



Truth To Wonder

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The Seven Year Itch

Truth To Wonder magazine now in its seventh year as a publication, a feat only possible by the Lord's enabling. When this seventh volume had been appearing on the horizon, I had felt a consistent and building urge to change things about the work; freshen it up somehow. This desire is not one fuelled by boredom, but an inescapable ache that something is missing. This burden has been on my heart for some time now and has only grown since other parts of the ministry have come to a close. Doors have been shut and whilst this was an extremely difficult step, it was step taken in trust of the Lord's will, even if it seemed strange at the time.

So, it came on the eve of my wedding anniversary, through a miserable night of ill health, that God revealed in my weakness, what it was that I had been missing in this work. It was the liberty of faith, the freedom of salvation. You see, I had been using this ministry as a means of silencing the accusations thrown against me by the enemy that is Satan. Accusations that I have no impact, no point in existence. Each day is a bitter battle against poisonous attacks that I have failed my wife, my children, my ministry, and that no one would be too fussed if I weren't here, such is the seemingly inconsequential impact I have on the world. Heavy stuff I know, and I only share it with you all in the hope that someone else experiencing such battles doesn't feel so alone in their struggles (Spurgeon knew them well too!).

Anyway, it was the night before my wedding anniversary to my wonderful wife Donna. We had just finished a lovely bank holiday weekend together as a family with our two daughters. We had only done a couple of short, local trips, nothing tiring or grand to most people, yet to me with my health issues, it was a busy time. This busyness had caught up with my body, and I so I laid in bed feeling very ill that night. It was very, very unpleasant, bordering on scary at times such was the intensity of how unwell I felt. So, as I laid there in utter physical weakness, the spiritual attacks kicked me while I was down. Attacks that I had failed physically where even pensioners could happily succeed, and so what hope would I ever have to provide for my family again. Along with this, cruel and lazy words thrown against me over the years raced through my mind, like darts thrown angrily at a dartboard. Each one thumping into my heart with bitterness of thought.



In previous night's such as these, I would read some Bible passages on my phone in the midnight hours to find some peace and comfort. Yet this night, I felt too weak to reach for my phone or hold it; I had nothing in me. I tried praying, but the waves of pain and intense nausea constantly broke my train of thought. This only furthered the effectiveness of the spiritual attacks that were coming at the same time. So, I found myself simply singing silently part of an old hymn (I didn't want to wake Donna who was sleeping peacefully). I sang to myself in my spinning head, 'I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it someday for a crown.' And in those words, sung to myself silently with a wrecked body, the answer to the burden that had been on my heart for some time to change things, had come. The simplicity of it all, my salvation through Christ's atoning sacrifice; the eternal glory I look

forward to, secured through Christ; it's all by Him, through Him, for His glory. None of it is because of me. How then, could I fail expectation, when no aspect of the effectiveness of my salvation is upon me! It is all secured in the love of God!

It was then, through this trial, that peace came. I had laboured in this work/ministry for so long, as a means of proving my worth to people, and to God. It didn't start out that way. It had though become that way. Satan is a cunning adversary, far smarter than even the smartest man/woman. He will weed his way into life patiently, precisely, so that you don't see how you're changing. Satan had taken my earnest intentions for God's work and had made it a weapon to smash against myself. He has watched over the years and seen how I wince at certain comments made by people, and he has used them to attack what was a simple and joyful work for Christ. In short, this whole work had become a gruelling burden, not a joyful witness.

The Lord did not want that though, for what glory will He receive from such a life lived in His mighty name?! A man's work in God's name may be filled with great learning, wonderful eloquence and great charisma; but if he has not the freeing love of Christ as his fuel, it's all empty noise (1 Corinthians 13:1).

It was by that trial filled night, that I was reminded so wonderfully of this gloriously simple truth of the Gospel. That the Gospel frees lives, it liberates them from the heavy chains of the lie that we can appease God through our own efforts. It is all by Christ's labours, not mine, not yours, that we are freed from sin and delivered from eternal hellfire! What a wonderful Saviour He is! For He loved us even when we hated Him! (Romans 5:8). Isn't He so very, very good! Far above any other god who dares claim they are loving and good. Such pretenders don't even come close to Christ Jesus!

