of love is amazing and something many of us can’t wrap our heads around.

**THE PROBLEM IS,
WE NEVER REALLY
SEE THAT TYPE OF
LOVE IN OUR LIVES.**

There was only one person who acted in such a way to perfectly fit this definition of true love.

HIS NAME WAS JESUS.

Jesus said many things and performed many great acts, all motivated by love. Out of love, Jesus showed mercy to the woman caught in adultery and chased away the religious crowd who wanted to execute her. Out of love, Jesus healed the crippled, the diseased, the deaf, and the blind. And out of love, Jesus willingly died the most horrific way you can imagine.

This book you are holding will explain why Jesus, out of love, died the way he did. It will show you that he not only preached love but also lived a life of love.

**YOU SEE,
YOU'RE NOT ONLY
HOLDING A BIBLE;
YOU'RE HOLDING
THE ULTIMATE
LOVE STORY.**

**A STORY ABOUT A
GOD WHO LOVES
YOU SO MUCH HE
DIED FOR YOU.
JESUS WASN'T A
GUY WHO JUST
KNEW HOW TO
LOVE; HE WAS
LOVE HIMSELF.**

CHAPTER
10

THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY-TWO

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him two by two into every town and place where he himself was about to go. He said to them, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest. Go! I am sending you out like lambs surrounded by wolves. Do not carry a money bag, a traveler's bag, or sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whenever you enter a house, first say, 'May peace be on this house!' And if a peace-loving person is there, your peace will remain on him, but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that same house, eating and drinking what they give you, for the worker deserves his pay. Do not move around from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and the*

people welcome you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in that town and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come upon you!' But whenever you enter a town and the people do not welcome you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this The kingdom of God has come.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town!

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you! And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to Hades!

"The one who listens to you listens to me, and the one who rejects you rejects me,

and the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

Then the seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ***“Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!”*** So he said to them, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Look, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions and on the full force of the enemy, and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names stand written in heaven.”*

On that same occasion Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, *“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will. All things have been given to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the*

Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son decides to reveal him."

Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said privately, *"Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*

■ THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

verses 25-37

Now an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus, saying, *"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* He said to him, *"What is written in the law? How do you understand it?"* The expert answered, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."* Jesus said to him, *"You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."*

But the expert, wanting to justify himself,
said to Jesus,

**“And who is
my neighbor?”**

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him up, and went off, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, but when he saw the injured man he passed by on the other side. So too a Levite, when he came up to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was traveling came to where the injured man was, and when he saw him, he felt compassion for him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took

care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying,

‘TAKE CARE OF HIM, AND WHATEVER ELSE YOU SPEND, I WILL REPAY YOU WHEN I COME BACK THIS WAY.’

Which of these three do you think became a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” The expert in religious law said, *“The one who showed mercy to him.”* So Jesus said to him, *“Go and do the same.”*

■ JESUS AND MARTHA

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he

said. But Martha was distracted with all the preparations she had to make, so she came up to him and said, *“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Tell her to help me.”* But the Lord answered her, *“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the best part; it will not be taken away from her.”*

CHAPTER 11

INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAYER

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he stopped, one of his disciples said to him, ***“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*** So he said to them, *“When you pray, say
Father, may your name be honored;
may your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone
who sins against us.
And do not lead us into temptation.”*

Then he said to them, *“Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine has stopped here while on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’ Then he will reply from inside, ‘Do not bother me. The door is*

already shut, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though the man inside will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of the first man's sheer persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

“SO I TELL YOU ASK, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU; SEEK, AND YOU WILL FIND; KNOCK, AND THE DOOR WILL BE OPENED FOR YOU.

For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

JESUS AND BEELZEBUL

Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the man who had been mute began to speak, and the crowds were amazed. But some of them said, ***“By the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, he casts out demons.”***

Others, to test him, began asking for a sign from heaven. But Jesus, realizing their thoughts, said to them, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is destroyed, and a divided household falls. So if Satan too is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? I ask you this because you claim that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. Now if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has already overtaken you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his possessions are safe. But when a*

JESUS

For ever
who as
receive

everyone

asks

es.

stronger man attacks and conquers him, he takes away the first man's armor on which the man relied and divides up his plunder. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

■ verses 24-28

■ RESPONSE TO JESUS' WORK

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it passes through waterless places looking for rest but not finding any. Then it says, 'I will return to the home I left.' When it returns, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there, so the last state of that person is worse than the first."

As he said these things, a woman in the crowd spoke out to him, ***"Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed!"*** But he replied, *"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!"*

THE SIGN OF JONAH

As the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say, *“This generation is a wicked generation; it looks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be a sign to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon – and now, something greater than Solomon is here! The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented when Jonah preached to them – and now, something greater than Jonah is here!”*

INTERNAL LIGHT

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a hidden place or under a basket, but on a

lampstand, so that those who come in can see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is diseased, your body is full of darkness. Therefore see to it that the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part in the dark, it will be as full of light as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

REBUKING THE PHARISEES AND EXPERTS IN THE LAW

As he spoke, a Pharisee invited Jesus to have a meal with him, so he went in and took his place at the table. The Pharisee was astonished when he saw that Jesus did not first wash his hands before the meal. But the Lord said to him, *"Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Didn't the one who made the outside make the inside as well?"*

But give from your heart to those in need, and then everything will be clean for you.

“But woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of your mint, rue, and every herb, yet you neglect justice and love for God! But you should have done these things without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! You love the best seats in the synagogues and elaborate greetings in the marketplaces! Woe to you! You are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it!”

One of the experts in religious law answered him, ***“Teacher, when you say these things you insult us too.”*** But Jesus replied, *“Woe to you experts in religious law as well! You load people down with burdens difficult to bear, yet you yourselves refuse to touch the burdens with even one of your fingers! Woe to you! You build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. So you testify that you approve of the deeds*

of your ancestors, because they killed the prophets and you build their tombs! For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' so that this generation may be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation. Woe to you experts in religious law! You have taken away the key to knowledge! You did not go in yourselves, and you hindered those who were going in." When he went out from there, the experts in the law and the Pharisees began to oppose him bitterly, and to ask him hostile questions about many things, plotting against him, to catch him in something he might say.

CHAPTER
12

FEAR GOD, NOT PEOPLE

Meanwhile, when many thousands of the crowd had gathered so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, *“Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing is secret that will not be made known. So then whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.*

“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more they can do. But I will warn you whom you should fear Fear the one who, after the killing, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Aren’t five sparrows sold for two pennies?

Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. In fact, even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

**“I TELL YOU, WHOEVER
ACKNOWLEDGES ME BEFORE MEN,
THE SON OF MAN WILL ALSO
ACKNOWLEDGE BEFORE
GOD’S ANGELS.**

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before God’s angels. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the person who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. But when they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you should make your defense or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you must say.”

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH LANDOWNER

Then someone from the crowd said to him, *“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”* But Jesus said to him, *“Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator between you two?”* Then he said to them, *“Watch out and guard yourself from all types of greed, because one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* He then told them a parable *“The land of a certain rich man produced an abundant crop, so he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to myself, “You have plenty of goods stored up for many years; relax, eat, drink, celebrate!”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded*

back from you, but who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ So it is with the one who stores up riches for himself, but is not rich toward God.”

■ EXHORTATION NOT TO WORRY

■ verses 22-34

Then Jesus said to his disciples, *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For there is more to life than food, and more to the body than clothing. Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than the birds! And which of you by worrying can add an hour to his life? So if you cannot do such a very little thing as this, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the flowers grow; they do not work or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these! And if this is how God clothes the wild grass,*

which is here today and tomorrow is tossed into the fire to heat the oven, how much more will he clothe you, you people of little faith! So do not be overly concerned about what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not worry about such things. For all the nations of the world pursue these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, pursue his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is well pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide yourselves purses that do not wear out – a treasure in heaven that never decreases, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

■ CALL TO FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

“Get dressed for service and keep your lamps burning; be like people waiting

JESUS

And wh
you by v
can add
hour to h

Which of
worrying
and an
his life?

for their master to come back from the wedding celebration, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he returns! I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, have them take their place at the table, and will come and wait on them! Even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them alert, blessed are those slaves! But understand this If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Then Peter said, ***"Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?"*** The Lord replied, *"Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his household servants, to give them*

their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds at work when he returns. I tell you the truth, the master will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave should say to himself, 'My master is delayed in returning,' and he begins to beat the other slaves, both men and women, and to eat, drink, and get drunk, then the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not foresee, and will cut him in two, and assign him a place with the unfaithful. That servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or do what his master asked will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know his master's will and did things worthy of punishment will receive a light beating.

FROM EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH, MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED, AND FROM THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH MUCH, EVEN MORE WILL BE ASKED.

NOT PEACE, BUT DIVISION

"I have come to bring fire on the earth – and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is finished! Do you think I have come to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! For from now on there will be five in one household divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

READING THE SIGNS

Jesus also said to the crowds, *"When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A rainstorm is coming,' and it does. And when you see the south wind*

blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and there is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky, but how can you not know how to interpret the present time?

■ CLEAR THE DEBTS

verses 57-59

"And why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? As you are going with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, so that he will not drag you before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the very last cent!"

IT'S NOT


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IT'S NOT A



It's not all about you.

Ever heard someone say that? Sometimes we need to hear this but other times it's a shot in the gut. Especially when we're hurting or stressed and everyone keeps saying, "It's not about you."