Love sets us free so that we labour in joy and thanksgiving. There's a reason why it's an old trope to say about a beloved family meal, that the secret ingredient is 'love'. That's because it is! Such dishes are made with care, with a full heart that expresses itself through the giving of its finest abilities. Didn't God do just that at Calvary! It's all so very simple, and that's why the Gospel is magnificent! We can get so lost in our own brilliance of learning and 'wisdom' sometimes, that we forget the crucial ingredient of love!

And so, I want this work to be filled with pieces that highlight the wonder that comes from learning, and following God's truth that is His Word. Yet, I want to do this with renewed love, with a purpose of showing you all the wonder of Christ Jesus! I want you all to see the majesty of just who Christ Jesus is, so that all who read these pages don't just read 'academia' or 'interesting points', but that you all see Christ! I pray that if it be the Lord's will, that He will bless this venture, and that He will guard me against myself. That I do not become lost in learning to the point that I lose joy, thanksgiving and peace. I pray that these labours in His mighty name, will heighten my joy of faith, and yours too, and never cause it to be damaged or harmed. With all that being said, let's look and see together, what wonders of the Lord and His Word we can learn. All for our good, and His glory. Amen.

Be Thou My True Father

The beloved hymn *Be Thou My Vision*, has a line that never fails to bring tears to my eyes. Each time we sang it at church, I didn't once make it through one line without my voice cracking with burning emotion. That line is the one that says, 'Be thou my great Father, and I thy true son.' As I look at that line, I see a relationship that leaves the angels of Heaven in joyful amazement, as it unfurls like a banner of grace. It is a banner that is planted in the heart of every redeemed believer by the Holy Spirit. It is a banner first crafted in the mists of eternity; penned by the will of the Father; woven with meekness and clarity by the Son; lifted high by the assured witness of the Holy Spirit.

That wondrous banner was driven down deep into my soul to anchor me in the certain joy of God's everlasting love. It could only be anchored so definitely because its course was set by the path of the nails driven deep into the hands and feet of my Saviour. Those nails were driven in mercilessly so that that heavenly banner of Fatherly adoption, might be placed mercifully into the redeemed heart, all to show His mercy to all Creation.

That banner is my certificate of adoption. My adoption as a true son to my great Father. It bears the seal of the King; the seal of the Judge of all Creation; a seal that flowed from the side of the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary. It proclaims my new life in Christ. A life plucked from the flames of Hell, to be lifted to the heavenly realms of the court of God.



Despite this wondrous proclamation unto all Heaven and earth of my adoption unto God, still the Accuser slinks towards the throne of God. He slithers forward and seethes with poisonous words that challenge the announcement of my redemption. His bitter accusation rails against this eternal banner of my adoption. He spits that my adoption into the fold of God is only an empty posturing of God. A posturing unto the easily believing angelic hosts that God's grace is true and unshakeable. He murmurs that the deep realms of the heart of God could never be so gracious to such a repugnant sinner as I.

Seraphim and Cherubim rage in their immortal hearts against such insolence from the Dragon of old that is Satan. Archangels stand ready to defend their Lord's name, and yet all that is that is needed to silence the adversary of old that is Satan, is a look of power from the burning eyes of fire that are Christ Jesus'. Eyes that glare with righteous anger at such foul accusations, and yet look lovingly on I who was once a child of sin.

My Lord takes out His eternal decree, that wondrous Book of Life of which only He knows it's content. Its pages are full, bursting with the proclamations of life gifted unto all those who heard His call. His nail pierced hands move through the pages, each name etched with shimmering gold denoting royal adoption. Those lives received into the love of God through the blood of the Lamb, He who now moves the pages of that book with knowing precision. His hand stops upon one certain page. A page listed far at the end of that happy book, and He points to a name written with a bold and certain script. That name is my own.

Satan's accusations are thrown to the wind, as the Lord God declares to the courts of Heaven that I am His, an adopted child through His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit confirms this joyful decree before all Heaven and Earth, so that none may question the Lord God. In that same moment, the Holy Spirit moves to confirm that same decree to my own heart, a heart reborn in Christ Jesus, to the glory of the Father.

The angels of Heaven cheer, as the Seraphim shout their praises to the Lord, whilst Cherubim raise their flaming swords in triumph at the saving power of Christ Jesus. The bitter words of Satan's accusations against me are crushed by the song of Heaven; a song that celebrates the adoption of another child into the bosom of God. This song I cannot hear with my ear yet, yet I know its melody well. It is a melody dearly beloved by all of God's adopted children. It is a melody that reverberates sweetly in the ear of the heart, when such words as 'Be thou my great Father, and I thy true son', are sung. In such happy moments, the will of God is lived on Earth as it is in Heaven. For it is the will of God that the Son is cherished and adored, for through Him, the Father is known. This truth, forever confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

So, when you feel the raging accusations of Satan rail against you, look to that eternal banner. Remember that it stands as a testimony to all who would question, that you are an adopted child of God. Remember, that that decree is sealed in the Book of Life, and your name rests there, awaiting the day of its fulfilment in eternity. All this done through the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. Let His name be glorified forever! And let the song of our hearts worship unto Him never fade! Amen.

Why Do Birds Suddenly Appear

On a beautiful May morning, I was sat down at the beach for a few happy minutes. There was only a gentle sea breeze touching the coastline gently, as the warm morning sun glazed the sapphire blue waters with a dazzling shine. The golden white sands stretched out deeply into the waves, as the tide yielded peacefully against the soft sands. It was a beautiful scene, one that people would happily travel thousands of miles to reach and rest in, only this was a few miles from my home. It was an incredible blessing to be able to enjoy such wonderful witnesses of God's Creation on my doorstep. How often we miss a myriad of blessings each day we hurriedly rush through.

As I took in the near tropical view, a seagull swooped low across the calm, unspoilt waters. It raced across the pond like sea, barely a few inches from slamming hard into the waves. Yet it raced across those same rich blue

seas with ease and grace, barely moving its wings as it raced across my view. Watching that seagull glide so swiftly and effortlessly so closely to the waters, I wondered how it could perform such a feat so gracefully.



It turns out that birds such as seagulls can perform such magnificent acts of graceful, effortless flight by taking advantage of an aerodynamic phenomenon. This phenomenon is known as 'ground effect'. When a bird flies approximately one wingspan above a flat surface (like calm, pond-like seas), the air becomes 'squeezed' between its wings and the surface. This creates a cushion of air that gives the bird additional buoyancy, thereby greatly reducing the energy needed to stay in the air. This is why seagulls can fly so swiftly yet so effortlessly at such close proximity to flat surfaces.

Furthermore, this utilising of a phenomenon in physics, enables birds such as seagulls, to fly closely to the water and spot marine life for its sustenance with greater ease and efficiency. Such innate awareness and utilisation of a 'phenomenon' in physics by such humble creatures as the common seagull, begs the question how did it know that such a manoeuvre was possible if they evolved from land-based creatures? Such a feat of physics utilisation accessed repeatedly across the bird kind, strongly suggests such awareness and application of complex physical processes must be programmed into them. As anyone with an ounce of common sense will acknowledge, any programme requires a programmer, as no programme writes itself! That then means that creatures such as the common seagull, must have been created by a being who enabled the seagull to utilise such a 'phenomenon' of physics, all to be able to feed themselves efficiently.

Such witnesses of this inescapable truth within daily living proves the words of Romans 1:20 to be true. Consider how the 'clearly seen' creature that is the seagull, through its impressive utilising of ground effect, highlights the 'invisible things' of the realm of physics. This intricate system of creation thereby proves the existence of a Creator God, just as Romans chapter 1 reveals!

The evidence for the existence of our Lord God surrounds us each day. It is a great tragedy of modern life that we are so frantic and rushed in our daily living, that we often miss such wonderful reminders of the reality of God. This is no accident, the Devil does not want anyone seeing the witnesses of God's loving provision as seen in Creation, and so he 'busies' us with the tasks of the day. This is partly why Jesus noted, 'sufficient is the evil of the day thereof' (Matthew 6:34), as such empty busyness done in fear, greed, jealousy, pride, etc, distracts us from seeing His handiwork in Creation. These witnesses within Creation are given to us to remind us of His closeness, His nearness to us, and that as He provides for the creatures of the air, land and sea, will He not do the same for us? (Matthew 6:26)

So, we are to be busy in our labours in the name of Christ Jesus, but to do so with an awareness of His nearness and provision for His redeemed children. This makes our labours much lighter, less frantic, more purposeful and satisfying. When those days of weariness of the flesh inevitably come to make us question the worth of constant labours in Christ's name, we are to look at those witnesses within Creation. Those witnesses that declare with such delightful effortlessness, that He knows our needs, and He will not withhold anything that is good for us (Psalm 84:11).