**BUT WHEN IT COMES
TO JESUS, IT REALLY IS
ALL ABOUT YOU.**

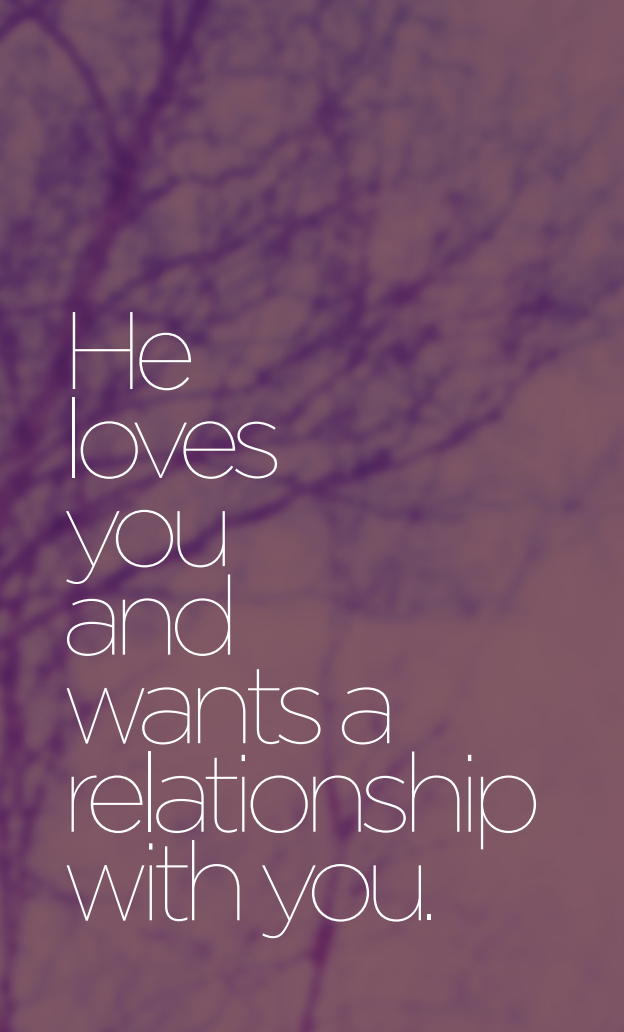
Jesus loves you. It doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, or what you've said. He loves you anyway. In fact, he loves you even if you don't return the favor. Doesn't matter.

HE LOVES YOU AND WANTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.

You see, Jesus not only loves you – he pursues you. His entire focus is on you. You matter to God. In the Bible, God refers to us as his children. That's how God thinks of you, as a son or daughter. And the great thing is that God is not just any dad, he's the perfect dad. He doesn't want to hurt you or abuse you. He always has time for you and is never too busy for you. Starting to get the picture?

When Jesus was on earth, he continually invited people to follow him, and he makes the same invitation to you. He says it this way:

“IF YOU ARE TIRED FROM CARRYING HEAVY BURDENS, COME TO ME AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST... I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE, AND YOU WILL FIND REST.”



He
loves
you
and
wants a
relationship
with you.

Jesus wants a relationship with you. Why? Is it because he has a big ego and needs more followers? No! It's because he loves you and wants to give you rest. He wants you to experience a love so full and rich that you could never imagine it on your own or get it from anywhere else.

This book tells about God's incredible love for you. Keep reading it and see that while God always loves you, you need to love him back to get this "rest" that Jesus offered.

JESUS CAME TO GIVE YOU A BETTER LIFE,

a life filled with purposes and meaning. He's always there for you with his arms wide open; you just need to meet him.

Don't let your past prevent you from experiencing a better future. Don't think that anything you've done has caused Jesus to overlook you. He doesn't overlook anyone. You matter to him, and in this case it's okay for it to be "all about you" because ultimately, that's why Jesus came and died ... for you.

CHAPTER
13

A CALL TO REPENT

Now there were some present on that occasion who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. He answered them, *“Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered these things? No, I tell you! But unless you repent, you will all perish as well! Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you! But unless you repent you will all perish as well!”*

WARNING TO ISRAEL TO BEAR FRUIT

Then Jesus told this parable *“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he*

came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the worker who tended the vineyard, 'For three years now, I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and each time I inspect it I find none. Cut it down! Why should it continue to deplete the soil?' But the worker answered him, 'Sir, leave it alone this year too, until I dig around it and put fertilizer on it. Then if it bears fruit next year, very well, but if not, you can cut it down.'"

■ HEALING ON THE SABBATH

verses 10-17

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, and a woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten herself up completely. When Jesus saw her, he called her to him and said, "*Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.*" Then he placed his hands on her, and immediately she straightened

up and praised God. But the president of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the crowd, *“There are six days on which work should be done! So come and be healed on those days, and not on the Sabbath day.”* Then the Lord answered him, *“You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from its stall, and lead it to water? Then shouldn’t this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be released from this imprisonment on the Sabbath day?”* When he said this all his adversaries were humiliated, but the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things he was doing.

■ ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Thus Jesus asked, *“What is the kingdom of God like? To what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a man took*

and sowed in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the wild birds nested in its branches.”

Again he said, *“To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until all the dough had risen.”*

THE NARROW DOOR

verses 22-30

Then Jesus traveled throughout towns and villages, teaching and making his way toward Jerusalem. Someone asked him, ***“Lord, will only a few be saved?”*** So he said to them, *“Exert every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, then you will stand outside and start to knock on the door and beg him, ‘Lord, let us in!’ But he will answer you, ‘I don’t know where you come*

from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will reply,

‘I DON’T KNOW WHERE YOU COME FROM! GO AWAY FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS!’

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves thrown out. Then people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and take their places at the banquet table in the kingdom of God. But indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

■ GOING TO JERUSALEM

At that time, some Pharisees came up and said to Jesus, **“Get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you.”** But he

said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Look, I am casting out demons and performing healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible that a prophet should be killed outside Jerusalem.' O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it! Look, your house is forsaken! And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

ABOUT JESUS

'Blessed
is the one
who comes
in the name
of the Lord!'

CHAPTER
14

HEALING AGAIN ON THE SABBATH

Now one Sabbath when Jesus went to dine at the house of a leader of the Pharisees, they were watching him closely. There right in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. So Jesus asked the experts in religious law and the Pharisees, *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”* But they remained silent. So Jesus took hold of the man, healed him, and sent him away. Then he said to them, *“Which of you, if you have a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?”* But they could not reply to this.

ON SEEKING SEATS OF HONOR

Then when Jesus noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. He said to them, *“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast,*

do not take the place of honor, because a person more distinguished than you may have been invited by your host. So the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your place.' Then, ashamed, you will begin to move to the least important place. But when you are invited, go and take the least important place, so that when your host approaches he will say to you, 'Friend, move up here to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who share the meal with you.

FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED, BUT THE ONE WHO HUMBLLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.”

He said also to the man who had invited him, “*When you host a dinner or a banquet, don’t invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors so you can be invited by them*

in return and get repaid. But when you host an elaborate meal, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

■ THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

verses 15-24

When one of those at the meal with Jesus heard this, he said to him, ***“Blessed is everyone who will feast in the kingdom of God!”*** But Jesus said to him, *“A man once gave a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time for the banquet he sent his slave to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, because everything is now ready.’ But one after another they all began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen,*

and I am going out to examine them. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I just got married, and I cannot come.' So the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the master of the household was furious and said to his slave, 'Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' Then the slave said, 'Sir, what you instructed has been done, and there is still room.' So the master said to his slave, 'Go out to the highways and country roads and urge people to come in, so that my house will be filled. For I tell you, not one of those individuals who were invited will taste my banquet!'"

■ COUNTING THE COST

verses 25-35

Now large crowds were accompanying Jesus, and turning to them he said, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate*

JESUS

For everyone
who exalts
himself will be
humbled.

his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't sit down first and compute the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish the tower, all who see it will begin to make fun of him. They will say, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish!' Or what king, going out to confront another king in battle, will not sit down first and determine whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot succeed, he will send a representative while the other is still a long way off and ask for terms of peace. In the same way therefore not one

of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his own possessions.

“Salt is good, but if salt loses its flavor, how can its flavor be restored? It is of no value for the soil or for the manure pile; it is to be thrown out.

**The one who
has ears to
hear had
better listen!”**

CHAPTER
15

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP AND COIN

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming to hear him. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law were complaining, *“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

So Jesus told them this parable *“Which one of you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, would not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go look for the one that is lost until he finds it? Then when he has found it, he places it on his shoulders, rejoicing. Returning home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, telling them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.’ I tell you, in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous*

people who have no need to repent.

“Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search thoroughly until she finds it? Then when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ In the same way, I tell you,

THERE IS JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD’S ANGELS OVER ONE SINNER WHO REPENTS.”

■ THE PARABLE OF THE COMPASSIONATE FATHER

verses 11-32

Then Jesus said, “A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. After a few days, the younger son gathered together all he had

and left on a journey to a distant country, and there he squandered his wealth with a wild lifestyle. Then after he had spent everything, a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and worked for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He was longing to eat the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired workers have food enough to spare, but here I am dying from hunger! I will get up and go to my father and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way from home his father saw him, and his heart went out to him; he ran and hugged his son and kissed him.

JESUS

'Rejoice v
because
found my
that was

with me,
I have
my sheep
lost.

Then his son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Hurry! Bring the best robe, and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Bring the fattened calf and kill it!

**Let us eat and
celebrate,
because this
son of mine
was dead, and
is alive again**

- he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.

"Now his older son was in the field. As

he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the slaves and asked what was happening. The slave replied, 'Your brother has returned, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he got his son back safe and sound.' But the older son became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and appealed to him, but he answered his father, 'Look! These many years I have worked like a slave for you, and I never disobeyed your commands. Yet you never gave me even a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends! But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and everything that belongs to me is yours. It was appropriate to celebrate and be glad, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found.'"



A ESCO Sto

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ory

Meet Annie:

I was a prostitute for escort services in Las Vegas, in the casinos and on the street, and I was an exotic dancer in the clubs. I did it all. I lived this lifestyle for over 11 years... and it just didn't happen overnight.

It all started when I was a little girl. I never felt really loved; there was abuse in my family that lowered my self-esteem to the degree that I became desperate for love.

My first sexual experience happened with a close friend of mine when I was eight years old. Also, as a "family duty," I went to church every week, but because of the hypocrisy in the church and in my home, I couldn't really believe God was real.

I became the party girl, going to nightclubs, drinking/drug parties, hanging out in bad parts of town, consuming sexually explicit media, and reading

“fashion” magazines. This is when the first of many rapes happened.

I did it all. Prostitution (both on the street and high-class call girl), exotic strip dancing, nude modeling, drugs of every kind, sex addiction, cutting, abortions and miscarriages, masturbation addiction, pornography, bisexuality, men addiction, gambling, binge-drinking, smoking, bulimia, and jail time.

I first got “turned out” in Hawaii, then went back to work in Minnesota as an escort, then an exotic dancer, and eventually that led me to Las Vegas, where the temptation of even bigger money tugged at my desires. I thought I could go to Vegas and get in and out quick... leave with my fortune so I could finally go to music college (since I’d never been able to afford it). Little did I know what would really happen with the choice I had just made.

WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT, I HAD BECOME A SLAVE TO THE SEX INDUSTRY...

but no one at the time could point that out to me for I had made the choice to do it on my own.

Many times I just wanted to die when I went to sleep at night after I worked, I felt so dirty, sleazy.

I was beaten, raped, kidnapped, strangled, and suffocated. I had guns put in my mouth, my hair cut off, and numerous bones broken. I was tied up, gagged, put in trunks of cars, spit on, kicked, pushed, and stalked by crazy men... and during that time I was also pimped out for five years.

I fell in love with my pimp before I even knew he was a pimp; I stayed with him because I was so in love. I finally got the courage to leave him, but had another tragedy come into my life. I developed Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer while I was still working. I was told that I was in stage two of the cancer and my chances of beating it were not very good. I then had to go through chemo and radiation for two years.

THEN SOMETHING VERY TRAGIC HAPPENED... my sister (and best friend) died at a the very young age of 31, my Uncle Richard died, my Grandpa Osgar died, and my dad was diagnosed with cancer – all within a period of

five months! So as you can imagine, I was pretty mad at God and wasn't sure if he was even real.

And yet, my cancer went away. And believe it or not, afterwards, I started doing drugs. At first it was just the painkillers that were prescribed to me for cancer and back pain. Then, I began using cocaine. I was instantly addicted! That led to other things a pain pill addiction, somas, Xanax, Valium, meth, smoking, and drinking. I became a gambling addict eventually because of the excessive drugs.

I TRIED ALL KINDS OF DIFFERENT “BELIEFS” like vampirism, Wicca, Buddhism, free masonry, new ageism, and many others, but nothing brought me peace.

I had met this man on a call early in my career, and he was very sweet to me. Over the years we kept in contact with each other and became very good friends. He actually was instrumental in getting me to quit... and I did, in 1998. We lived a fast and expensive life in the “corporate” business world. Though I didn't realize it at the time, I had what doctors call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

I would stay up for days on end getting so drunk and high, then pass out on my floor in my walk-in closet in my million-dollar home, with only my drugs, wine, and cigarettes to keep me company. With tears and mascara running down my face, I would cry... “God where are you? I’m messed up God! Why me? I’m mad at you, God! You said you loved me! Why is this happening to me?”

I had given up. I knew no matter what I did, nothing mattered to me anymore. I overdosed on cocaine, alcohol, Xanax, pain pills, and somas. I took a hit of cocaine and thought I was going to die, the pain in my chest was so scary. As I fell to the ground, all I could see was my life flashing before me. I instinctively could only say the name of Jesus from my lips “Jesus, I am sorry!” I said.

“JESUS, PLEASE, IF YOU ARE REAL, PLEASE GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE!”

I had prayed this prayer before, but this time I really meant it and surrendered. As the sirens rang out from the ambulance, I prayed to him that if he saved me,

I would tell the whole world about his salvation and who he is. Well, Jesus came to my rescue. And that girl I used to be? She died that day.

I finally found the truth, and it was not in some man, materialism, drug, or fantasy. It is in a man who will never leave you nor forsake you.

**HE IS FAITHFUL, MERCIFUL,
GRACEFUL, AND KIND, BUT
MOST OF ALL HE LOVES ME
FOR ME AND NOT WHO I
USED TO BE! HIS NAME IS
JESUS CHRIST.**

CHAPTER
16

THE PARABLE OF THE CLEVER STEWARD

Jesus also said to the disciples, *“There was a rich man who was informed of accusations that his manager was wasting his assets. So he called the manager in and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Turn in the account of your administration, because you can no longer be my manager.’ Then the manager said to himself, ‘What should I do, since my master is taking my position away from me? I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m too ashamed to beg. I know what to do so that when I am put out of management, people will welcome me into their homes.’ So he contacted his master’s debtors one by one. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ The man replied, ‘A hundred measures of olive oil.’ The manager said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and*

write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' The second man replied, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' The master commended the dishonest manager because he acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their contemporaries than the people of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by how you use worldly wealth, so that when it runs out you will be welcomed into the eternal homes.

“THE ONE WHO IS FAITHFUL IN A VERY LITTLE IS ALSO FAITHFUL IN MUCH, AND THE ONE WHO IS DISHONEST IN A VERY LITTLE IS ALSO DISHONEST IN MUCH.

If then you haven't been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches? And if you haven't been trustworthy with someone

else's property, who will give you your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

■ verses 14-18

MORE WARNINGS ABOUT THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees (who loved money) heard all this and ridiculed him. But Jesus said to them, *"You are the ones who justify yourselves in men's eyes, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly prized among men is utterly detestable in God's sight.*

"The law and the prophets were in force until John; since then, the good news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is urged to enter it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tiny stroke of a letter in the law to become void.

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery, and the one who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

■ verses 19-31

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. But at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus whose body was covered with sores, who longed to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. In addition, the dogs came and licked his sores.

“Now the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. And in hell, as he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far off with Lazarus at his side. So he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in anguish in this

fire.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus likewise bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us, so that those who want to cross over from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ So the rich man said, ‘Then I beg you, father – send Lazarus to my father’s house (for I have five brothers) to warn them so that they don’t come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they must respond to them.’ Then the rich man said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ He replied to him, ‘If they do not respond to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

CHAPTER
17

SIN, FORGIVENESS, FAITH, AND SERVICE

Jesus said to his disciples, *“Stumbling blocks are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him to have a millstone tied around his neck and be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. Watch yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him. Even if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times returns to you saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”*

The apostles said to the Lord, ***“Increase our faith!”*** So the Lord replied, *“If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this black mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled out by the roots and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.*

“Would any one of you say to your slave who comes in from the field after plowing or shepherding sheep, ‘Come at once and sit down for a meal’? Won’t the master instead say to him, ‘Get my dinner ready, and make yourself ready to serve me while I eat and drink. Then you may eat and drink’? He won’t thank the slave because he did what he was told, will he? So you too, when you have done everything you were commanded to do, should say, ‘We are slaves undeserving of special praise; we have only done what was our duty.’”

verses 11-19

THE GRATEFUL LEPER

Now on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance, raised their voices and said, ***“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”*** When

he saw them he said, *“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* And as they went along, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He fell with his face to the ground at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. (Now he was a Samaritan.) Then Jesus said, *“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to turn back and give praise to God except this foreigner?”* Then he said to the man, *“Get up and go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

■ THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

Now at one point the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming, so he answered, *“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”*

LEPARS TO JESUS

“Jesus, M
have me
on us.”

Master,
mercy

■ THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

verses 22-37

Then he said to the disciples, *“The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. Then people will say to you, ‘Look, there he is!’ or ‘Look, here he is!’ Do not go out or chase after them. For just like the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.*

BUT FIRST HE MUST SUFFER MANY THINGS AND BE REJECTED BY THIS GENERATION.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage – right up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, people

were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; but on the day Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be the same on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, anyone who is on the roof, with his goods in the house, must not come down to take them away, and likewise the person in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two people in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

Then the disciples said to him, "**Where, Lord?**" He replied to them, "*Where the dead body is, there the vultures will gather.*"

CHAPTER
18

PRAYER AND THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

Then Jesus told them a parable to show them they should always pray and not lose heart. He said, *“In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. There was also a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but later on he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor have regard for people, yet because this widow keeps on bothering me, I will give her justice, or in the end she will wear me out by her unending pleas.’”* And the Lord said, *“Listen to what the unrighteous judge says! Won’t God give justice to his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay long to help them? I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless,*

when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

■ THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND TAX COLLECTOR

verses 9-14

Jesus also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else. *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.' The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!' I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be*

humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

■ JESUS AND LITTLE CHILDREN

verses 15-17

Now people were even bringing their babies to him for him to touch. But when the disciples saw it, they began to scold those who brought them. But Jesus called for the children, saying, *“Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”*

■ THE WEALTHY RULER

verses 18-30

Now a certain ruler asked him, ***“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** Jesus said to him, *“Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments*

JESUS

“Let the
little children
come to me.”

*‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” The man replied, **“I have wholeheartedly obeyed all these laws since my youth.”** When Jesus heard this, he said to him, *“One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”* But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was extremely wealthy. When Jesus noticed this, he said, *“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”* Those who heard this said, ***“Then who can be saved?”*** He replied, *“What is impossible for mere humans is possible for God.”* And Peter said, ***“Look, we have left everything we own to follow you!”*** Then Jesus said to them, ***“I tell you the truth, there is no one****

who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of God's kingdom who will not receive many times more in this age – and in the age to come, eternal life.”

■ ANOTHER PREDICTION OF JESUS' PASSION

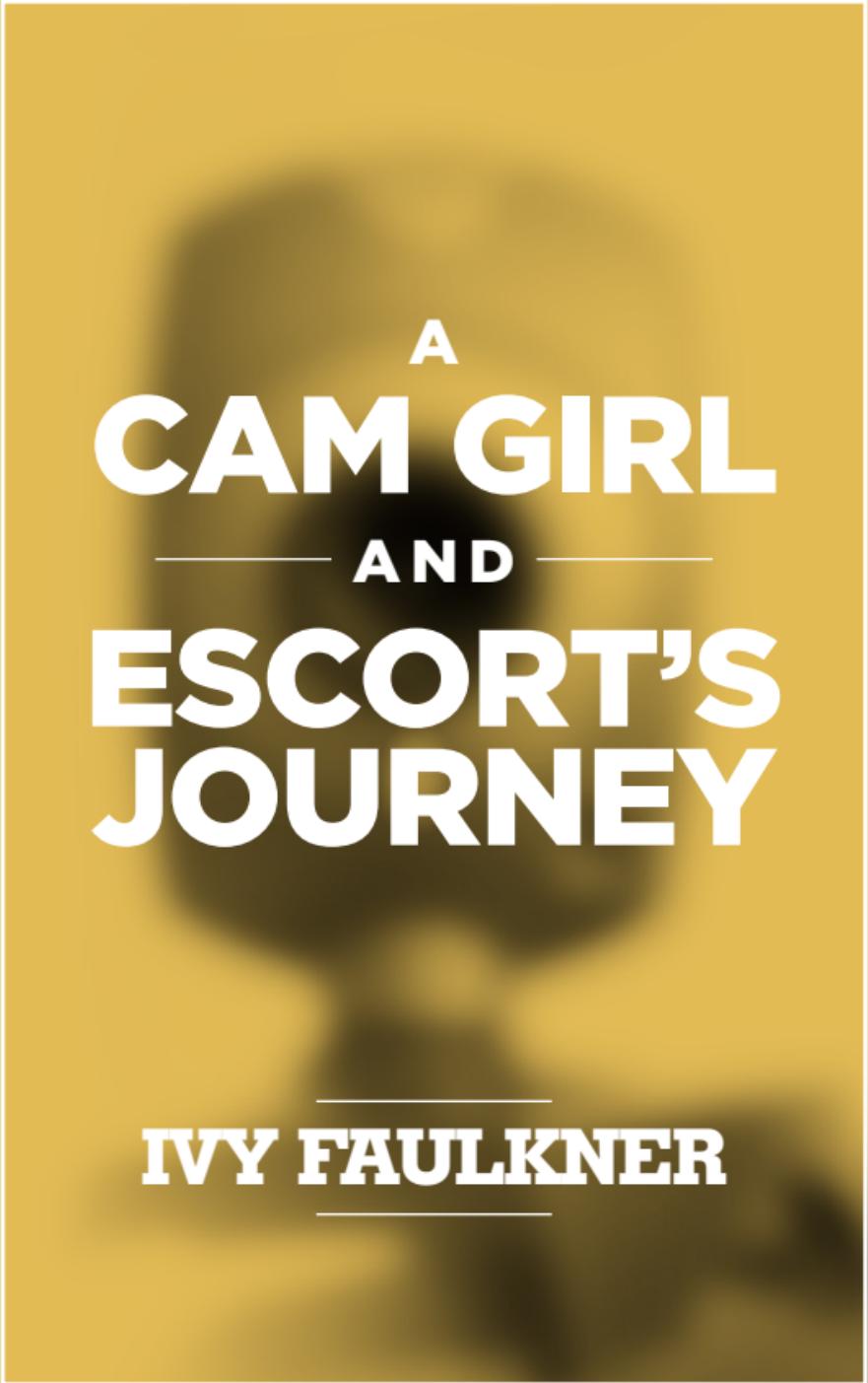
verses 31-34

Then Jesus took the twelve aside and said to them, “*Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; he will be mocked, mistreated, and spat on. They will flog him severely and kill him. Yet on the third day he will rise again.*” But the twelve understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what Jesus meant.

HEALING A BLIND MAN

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was going on. They told him, *“Jesus the Nazarene is passing by.”* So he called out, *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* And those who were in front scolded him to get him to be quiet, but he shouted even more, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* So Jesus stopped and ordered the beggar to be brought to him. When the man came near, Jesus asked him, *“What do you want me to do for you?”* He replied, *“Lord, let me see again.”* Jesus said to him, *“Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.”*

AND IMMEDIATELY HE REGAINED HIS SIGHT AND FOLLOWED JESUS, PRAISING GOD. WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE SAW IT, THEY TOO GAVE PRAISE TO GOD.



**A
CAM GIRL
— AND —
ESCORT'S
JOURNEY**

IVY FAULKNER

MY HUSBAND REALLY LIKED WATCHING PORN AND WOULD SHOW ME WHAT HE LIKED. THERE WAS A SERIES ON HBO THAT HE LIKED TO WATCH AND I WOULD ALWAYS THINK TO MYSELF, I COULD DO THAT... AND MAYBE EVEN DO IT BETTER. SO, I FOCUSED ON LOSING THE WEIGHT FROM MY PREGNANCY AND GETTING BACK INTO SHAPE, BETTER THAN EVER.

Believe it or not, on our anniversary that year, we stopped at a strip club and I told my husband to wait in the car while I went inside and auditioned. He was actually fine with that and supported it. Being on stage was nothing new to me – I grew up dancing and performing – so I thought the only difference was that I was taking off my clothes.

SO I BEGAN DANCING and enjoyed it. Yes, I actually enjoyed it at that point. I began planning to leave my husband with the money I was making. I also put some photographs on the internet. I began getting

so many offers for paid shoots that I had no idea what to do. I had no idea what to charge. So I researched other models, found the going rates and began to respond to offers. I spent the next year traveling at least two weeks of every month, shooting for every camera owner who called themselves a photographer and was willing to pay me. I made quite a bit of money. I taught myself to design sites, promote them, shoot content for other models and on and on.

I SPENT SEVEN YEARS building myself and other models and sites to a well-known level on the internet. I figured I was successful at it when I began to get recognized in public by men who had seen me on this or that website or in this or that magazine. Along with that came stalkers and others who threatened to go to my children's schools and post my nude pictures all over my town. I dealt with all types and really began to hate the attention, to the point where I never wanted to leave the house. So I stayed in most of the time, on the computer, doing live webcam shows weekly for members of my site. Then I began to get the fan offers.

I figured I could make it on my own with the money from my sites and from the club. But it got really rough

and those offers from fans to meet me in person began to look even better. So I gave in. I started escorting, using my “internet fame” to justify very high rates. I made a lot of money, but where did it get me? Was I happy? Did I save any of that money for something great? No. Because it was all a lie! The devil is a liar and a thief who comes to steal and destroy!

Every client I met with gave me a sickening feeling in my stomach, and I basically just blacked out during those hours. I began only working as much as I had to pay the bills, and I dreaded even that much. My depression and panic attacks began to worsen and I began to shut down completely.

All the little steps led me to this place where I opened my eyes and really asked myself...

WHO IN THE WORLD HAVE I BECOME? HOW DID I GET HERE?

I had left my husband, tearing apart my marriage of 13 years and the only life my children knew... and for what? Who am I?

It was at that moment that the still small voice which I once knew very well whispered into my ear and reminded me “You are my child, you always have been and I have been here waiting for you to return to me. I am the Father who loves you unconditionally... I am the man who thinks you are more beautiful each and every day and you are more beautiful each and every day... you are precious in my sight.”

IT’S LIKE I WOKE UP from a nightmare. I gave my life over to God entirely in that moment, and I will not allow the enemy or any person or device he sends out after me draw me back into a life filled with the pain, shame, and guilt I once held in my heart.

Through the blood of Jesus, I have been washed clean. All that was old has been taken away and step by step, one by one, he’s changing my heart with every thought in my head, every step that I take and every moment that I breathe. Greater than that, He has filled me with a joy and a peace unlike any other. I am in love for the very first time in my life, and there is no way to express those feelings with words.

HE LOVES ME. HE PROTECTS ME. HE GUIDES ME...

in the way I should go and He safeguards my each and every step.

Jesus has filled my heart with a love and a burden for others like myself. Every moment of our lives happens for a reason and I truly believe God allows us to go through things in our lives so that in the end, we can reach others more easily having been there ourselves! I live today only for that reason, which is why I am sharing my story in these pages. If you're tired of trying to keep up with the game, if you're weary and overwhelmed with thoughts of despair, or if you're still holding it all together but deep down know there must be another way, I'm here to tell you the book you are holding, written by the greatest Author ever known, will show you the love of Jesus.

GOD IS JUST WAITING FOR YOU!

CHAPTER
19

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. Now a man named Zacchaeus was there; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to get a look at Jesus, but being a short man he could not see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, because Jesus was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to him, *“Zacchaeus, come down quickly, because I must stay at your house today.”* So he came down quickly and welcomed Jesus joyfully. And when the people saw it, they all complained,

“HE HAS GONE IN TO BE THE GUEST OF A MAN WHO IS A SINNER.”

But Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, *“Look, Lord, half of my possessions I now give to the poor, and if I have*

cheated anyone of anything, I am paying back four times as much!" Then Jesus said to him, *"Today salvation has come to this household, because he too is a son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

■ THE PARABLE OF THE TEN MINAS

verses 11-27

While the people were listening to these things, Jesus proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. Therefore he said, *"A nobleman went to a distant country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. And he summoned ten of his slaves, gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to be king over us!' When he returned after*

receiving the kingdom, he summoned these slaves to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had earned by trading. So the first one came before him and said, 'Sir, your mina has made ten minas more.' And the king said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, you will have authority over ten cities.' Then the second one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has made five minas.' So the king said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another slave came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina that I put away for safekeeping in a piece of cloth. For I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You withdraw what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.' The king said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! So you knew, did you, that I was a severe man, withdrawing what I didn't deposit

and reaping what I didn't sow? Why then didn't you put my money in the bank, so that when I returned I could have collected it with interest?' And he said to his attendants, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has ten.' But they said to him, 'Sir, he has ten minas already!' 'I tell you that everyone who has will be given more, but from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be their king, bring them here and slaughter them in front of me!'"

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

■ verses 28-40

After Jesus had said this, he continued on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. Now when he approached Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, telling them, *"Go to the village ahead of you. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied there that*

has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent ahead found it exactly as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ***"Why are you untying that colt?"*** They replied, ***"The Lord needs it."*** Then they brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt, and had Jesus get on it. As he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen

**“Blessed is
the king who
comes in the**

name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

But some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “*Teacher, rebuke your disciples.*”

He answered, “*I tell you, if they keep silent, the very stones will cry out!*”

JESUS WEEPS FOR JERUSALEM UNDER JUDGMENT

■ verses 41-44

Now when Jesus approached and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “*If you had only known on this day, even you, the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come*

upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and surround you and close in on you from every side. They will demolish you – you and your children within your walls – and they will not leave within you one stone on top of another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.”

■ CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

verses 45-48

Then Jesus entered the temple courts and began to drive out those who were selling things there, saying to them, *“It is written, ‘My house will be a house of prayer,’ but you have turned it into a den of robbers!”*

Jesus was teaching daily in the temple courts. The chief priests and the experts in the law and the prominent leaders among the people were seeking to assassinate him, but they could not find a way to do it, for all the people hung on his words.

CHAPTER
20

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Now one day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the gospel, the chief priests and the experts in the law with the elders came up and said to him, *“Tell us By what authority are you doing these things? Or who it is who gave you this authority?”* He answered them, *“I will also ask you a question, and you tell me John’s baptism – was it from heaven or from people?”* So they discussed it with one another, saying, *“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From people,’ all the people will stone us, because they are convinced that John was a prophet.”* So they replied that they did not know where it came from. Then Jesus said to them, *“Neither will I tell you by whose authority I do these things.”*

THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

Then he began to tell the people this parable *"A man planted a vineyard, leased it to tenant farmers, and went on a journey for a long time. When harvest time came, he sent a slave to the tenants so that they would give him his portion of the crop. However, the tenants beat his slave and sent him away empty-handed. So he sent another slave. They beat this one too, treated him outrageously, and sent him away empty-handed. So he sent still a third. They even wounded this one, and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What should I do?*

**I WILL SEND MY ONE DEAR SON;
PERHAPS THEY WILL RESPECT HIM.'**

But when the tenants saw him, they said to one another, 'This is the heir; let's kill him so the inheritance will be ours!' So they threw him out of the

vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When the people heard this, they said, **“May this never happen!”** But Jesus looked straight at them and said, *“Then what is the meaning of that which is written ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and the one on whom it falls will be crushed.”* Then the experts in the law and the chief priests wanted to arrest him that very hour, because they realized he had told this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

■ PAYING TAXES TO CAESAR

Then they watched him carefully and sent spies who pretended to be sincere. They wanted to take advantage of what he might

JESUS

“Give to Caesar
things that
are to Caesar
and to God
things that are to God.”

Caesar the
are Caesar's,
the things
d's."

say so that they could deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. Thus they asked him, *“Teacher, we know that you speak and teach correctly, and show no partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar or not?”* But Jesus perceived their deceit and said to them, *“Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?”* They said, *“Caesar’s.”* So he said to them, *“Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* Thus they were unable in the presence of the people to trap him with his own words. And stunned by his answer, they fell silent.

MARRIAGE AND THE RESURRECTION

Now some Sadducees (who contend that there is no resurrection) came to him. They

asked him, *“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies leaving a wife but no children, that man must marry the widow and father children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died without children. The second and then the third married her, and in this same way all seven died, leaving no children. Finally the woman died too. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For all seven had married her.”*

So Jesus said to them, *“The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are regarded as worthy to share in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. In fact, they can no longer die, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, since they are sons of the resurrection. But even Moses revealed that the dead are raised in the passage about*

the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live before him.” Then some of the experts in the law answered, ***“Teacher, you have spoken well!”*** For they did not dare any longer to ask him anything.

■ verses 41-44

THE MESSIAH, DAVID'S SON AND LORD

But he said to them, *“How is it that they say that the Christ is David's son? For David himself says in the book of Psalms,*

‘The Lord said to my lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

*until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”’*

*If David then calls him ‘Lord,’
how can he be his son?”*

JESUS WARNS THE DISCIPLES AGAINST PRIDE

As all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, *“Beware of the experts in the law. They like walking around in long robes, and they love elaborate greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ property, and as a show make long prayers. They will receive a more severe punishment.”*

CHAPTER
21

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box. He also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, *"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all offered their gifts out of their wealth. But she, out of her poverty, put in everything she had to live on."*

THE SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE

Now while some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and offerings, Jesus said, *"As for these things that you are gazing at, the days will come when not one stone will be left on another. All will be torn down!"* So they asked him, *"Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will be*

the sign that these things are about to take place?" He said, "Watch out that you are not misled. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them! And when you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be afraid. For these things must happen first, but the end will not come at once."

■ verses 10-19

PERSECUTION OF DISCIPLES

Then he said to them, "Nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven. But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you, handing you over to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will be a time for you to serve as witnesses. Therefore be resolved not

to rehearse ahead of time how to make your defense. For I will give you the words along with the wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will have some of you put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of my name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish.

**By your
endurance you
will gain your
lives.**

■ THE DESOLATION OF JERUSALEM

verses 20-24

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation

has come near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Those who are inside the city must depart. Those who are out in the country must not enter it, because these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing their babies in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away as captives among all nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

■ THE ARRIVAL OF THE SON OF MAN

“And there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth nations will be in distress, anxious over the roaring of the sea and the surging waves. People will be fainting from fear and from the

JESUS

Heaven and
earth will pass
away, but my
words will
never pass
away.

expectation of what is coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to happen, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

■ THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

verses 29-33

Then he told them a parable “Look at the fig tree and all the other trees. When they sprout leaves, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near. So also you, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

BE READY!

“But be on your guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day close down upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will overtake all who live on the face of the whole earth. But stay alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that must happen, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

So every day Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, but at night he went and stayed on the Mount of Olives. And all the people came to him early in the morning to listen to him in the temple courts.



**A
MESSAGE
FROM
BRITTONI**

**BRITTNI WAS ONCE KNOWN AS
JENNA PRESLEY IN THE WORLD
OF PORN. SHE MADE PORN FOR 7
YEARS AND CLIMBED THE SEX-
INDUSTRY LADDER TO BECOME
ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN
PORN STARS IN THE INDUSTRY.**

WE AT XXXCHURCH MET BRITTNI
MANY YEARS AGO AT A PORN
CONVENTION, **HAD A FEW
SIMPLE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT
NOTHING IN PARTICULAR,** AND
GAVE HER A BIBLE SIMILAR TO
THE ONE YOU ARE HOLDING
NOW. **BRITTNI HAS A MESSAGE
FOR YOU IN HER OWN WORDS...**

Throughout my porn career, I often felt stuck. Although at times I felt beautiful because of all the compliments I received from directors, fans, and agents, at the end of the day when I went home, I felt broken, hopeless, and lost. The thoughts ran through my mind all the time. There has to be something better than this, but what is it? What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose? Why am I here? Dare I find out? If I leave the porn industry, what am I supposed to do? Who will ever hire me? Who will ever love me? This is all I have known for 7 years of my life. I will be starting from scratch and what does that even look like? Maybe I am meant to be a porn star; maybe this is my calling; maybe I should stick it out...

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. Until one day, on my way to shoot a porn scene, I decided to bring a Bible.

I read quite a few verses in the book of Revelation and realized my calling was greater than porn. I am called to be a star, yes, but not a porn star. I am called for greatness; I am called to do things that bring me joy and peace without the use of drugs or alcohol. Life does get better; there is life after porn.

There is
HOPE, there
is **JOY**, there
is **PEACE**,

and I found all of that in Jesus. Seeking Jesus was the best decision I ever made. I will never turn back.

If you are reading this today, I want you to know the truth. I want you to know what

God thinks of you. The Bible says you are a masterpiece, which means you weren't mass-produced;

You are
**ONE OF A
KIND** to the
Almighty
God.

He loves you so much. He is not mad at you at all. He loves and cares about you tremendously. God is not like any man you have ever met; he is not a man that he should lie. His promises are sincere and he promises you life and life in abundance. You are nothing less than amazing.

God wants you and He wants all of you.