This Word of God then refreshes us so that we can continue to live with an ease of spirit, a lightness of heart, so that our days mirror the ease of flight attained by the humble seagull. The seagull glides so effortlessly because of God's provision that upholds it from crashing into the waves. If He will provide so consistently for such a meagre creature that is the common seagull, won't He do so for you also? He has proved this to be so through the giving of His only begotten Son, for your sins and mine (Romans 5:8). What more proof do we need of His goodness, provision and love. So, take flight for Christ, and trust that He will be the wind beneath your wings. Amen.

Another Way

Most people are in pain. By this we are not limiting ourselves to physical pain, but something far deeper. That being spiritual, heartfelt pain. Such pain can be very hard to quantify and can cause many to go quietly through life knowing that something is wrong, but they cannot figure out what. Some look to silence this nagging wound with activity, 'busyness' or pleasure. Others, decide to end this nagging wound by covering it with deep seated anger and frustration.

King Solomon kept no pleasure back from himself. He knew all the delightful distractions and enjoyments this world could offer, and yet he declared them all empty, or 'vanity' (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Pleasure could not rid a heart of that strange nagging pain we all feel in our souls. Yet tragically, many a life has been given over to the empty pursuit of pleasure, in the hope that maybe some form of it will remedy the ache of the soul. One sad example being that of Oscar Wilde. A tremendously talented man with the pen; a sharp and witty mind, and yet given over to wicked lusts that left his life empty and lost.

Cain employed anger to deal with his issue of pain. His issue was that of jealousy of Abel, and refusal to accept God's terms of accepted sacrifice. Cain's heart was clearly wounded (even if self-inflicted), and yet God displayed His amazing compassion and long-suffering nature by seeking to help Cain. The Lord sought to stop Cain from employing anger as his cover for pain of heart, as this would only lead to sin (Genesis 4:7). Cain refused the Lord's instruction given in compassionate love, setting himself on a murderous course; a course followed by countless billions of lives ever since (in bodily murder or spiritual murder as outlined in Matthew 5:21-22).

So, empty pleasure and misplaced anger both lead to the same destination; Hell. For this deep, spiritual pain that we all feel/felt at some point, is the ache of a sinful heart and the loss of communion with our loving God. Blinded by our spiritual deadness, countless lives still use these roads of empty pleasure or misplaced anger, to lead them to destruction as a foolish means of numbing that deep, spiritual ache we all know to be true. The problem is that every life deduces at some point in physical maturity, that this soul ache is too deep and constant to be ignored. So, we rightly determine that we must do something about this pain, and yet in our spiritual blindness, we believe that our options of pain removal are either pleasure or anger. Each life essentially leaves itself with a 'pick your poison' approach to its living. Quite the sad and pitiful existence we all face.

Yet the Lord God is so immensely compassionate to our predicament and does not want to leave us in such a pitiful state. After all, He created us in the fullness of His eternal love, and such pure love will look to aid those who are loved. He came in the flesh of man to show us a different way, His way, for He is 'The Way.' This is why early Christians were first known as followers of 'The Way' before they were given the name 'Christians'. His way is one that is deeply undesirable to each of us. It is a way that marches determinedly into the pain and does not seek to numb it or cover it. Naturally, we all look to run from pain, and this is logical and correct...some of the time. However, existing pain of the heart can only be conquered when it is stepped into, not run away from. Here we see the distinction between our fallen wisdom, and Jesus' perfect wisdom. When Jesus willingly went to the Cross, He was knowingly stepping into the deepest of agonies of the heart and soul (and of course the body). He did so because it was befitting Him to do so, so that eternal glory could be known (Luke 24:26-47). If He had not taken up that cup of suffering, as was His plea in the weakness of the flesh in Gethsemane, then we would be left in our pitiful state. That pitiful state of still being burdened with a deep soul ache, and no clear remedy to it.

The solution then is to not surrender to the lie that there are only two ways to avoid this deep, spiritual pain in our hearts. We shouldn't pursue anger to numb the pain as Cain did. Neither should we pursue the emptiness of worldly pleasures, as Solomon showed to be vanity. We are to choose the straight and narrow path that leads to Christ. We are to follow Him and take up our cross (Matthew 16:24), for this is way of Christ Jesus! In Him, we have the one who has restored us to the Father through His atoning sacrifice, thus ridding us of that pain of sin we all feel deep in our hearts.