He loves you and cherishes every single breath you take. You are his child and he is your father. He created you and desires a relationship with you. People may give up on you but God never will. **‘GOD KNOWS THE PLANS HE HAS FOR YOU, PLANS TO PROSPER YOU, NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE.’** He wants to see you succeed in all that you do according to his will. What God desires for you is kinder, sweeter, and greater than you ever could imagine for yourself. In order to receive all of the wonderful things he has for you, you must ask for forgiveness and begin to seek him. As you do so, you will find him, and you will discover life after heartache.

To hear Brittini's story visit
<http://x3.cm/brittini>



CHAPTER
22

JUDAS' DECISION TO BETRAY JESUS

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.

The chief priests and the experts in the law were trying to find some way to execute Jesus, for they were afraid of the people.

Then Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve. He went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers of the temple guard how he might betray Jesus, handing him over to them. They were delighted and arranged to give him money. So Judas agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus when no crowd was present.

THE PASSOVER

Then the day for the feast of Unleavened Bread came, on which the Passover lamb

had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, *“Go and prepare the Passover for us to eat.”* They said to him, ***“Where do you want us to prepare it?”*** He said to them, *“Listen, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters, and tell the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”’ Then he will show you a large furnished room upstairs. Make preparations there.”* So they went and found things just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

■ THE LORD’S SUPPER

Now when the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table and the apostles joined him. And he said to them, *“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it*

again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Then he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, *“This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, *“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”*

■ A FINAL DISCOURSE

“But look, the hand of the one who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man is to go just as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” So they began to question one another as to which of them it could possibly be who would do this.

JESUS AT THE LAST SUPPER

“This is n
body w
given fo

my
which is
or you.”

A dispute also started among them over which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. So Jesus said to them, *"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them are called 'benefactors.' Not so with you; instead the one who is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is seated at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*

"You are the ones who have remained with me in my trials. Thus I grant to you a kingdom, just as my Father granted to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has demanded to have you all, to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon,

that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

But Peter said to him, ***"Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!"***

Jesus replied,

"I TELL YOU, PETER, THE ROOSTER WILL NOT CROW TODAY UNTIL YOU HAVE DENIED THREE TIMES THAT YOU KNOW ME."

Then Jesus said to them, *"When I sent you out with no money bag, or traveler's bag, or sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?"* They replied, ***"Nothing."*** He said to them, *"But now, the one who has a money bag must take it, and likewise a traveler's bag too. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted with the transgressors.' For what is written about me is being fulfilled."* So they said, ***"Look, Lord, here are two swords."*** Then he told them, *"It is enough."*

ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

Then Jesus went out and made his way, as he customarily did, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he came to the place, he said to them, *“Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”* He went away from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed,

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Yet not my will but yours be done.”

[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And in his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.] When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, exhausted from grief. So he said to them, *“Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you will not fall into temptation!”*

■ BETRAYAL AND ARREST

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd appeared, and the man named Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He walked up to Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said to him, *“Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”* When those who were around him saw what was about to happen, they said, *“Lord, should we use our swords?”* Then one of them struck the high priest’s slave, cutting off his

right ear. But Jesus said, *"Enough of this!"* And he touched the man's ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders who had come out to get him, *"Have you come out with swords and clubs like you would against an outlaw? Day after day when I was with you in the temple courts, you did not arrest me. But this is your hour, and that of the power of darkness!"*

■ JESUS' CONDEMNATION AND PETER'S DENIALS

verses 54-71

Then they arrested Jesus, led him away, and brought him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had made a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a slave girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight, stared at him and said, *"This man was with him too!"* But Peter denied it *"Woman, I don't*

JESUS TO JUDAS

“Judas,
would you
betray the
Son of Man
with a kiss?”

know him!” Then a little later someone else saw him and said, *“You are one of them too.”* But Peter said, *“Man, I am not!”* And after about an hour still another insisted, *“Certainly this man was with him, because he too is a Galilean.”* But Peter said, *“Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!”* At that moment, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. Then the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him,

**“Before a
rooster crows
today, you will
deny me three
times.”**

And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Now the men who were holding Jesus under guard began to mock him and beat him. They blindfolded him and asked him repeatedly, ***“Prophecy! Who hit you?”*** They also said many other things against him, reviling him. When day came, the council of the elders of the people gathered together, both the chief priests and the experts in the law. Then they led Jesus away to their council and said, ***“If you are the Christ, tell us.”*** But he said to them, *“If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”* So they all said, ***“Are you the Son of God, then?”*** He answered them, *“You say that I am.”* Then they said, ***“Why do we need further testimony? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!”***

CHAPTER
23

JESUS BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE

Then the whole group of them rose up and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, *“We found this man subverting our nation, forbidding us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar and claiming that he himself is Christ, a king.”*

So Pilate asked Jesus, *“Are you the king of the Jews?”* He replied, *“You say so.”*

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, *“I find no basis for an accusation against this man.”* But they persisted in saying, *“He incites the people by teaching throughout all Judea. It started in Galilee and ended up here!”*

JESUS BROUGHT BEFORE HEROD

Now when Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. When

he learned that he was from Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who also happened to be in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some miraculous sign. So Herod questioned him at considerable length;

Jesus gave him no answer.

The chief priests and the experts in the law were there, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, dressing him in elegant clothes, Herod sent him back to Pilate. That very day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other, for prior to this they had been enemies.

JESUS BROUGHT BEFORE THE CROWD

Then Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them, *“You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. When I examined him before you, I did not find this man guilty of anything you accused him of doing. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, he has done nothing deserving death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him.”*

But they all shouted out together, *“Take this man away! Release Barabbas for us!”*

(This was a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder.) Pilate addressed them once again because he wanted to release Jesus. But they kept on shouting, *“Crucify, crucify him!”* A third time he said to them, *“Why? What wrong has he done? I have found him guilty of no crime deserving death.*

PILOT REGARDING JESUS

“What were
he done?
found him
of no crim

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m guilty
ne.”

I will therefore flog him and release him.”

But they were insistent, demanding with loud shouts that he be crucified. And their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, who had been thrown in prison for insurrection and murder. But he handed Jesus over to their will.

■ THE CRUCIFIXION

verses 26-49

As they led him away, they seized Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country. They placed the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, among them women who were mourning and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, *“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For this is certain The days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore children,*

and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if such things are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Two other criminals were also led away to be executed with him. So when they came to the place that is called “The Skull,” they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. But Jesus said,

**“Father,
forgive them,
for they don’t
know what they
are doing.”**

Then they threw dice to divide his clothes.

The people also stood there watching, but the rulers ridiculed him, saying, *“He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one!”* The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, *“If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!”* There was also an inscription over him, “This is the king of the Jews.”

One of the criminals who was hanging there railed at him, saying, *“Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”* But the other rebuked him, saying, *“Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we rightly so, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.”* Then he said, *“Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.”* And Jesus said to him, *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, because the sun's light failed. The temple curtain was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"* And after he said this he breathed his last.

Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he praised God and said, *"Certainly this man was innocent!"* And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all those who knew Jesus stood at a distance, and the women who had followed him from Galilee saw these things.

■ JESUS' BURIAL

Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council, a good and

righteous man. (He had not consented to their plan and action.) He was from the Judean town of Arimathea, and was looking forward to the kingdom of God. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock, where no one had yet been buried. It was the day of preparation and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they returned and prepared aromatic spices and perfumes. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

JESUS TO THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

“Today
you will be
with me in
paradise.”

CHAPTER
24

■ THE RESURRECTION

Now on the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women went to the tomb, taking the aromatic spices they had prepared.

They found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood beside them in dazzling attire. The women were terribly frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, *“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has been raised! Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”* Then the women remembered his words, and when they returned from the tomb they told all these things to the

eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. But these words seemed like pure nonsense to them, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. He bent down and saw only the strips of linen cloth; then he went home, wondering what had happened.

■ JESUS WALKS THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

verses 13-35

Now that very day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. While they were talking and debating these things, Jesus himself approached and began to accompany them (but their eyes were kept from recognizing him). Then he said to them, *“What are these*

matters you are discussing so intently as you walk along?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?" He said to them, "What things?" "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene," they replied, "a man who, with his powerful deeds and words, proved to be a prophet before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Not only this, but it is now the third day since these things happened. Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, who

ANGEL TO THE WOMEN AT JESUS' TOMB

“He is not
but has
raised!”

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s been

said he was alive. Then some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.” So he said to them, *“You foolish people – how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?”*

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things written about himself in all the scriptures.

So they approached the village where they were going. He acted as though he wanted to go farther, but they urged him, *“Stay with us, because it is getting toward evening and the day is almost done.”* So he went in to stay with them.

When he had taken his place at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. At this point their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Then he vanished out of

their sight. They said to each other, *“Didn’t our hearts burn within us while he was speaking with us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?”* So they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and those with them gathered together and saying,

“The Lord has really risen,

and has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

■ JESUS MAKES A FINAL APPEARANCE

verses 36-43

While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, *“Peace be with you.”* But they were startled and terrified, thinking they saw a

ghost. Then he said to them, *“Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; it’s me! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones like you see I have.”* When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still could not believe it (because of their joy) and were amazed, he said to them, *“Do you have anything here to eat?”* So they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in front of them.

■ JESUS’ FINAL COMMISSION

verses 44-49

Then he said to them, *“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.”* Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures, and said to them, *“Thus it stands written that the*

**CHRIST WOULD SUFFER AND
WOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD ON
THE THIRD DAY, AND REPENTANCE
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS
WOULD BE PROCLAIMED IN HIS
NAME TO ALL NATIONS,**

*beginning from Jerusalem. You are
witnesses of these things. And look, I am
sending you what my Father promised.
But stay in the city until you have been
clothed with power from on high.”*

■ JESUS' DEPARTURE

Then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. Now during the blessing he departed and was taken up into heaven. So they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple courts blessing God.