There is no pain of heart too deep, too ingrained that Christ Jesus cannot heal! I truly believe this! Do not listen to spiteful whispers in your heart, those that entice you to shut down your heart to protect yourself from this soul ache! Do not listen to the honeyed words of worldly pleasures that look to seduce you into distracting yourself from the pain of your sinful heart! That pain is the alert to you of a need. A desperate need! A need for a remedy, a healing, a rescuing from a misery no one else can see or know in its agonising depths apart from Almighty God! Yet it is that same Almighty God that knows your miseries, your pains, your sins, every one of them, who came in the flesh of man to give Himself in your place. He did this to rescue you from you! For without Him, you will march yourself in wilful ignorance into the fires of Hell! He does not want that for you! He made you in love, and He longs for you to rest in His love, so that all you'll ever know is peace for all eternity! He gave Himself so that you would not be enslaved to anger or pleasure, but be freed to know the love of God for eternity to come!

Flee from sin and run to His outstretched arms. Those arms that reach out with nail pierced hands to receive you with an eternal certainty that nothing can snatch you from His healing embrace! Choose life this day (Deuteronomy 30:15), and know all this to be true, and receive Christ Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Widows Indeed

In 1 Timothy 5:3, we are told to honour widows that are widows indeed. We are to do so as true Christians because of the lonely struggle such poor souls are affected with every hour. Most of us go about our days hurriedly. A million and one things to do and interactions with other people are seemingly non-stop. So, when the end of the day is reached, that empty silence that fills the room is a blessed relief from the toils of the day. Yet for some, that empty silence screams unendingly every day.

How many times do we rush past a lonely life? Those quiet lives forgotten by everyone. Those timid souls whose heads linger solemnly from their weary shoulders. Their eyes lost in the dirty streets for fear of someone seeing the loneliness that bites their soul. Loneliness is a strange but violent beast. It snarls and peels back its foaming lip to reveal bitter teeth. Teeth of sorrow snapping warningly against those who may dare to step away from its lair. There are so many lives scared to live because of this foul foe, and yet we who are blessed with friends and family, hurry by them with scant regard. If we would just let our eyes meet such troubled lives, we would see that broken longing for love look back at us. Those sorrowful eyes would not look back at us with hope though. No. Lives so desperately affected, bear the gaze of the resigned. That numb heart of resignation of acknowledgment that a joyful life is no longer theirs to know.



Honour widows
that are widows indeed.
1 Timothy 5:3

Yet, once upon a time, those lonely widows knew love. In those blissful summer evenings, where the sun danced playfully across the horizon, so that its precious light might illuminate the tender gaze of their beloved a little longer, before the night stole it away. They once danced so gently with their beloved, that it was as if the autumn breeze was the melody to their love. They once cherished the touch of their dear one. Its warmth prized and clung to with more longing than any lure of gold could stir up

in the heart. They may have even known the sweetness of the care for a child. That testimony to the world of a love made real; a creation stemming from the fullness of their own heart. Now though, all that is gone. A world once filled with promise and life, now stands cold and empty.

As Christians, we are to search out such sorrowful lives and constrain them to know love once more. Didn't the two disciples on the road to Emmaus 'constrain' the Lord Jesus to join them for rest and refreshment! (Luke 24). Their desire was to show hospitality and care for another traveller, one who to their eyes was moving on his way in loneliness. Ah, the Lord Jesus knows the sorrows of the lonely life so very well. There

has never been a lonelier life lived than that lived by Christ Jesus, when He walked in the flesh of man. For can you imagine the loneliness of spirit, to see all the world around you live in blindness of sin, whilst you lived in purity of wisdom and ways. Can you imagine the heartbreak every hour, to show and offer the everlasting love of God to all, and yet so, so many look blankly back at you.

Christ knew loneliness well. And so, He sought out the lonely, and showed them that even if all the world ignored their tear-filled eyes, He would meet their gaze. He would look into those desperate but resigned eyes and know their sorrows as His own. No words would be needed in their exchange; broken hearts converse silently with unrivalled eloquence through a simple look. His eyes would have been filled with compassion and a desire to cure them of a pain He knew so profoundly. That lonely life would've gazed upon the Lord's and seen He who had gifted them life and was now seeking them out to reignite it once more. He would do so with the fire of His Spirit, a Spirit that declares all such broken and contrite hearts are precious to Him. Oh, how that lonely life would see such Heavenly truth reach deeply into their soul through the window that is their gaze. Our Lord hurried past no one. He went to the lonely, the forgotten, the vulnerable, the widow indeed, and brought them hope. A true and unyielding hope that the Son of God honoured their gaze with His own, and so all are to follow His loving manner.

Christian, are you ready to search out such lives in the name of the King? Are you ready to slow your hurried life whilst giving thanks for its busyness? Do you know you hold a wondrous treasure in your hands, that being of companionship?! Are you skilled in the knowledge of your Lord and His Word so that you may recognise the true widow? Those quiet lives that want to be forgotten in their awful pain. Are you ready to meet their tears with your own, but constrain that broken life to join yours, all so that they might know the love of God lived through your witness for Christ?! If you are not, then hurry in your business and throw yourself at the feet of Christ, asking Him for largeness of heart. For you never know; one day you might find yourself longing for that same gift of companionship to be brought to your lonely door.

The True Vine

The days preceding the dark clouds of the sufferings of that first Easter weekend were beginning to emerge on the horizon for the Lord Jesus. That sight was hidden from the weak eyes of mortal man however, it was known only by the foreknowledge of the Lamb of God. When such storm clouds gather in the distance, the wise look to gather their vulnerable belongings and take them to shelter. This is exactly how the Lord Jesus moved in John 15:1. Seeing the bitter clouds of suffering that was Calvary, He quickly and purposefully set about securing the vulnerable hearts of His beloved disciples. His aim was to find them shelter, so that the storm of deepest suffering that was God's righteous judgment for their sins, might pass over them. That shelter would be under His own blood that flowed down the splintered wood of that cursed tree on Calvary's hill.

This shelter was offered in the refuge that is His Word. It was a word that He had uttered first long before any of His disciples had ever taken their first breath as a baby. It was a word given to another frightened and confused disciple some 1500 years before. It was a word that boomed from amidst the flames that engulfed but did not consume that burning bush on the slopes of Mount Sinai. That mighty mountain where the presence of God would meet His people after their deliverance from oppression in Egypt. Here, the words first came to the ears of meekest on all the earth, words that revealed the almighty nature of God. That man of meekness was Moses, and he would be the first to hear that mighty name of which only God can claim. That name being, "I AM".

No other being can claim this title, for only God needs no other to sustain Him. The archangels, the cherubim, the seraphim, all created beings in Heaven and those below the halls of God's glory, are only in existence because of His sustaining hand. Yet, He needs no hand to sustain Him. He is all He needs. He does not need the praise of angels or man to maintain His power or glory, like the fraudulent gods of Egypt, Greece and Rome require. We can offer Him nothing, and yet He came to meet and reveal Himself to a truly meek soul that was Moses on Sinai. He did this so that Moses might know that fear and doubt needn't be his companions any longer, but that courage and peace could be His through Christ Jesus. Yes, it was He who

spoke to Moses through the bush. It was He that revealed Himself as the great “I AM”, and He would do so once again to similarly humble hearts that were the disciples.

Six times prior, Christ’s disciples had heard Him refer to Himself as “I am...”. The first being, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). The second, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The third, “I am the door” (John 10:9). The fourth, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11). The fifth, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). The sixth, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Each declaration was a statement. A clear, unmistakable declaration of divinity. Yet it was a statement that resonated only in the ears of those who knew this claim. Those who had longed to know for themselves who this “I AM” is and had searched eagerly for the one who uttered those words first given to mankind on the slopes of Sinai.

Now with the storm clouds of suffering gathering, Christ gives the seventh and last of the “I am” statements. In John 15:1, Christ speaks, “I am the true vine”. On reaching the seventh declaration, a completeness of revelation of divinity had been reached. As a good vine produces fruit without strain, so did God produce the fruits of His labours of Creation on the seventh day. There He took His rest from the work and delighted in the richness of life He had created. In these words, “I am the true vine”, Christ Jesus reveals to all who have tuned their ears to hear the rhythm of His speech, the truth of His proclamations, that it was He who rested from His labours of Creation that seventh day. For it was He who made all the world, by Him, through Him and for Him.

These words, words that speak of growth, life and its sustaining, were given at an hour when death was creeping towards the fleshly frame of Christ Jesus. Seeing the black skies hurry towards His Spirit, Christ Jesus looked to bring His beloved disciples close to Him, so that their eyes might be filled with the bright skies of hope. He saw the coming storm but knew the radiant rays of light that still dwelt behind it. That light being His own righteousness. And so, He sought to encourage and strengthen those whom He knew would fixate in fear on the terror that was soon to come. He did do by sharing one last time, that He is the great “I AM”.