WE'VE GOT ANSWERS

XXXCHURCH HAS BEEN AROUND FOR OVER TEN YEARS AND HAS ATTENDED ALMOST 100 PORN AND SEX SHOWS. OVER THAT TIME WE'VE BEEN ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS. SOME OF THOSE QUESTIONS MAY BE ONES YOU HAVE RIGHT NOW READING THIS BOOK. MOST ARE ABOUT JESUS, BUT SOME ARE ABOUT US AND WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO. SO HERE ARE SOME ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS WE'VE HEARD MOST FREQUENTLY. AS FOR ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT JESUS OR GOD... WE WANT TO LET THE BIBLE SPEAK FOR ITSELF.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

We get this one all the time (literally). Why is a group of Christians at a porn show handing out little Bibles? The answer is simple: we're doing what Jesus tells us to do. In Mark 16:15, Jesus says "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Jesus clearly says "all the world," but unfortunately much of the church doesn't want to consider a porn show part of that "world." But we do, so we're here to change that.

BY SAYING JESUS LOVES PORN STARS, AREN'T YOU TRYING TO SINGLE THEM OUT AS ESPECIALLY BAD?

No, not at all! First, if we were at an adult convention saying "Jesus Loves Accountants," that may be true, but it wouldn't make a lot of sense in this context. The message needs to fit the intended audience. Second, and more importantly, we could say that "Jesus Loves Everyone" and leave it at that.

We could, but that wouldn't mean as much. Why? Because as humans, we all have preconceptions and prejudices. We hear "everyone" or "you" but believe "everyone except that person" or "not me." So at XXXchurch, we want to be clear: yes, Jesus loves everyone, and that includes porn stars..



3

ARE YOU REALLY FRIENDS WITH PEOPLE HERE OR IS IT JUST AN ACT? AFTER ALL, YOU ARE CHRISTIANS RIGHT?

Yes, we are Christians. But that doesn't mean we can't be friends with those who aren't. The relationships we've built with consumers, producers, entertainers, and convention owners are real. They are authentic. Yes, we are here to tell people Jesus loves them, but we also believe you can be friends with someone even if you don't agree with everything they do. The reality is that while we do want to see our friends come to know Jesus, that's just our desire; it's not a requirement for friendship.

AREN'T YOU REALLY HERE BECAUSE YOU WANT TO SHUT DOWN THE PORN INDUSTRY?

No, not at all. We recognize that people have a right to make a living. That includes porn stars, porn producers, and the like. We aren't the censorship people. We don't picket these events. We love people regardless of their career choice and want them to be happy and healthy. We are here to tell people about a guy named Jesus, that's all.

WELL YOU ARE AGAINST PORN, RIGHT?

Here's the thing: we don't think that porn is a good choice for you. We don't buy porn ourselves and yes, we try to help people who are addicted to it. But we aren't here to stop you from looking at or buying porn. We just believe that there is something far better than porn: Jesus.

6

I'M A GOOD PERSON. DO I REALLY NEED JESUS?

ROMANS 3:23-24

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

"For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast."

7

HOW DO I KNOW GOD REALLY LOVES ME?

JOHN 3:16-17

"For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into

the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him.”

ROMANS 5:8

“But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

I JOHN 4:19

“We love because he loved us first.”

8

**WHAT DO I DO ABOUT ALL THE
LONELINESS I FEEL? WHO CAN HELP
ME WITH THAT?**

ISAIAH 41:13

“For I am the LORD your God, the one who takes hold of your right hand, who says to you, ‘Don’t be afraid, I am helping you.’”

JOHN 14:18

“I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you.”

MATTHEW 11:28-29

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

9

**I’VE DONE A LOT OF BAD THINGS.
CAN GOD REALLY FORGIVE ME?**

I JOHN 1:9-2:2

“But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. (My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.) But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.”

IS LIFE WITH JESUS REALLY BETTER? I HAVE MY DOUBTS.

JEREMIAH 29:11

“For I know what I have planned for you,” says the LORD. ‘I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.’”

JOHN 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage.”

JOHN 15:10-11

“If you obey my commandments, you will re-main in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.”



**JESUS
LOVES
PORN
STARS**

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BY CRAIG
GROSS

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After all the traveling I've done and all the debates Ron and I have shared together, I have lots of stories that feature Ron. I've done interviews with him. I've had countless late-night meals with him. I've hung out at his house. And all of that time has provided plenty of great stories between me and Ron. But my favorite story of all has nothing to do with any of those things.

IT HAS TO DO WITH A TURTLE, A SIMPLE PRAYER, AND A HOSPITAL STAY.

If you know Ron, you may know that he has a pet turtle. Her name is Cherry, and he legitimately loves her. I don't know why – I mean, I don't mind turtles in general, doing their little turtle thing in ponds and on the side of the road, but having one as a pet in the first place, and then loving it as much as Ron loves Cherry... well, he is a unique guy.

Anyway, back to my story. One bright Southern California day, Ron was caring for

his turtle on the balcony of his condominium, taking advantage of the weather to feed her some lettuce and let her get a little fresh air. Seeing her in that light, at that angle, and in such a state of repose as innocent as munching on a lettuce leaf, Ron was overtaken with love for his little friend and felt the urge to send up a short, simple prayer to a God he only kind of knows.

“Lord,” he said, “look at Cherry’s cute little face. Well, You already know what it looks like because You created it. Lord, I just love her so much, and I know she’s already old, but I’d love for her to live long enough to break the century mark. Can you help her get past 100 years old? I don’t want to fail as an owner, so please give her a nice long life.”

That was all. Probably it was less of an actual prayer and more of a heartfelt wish that Ron wanted to give to his precious little reptilian friend. His heart was innocently and

gratefully extended toward another one of God's creatures.

GOD DIDN'T CARE. HE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY AND TOOK IT.

Here's what happened next, Ron decided to go back into his condo to use the restroom while Cherry finished her lettuce on the porch. As he backed through the door, a gust of wind from outside brushed against his face and blew into his condo.

Now, here's something else you may or may not know about Ron his place is a mess. It looks like an episode of Hoarders in there with all the stuff he has strewn all over, which includes about a small forest's worth of loose papers.

And yet, as this gust of wind came past him and into his house, none of those papers moved. They made a rustling noise, but none of them budged even an inch from their resting place. In fact, out of the many,



**“I THINK
GOD
SPOKE
TO ME.”**

many things in Ron's living room, only one of them moved.

A TURTLE.

Not Cherry, the actual turtle. This was a little stuffed animal version of a turtle, a soft, plush plaything he'd received as an offhand gift years before. Ron had stuck this plush turtle on the top shelf of a bookcase, and it was by far the heaviest thing on that shelf.

The gust of wind moved past Ron and struck this plush turtle. According to Ron, the wind then lifted the turtle off the shelf and suspended it in mid-air for a few seconds, kind of like a plastic bag getting caught in an updraft in a parking lot (if you've seen *American Beauty*, it was like that). After a brief moment, the wind stopped and this soft turtle plaything fell to the floor, landing on all fours, facing Ron. It was practically staring up at him.

Ron closed the balcony door and continued

on his way to the restroom and smiled at the stuffed turtle smiling at him from the floor. “Wow, God,” he said, “You have some sense of humor.”

AND THEN GOD SPOKE TO HIM.

That’s when Ron called me.

Well, first he called his brother and his father and told them the story, and they both said, “So be it.” But then he called me and said, “Craig, I have big news.”

“You’re announcing your retirement from the adult industry?” I said. I’m nothing if not continually hopeful.

“No,” he said. “I think God spoke to me.” He told me the story about his prayer and the wind and this little stuffed turtle landing on its feet, and then he said, “I really think the Lord is telling me he heard my prayer.”

“Well,” I said, “He must really be trying to convince you.”

**JESUS
CARES
ABOUT
THE
STUFF
WE CARE
ABOUT.**





I'll be honest – I didn't necessarily believe it was anything beyond a coincidence, but if it was important to Ron, then it needed to be important to me. After all, Jesus cares about the stuff we care about.

Ron was really blown away by this, so much so that he got slightly fixated on it and tried to recreate the turtle-soaring moment himself. He put the turtle back on the shelf, got an air gun, and did everything he could to make that turtle move. He was unsuccessful at first but after a whole lot of shooting, he eventually found the right angle and was able to, more or less, reenact the wind that took his plush little toy down to the floor.

Except he could never manage to land it on its feet. Every time he got it to tumble off the shelf, it would land on its back, which would be death for a real turtle. The only way an actual turtle like Cherry could live after that kind of fall is if it landed on its feet, and this

fake turtle would never do that. Landing on its back would mean a certain end of a turtle – it sure wouldn't reach 100 years old.

So after this experimentation, Ron was definitely certain that God had spoken to him through his plush turtle, and used it as a means of assuring him Cherry would be around for awhile.

PRETTY NEAT STORY, HUH? EXCEPT IT DOESN'T END THERE.

Quite a while later, in January of 2013, Ron began feeling a horrible pain in his chest and headed to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center to get checked out. A few medical tests later and the doctors there determined he had an aneurysm near his heart. He called me to tell me what was going on just before the doctors rushed him into surgery; I rushed to the hospital to pray for my friend and be with him when he got out eight hours later. I waited through the night praying a prayer very similar to Ron's prayer for Cherry

“PLEASE LET HIM LIVE.”

A black and white photograph of three people smiling. On the left is a woman with long dark hair. In the center is a man with a mustache, wearing a dark t-shirt, holding a small potted plant with both hands. On the right is a man with short hair, also smiling. The background is slightly blurred, showing what might be curtains.