This seventh uttering of that mighty declaration of deity, was heightened to new glories of radiance, when He spoke “I am the **true vine**”. Since the calling of Abraham to father a people reserved unto God, Israel had been seen as the vine planted by God to bring forth good fruit. That fruit was purposed to show all the world the sweetness of His love, the truth of His Word and the power of His authority. And yet, as His Word reflected in Jeremiah 2:21, and Isaiah 5:1-7, that vine that was Israel, had become withered and unproductive. It had fallen away from the source of its strength and life through its embracing of idolatry and wickedness. The vine so lovingly planted by the husbandman that is the Father, was corrupted.



Yet here, in Christ Jesus, we have come forward the **true vine**, one who would not yield to sin and corruption. He would remain pure and true in all His ways, so that the prized fruit His life would yield, would be sought after by countless lives for generation upon generation. That treasured fruit being eternal life through His triumphant resurrection from the grave. He would become the first fruits of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23), the sweetest and most nourishing of all harvests! This was the proclamation that Christ wanted His disciples and all of us to know when He announced Himself as the great “I AM” one more time.

So, whilst the dark clouds of suffering were now close to being overhead, the disciples were unaware of the bitterness of agony that resided in those storm clouds. The earnest work of their Master to take them to spiritual shelter, meant they heard only His voice amidst the growing rumblings of thunder that was the approaching wrath of God towards the sins of man. They could not hear that terrifying sound, as the sweetness

of their Lord's voice was so true. It was fixed; fixed upon His sure Word built upon the authority given unto Him by the Father.

Christ knew the stinging rains and violent winds of suffering were soon to descend, and so He gave this most life filled of declarations, all to show His command once more over all tempests of life. For vineyards need temperate climates to thrive; violent, unpredictable weathers soon ruin any crop that shows promise. So, how could He protect and provide for His beloved disciples when soon they were to know hardship, doubt, confusion and suffering? Through that mighty name, "I AM". He would care for them through Himself. He lovingly demonstrated this by referring to Himself as the 'true vine'. They, the disciples and indeed we believers, were the branches that were attached to Him, the vine. As any branch that sustains health and productivity can only do so when connected to the vine, so too they could only know health and productivity of faith by remaining attached to Him. And so, Christ called on them to 'dwell in Him', for there was their sustaining in all things. Here too, is our sustaining in all things. As the vine supplies all the needs of the branch to grow healthy fruit, so too does Christ supply all that is needed to grow healthy fruits of the Spirit.

Yet this vine was soon to undergo tremendous testing of strength and resilience. Many such vines would snap under the strain of such raging storms as that which Christ Jesus knew in Gethsemane and Calvary. However, this again is where He is the 'true vine', one that remains strong and deeply rooted, able to withstand even the fiercest of storms. If the vine remains strong and true, the branches will always have hope, and thus be able to grow and produce beautiful fruits. And so, Christ Jesus moved to draw His disciple's curious hearts to Himself, so that they can be reassured that His faithfulness would never falter; His righteousness would never be tainted; His love would never be corrupted. Because of this, they could rest in the strength of His provision and not fear any storm that came to threaten them.

In this happy rest, and trusting reliance on the strength of Christ Jesus, the branches that were the lives of the disciples, could continue to work and thrive, even amidst wild storms of life. Their lives could continue to produce wonderful fruits of Godly living, not through their strained efforts, but through His sustaining hand. Christ was teaching them, and indeed all who entrust themselves to His grace and mercy, that we need not strain to produce good fruits from our life's work if we have lived or 'abided' in Him. When we abide in Him, our lives will produce delightful fruits pleasing to all, like the humble grape freely produces its delicious sweetness because of the work done by the vine that sustains it. The grape cannot take credit for its sumptuous taste, it is all the work of the vine and the vineyard owner, or husbandman, that has produced such a sought-after fruit. That husbandman being our Heavenly Father. Therefore, the fruits grown from our life when lived in Christ Jesus, speaks well of the work done by our Heavenly Father.