**“LORD, YOU MADE HIM.
PLEASE LET HIM LIVE.”**

There were no gusts of wind in the waiting room, but I did feel a breath of peace in my heart as I sat there and worried about my friend.

Ron made it through the surgery and was eventually led to the recovery room before being fully admitted to the hospital to get his strength back. I spent a lot of time with him there in the hospital and had a lot of good conversations, but I'll never forget what happened when a friend stopped by Ron's condo to pick up his cell phone charger (it's really a cell phone — one of those old-school flip phones), his calendar, and a few other things.

Knowing how much Ron was probably missing Cherry, this friend wanted to bring something turtle-related up to the hospital for Ron. She looked around his place and spied lots of options, but they were all heavy, hard things made out of ceramic or

metal or some sort of hard material like that, not the kinds of things you want to take to a patient in the hospital. She wanted to find something soft.

**SHE COULD ONLY FIND
ONE SOFT TURTLE.**

YEAH.

She didn't know the story. She didn't know that Ron perceived that particular turtle as an answer to prayer. She just thought she'd do something nice for him and bring him something.

Of course Ron was delighted to see this turtle. And so was I. Because it looked familiar to me. I'd heard Ron tell the story about the gust of wind and the plush turtle more than once — it's his favorite story to tell on the rare occasions when he comes with me to speak at a church — but I'd never put two and two together before that day.

See, as I held that turtle, I realized that I

recognized it. Turning it over in my hands, I read the label stitched into the turtle's seams

CIRCUS CIRCUS, LAS VEGAS, NV

Now I remembered where I'd seen this turtle before at Adventureland in Las Vegas, when my son Nolan won it playing games. I'd seen it again months later when we, knowing how much he loved turtles, passed it on to him on the spur of the moment.

IT USED TO BE MINE.

Now I was a believer. Coincidence? Forget it. Nothing is by chance or by accident. God is in control and he knows what he's doing. He knew what he was doing when he had me unthinkingly pass that turtle on to Ron. He knew what he was doing when he blew it off that shelf. He knew what he was doing when he put it in this friend's mind to bring it to the hospital.

I'm a big believer in Jesus using whatever he can to get your attention. If he wants to

talk to you, he doesn't have to wait for you to show up in church on a Sunday morning. He isn't sitting on his hands in heaven just waiting for you to go through some sort of intricate series of steps so he can finally get a word in edgewise.

HE'S JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO TURN TOWARD HIM.

Don't believe me? That's how it went down in the gospel of Matthew. You probably know the story of the Nativity, right? How Jesus was born in a barn in Bethlehem, and how some angels appeared to some shepherds who decided to come worship him as he was lying there, a newborn infant in a feeding trough.

And you probably already know about the three wise men, right? How they also came to worship Jesus after seeing a star in the sky? Of course you do – it's practically everywhere at Christmastime, and if you

ever see a nativity set, there's always a bright star right above the stable. It's cute.

But have you ever wondered what those wise men were doing looking up at the sky? Have you ever thought about how they got all that information from a single star?

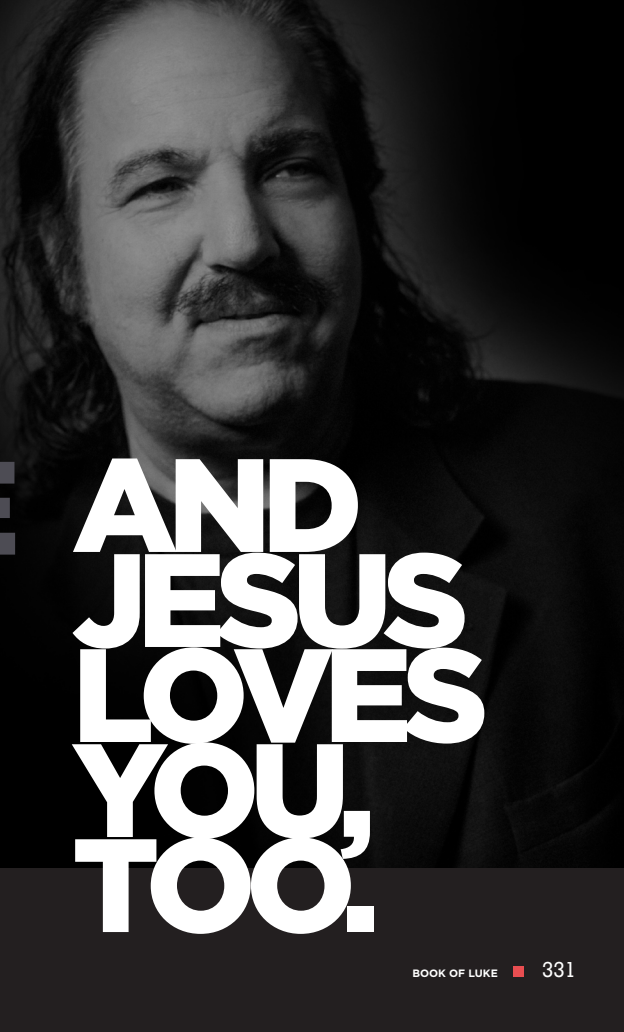
It's because they were astrologers!

They weren't interested in God as we think about Him. They weren't even, initially, interested in Jesus, who would become the Savior of the world. They were just looking up at the stars and trying to figure out what the gods, or whatever divine thing that lay behind the workings of the world, was telling them.

They were paying attention to the spiritual things of the world, and that's where God – the real God of the Universe, not the fake one of astrology – met them. He spoke to them in a language they could understand and led them to the ultimate truth.

That's the God I'm talking about now. The God who came to this world in the form of Jesus, who loves you on a scale far greater than you could ever comprehend. He's trying to talk to you in a language you'll understand and guide you to himself. That's why he blew that turtle I gave Ron onto the floor, and that's why he helped get this Bible in your hands.

**BECAUSE
JESUS
LOVES
RON
JEREMY.**



**AND
JESUS
LOVES
YOU,
TOO.**

JESUS LOVES YOU

“JESUS LOVES PORN STARS.”

WE SAY IT A LOT HERE AT XXXCHURCH.

IT'S KIND OF OUR THING.

BUT WHAT DOES IT EVEN MEAN?

Sure, it gets a lot of looks at porn shows, and it generates a lot of disbelieving chuckles, some of them shocked at the audacity of such a statement; some of them wondering whether it might actually be true.

——— *IT IS.* ———

Jesus does love porn stars.
Jesus also loves the porn addict.
And the porn producer.

And the drug user, the alcoholic, the
CPA, the nanny, the doctor, the patient.

**THE PERSON WHO MEDICATES
THEIR PAIN WITH A PALM FULL OF PILLS.
AND THE PERSON WHO MEDICATES
WITH HOURS ON THE TREADMILL.**

The president of a country.
And the president of the PTA.

**THE OUTSPOKEN ATHEIST.
AND THE UNSPOKEN BELIEVER.**

The present and the absent.
The lived-in and the vacant.
The experienced and the virgin.

**The one whose life is on display for
all to see, who has it all and then some.
And the one whose life is hidden in a
corner, who guards their heart
against the pain.**

THE ONE WITH ALL THE LIKES,
SHARES, AND RETWEETS.
AND THE ONE WITH ALL THE STRIKES,
SCARES, AND DEFEATS.

Truth be told, no matter who we are,
we could all use a little bit of love.

JESUS HAS A LOT OF IT.

MORE THAN WE COULD
EVER KNOW OR EXPERIENCE.

**And that's what we mean when we say
"Jesus loves porn stars."**

WE MEAN THAT JESUS LOVES YOU.

THAT'S ALL. THAT'S EVERYTHING.

A lot of people want to preach a lot
of rules about behavior. They want to
tell you that you have to act a certain
way or become a certain person in
order to follow Jesus.

WE SAY OTHERWISE.

We say that Jesus doesn't really care
about the way you behave. Not at
first, anyway. Because we don't believe

Jesus' love for us—for you—changes
based on what we *do*.

**HE LOVES US JUST BECAUSE HE DOES.
HE LOVES YOU JUST BECAUSE.**

He doesn't want your actions, or your
behavior, or your obedience to a long list
of rules that other people give you.

**He just wants your heart. All of it. The
whole thing. And then the rest of it—
the lifestyle changes, the behavioral
modifications, the thought alterations—
all of that will follow.** *(We can help you
with that stuff, too, if you need it.)*

SO WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS' LOVE?

**Does it make you chuckle
uncomfortably? Do you want to shift
your eyes around, nervously avoiding
His steady gaze?**

**HE WON'T STOP LOVING YOU. EVER.
HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?**

KNOW THAT WE LOVE YOU

Now that you've read everything in this Bible,
you're faced with some decisions.

MAYBE YOU STILL AREN'T CONVINCED.

MAYBE YOU HAVE A LOT OF
UNANSWERED QUESTIONS.

**MAYBE YOU WANT TO KNOW
MORE ABOUT JESUS.**

Whatever the case, we are here for you.

It doesn't matter if you make porn
or just buy it. **WE AT XXXCHURCH LOVE YOU.**

We'd love to connect with you.

We'd love to answer you questions,
hear your thoughts, and listen to your stories.
And if you just want to let us know that you like
what we do, we want to hear that too.

Wherever you are at and whatever
you think, we are here for you.

HIT US UP.

CONTACT US

BY EMAIL

info@xxxchurch.com

BY PHONE

626.628.3387

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

@X3church



TWITTER

@X3church



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@X3church



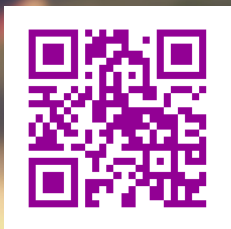


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JESUS — LOVES — YOU

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