These happy truths must not be mistaken though. It is easy to hear such joyful news of producing Godly fruits without strain and jump to an incorrect conclusion. We must be cautious to not overcorrect our ways and put no effort into our service of the Lord, believing that He will do all the work. That is a false and lazy application of His Word. We are to apply ourselves daily with great diligence and earnestness of faith in cultivating our relationship with the Lord God. We are to be active in living our faith in every moment of life. Too many times we are happy to be seen to be busy for Christ when eyes are watching us. Make no mistake, to live in Christ Jesus consistently, to abide in Him, takes hard work. It requires a daily battle against the lusts and desires of the flesh. It requires a mastering of that old man of sin that looks to drag us down into the mires of transgression against the Lord we love.

However, this is where the labour to abide in Christ Jesus is a most profitable venture. To invest our time and efforts into the sanctuary of our soul that is Christ, is an investment that yields eternal dividends. When we work to deny our fallen, fleshly will and invest our lives to live in the will of God, we are brought out of the storm clouds of sin that look to blacken the days of our lives. By remaining in the presence of Christ each day, we see that He is the 'true' or strong vine, capable of giving us refuge in times of peril. Not only does He provide us sanctuary in perilous times, but also each hour when the Devil would look to tempt us to fall into subtle sins. We soon see for ourselves, that our investment in Christ is a sound one, as we enjoy His unsurpassed peace through the inevitable tests and trials of life.

Those wonderful, self-revealing words of “I am the true vine”, can bring us tremendous provisions for every eventuality of life, particularly those testing times of hardship and suffering. This gracious provision revealed through who the Lord Jesus, was given unto the disciples in the closing days of Christ’s earthly walk in the flesh of man. Yet this self-revelation would mean nothing if it wasn’t truly proven to be real and substantial. Christ could only claim to be the ‘true vine’, if He could withstand the greatest suffering and test that life can face; that being the grave. He triumphed over death and thus proved that He can produce life where death looks to destroy with the bitterest tempest.

When we abide in Him, we are kept on guard from sinful ways, words, thoughts and deeds in this life, and we are reminded that where He is, we soon shall be also. We cannot be anywhere else! For where the vine is, the healthy branch must be also! In this remembrance of just who our Lord is, our joy of faith is constantly refreshed, like the productive plant is refreshed to continue to bloom under the revitalising rains.

The Lord looked to secure the spiritual safety of His beloved disciples before He was to leave them. He would soon step forward into the storm of suffering on their behalf. He did so in obedience to the will of the Father, and in fullness of love towards sinners such as you and I. Christ looked to bring them into the shimmering light of the victory of the empty tomb. He does not want any of His servants to look at the storm clouds of life with a trembling heart, for He has purged those raging clouds of their bitter rains. He has taken all the sufferings those tempests carried, and He points the way to the radiant glories of Heaven! Those glories are so very close by, for they are held in His nail pierced hands. Oh, how they are ours to have and treasure each day, if we just abided in Him! If we just lived in His Word of who He is, the true vine, we would know a distant glimmer of Heaven to fill our spirits this very day. Amen.

The Lamb Slain

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

None can dispute that we are in the last days of history. Since the Lord Jesus ascended into Heaven, all those who believe on Him are awaiting the hour when He shall return. Those intervening years are called the ‘last days’ in Scripture, as all Creation awaits, groaning under the weight of sin, for the day of His glorious return. Two thousand years have already passed, and yet faithful Christians have lived those years with an earnestness of faith as though at any moment, their beloved Master could return to them. Those faithful souls have been the few, as most lives lived have followed imposter saviours, those that have claimed to be able to deliver mankind from its miseries. Yet every one of them has failed. Popes have died and led millions into Hell with them. Generals have conquered vast lands and yet delivered only pain, suffering and death. False teachers have claimed to speak for God, and yet only duped countless lives into worship of an anti-Christ. What is coming is a man who will be moved by Satan himself to claim that he is the Christ. The long-awaited Messiah that will lead mankind into a golden dawn. Billions will follow him and worship his image. Yet in doing so, their names will not be recorded in the Lord’s Book of Life. Those pages are reserved for the faithful few; those who stood firm for the faith, and awaited the return of the Lord Jesus and accepted no imposter saviour.

We are to wait for Christ Jesus and accept no other imposter saviour, no matter how convincing they appear, because of the richness and power of His promises to the faithful few. The Lord’s promises of eternal peace and glory to we faithful soldiers of Christ, were not delivered in reaction to the evil of mankind’s treachery in Eden. They were prepared long before Adam fell into sin in that blissful garden that was Eden. For in the wondrous foreknowledge of God, He knew that mankind would fall into sin, even before Adam took his first breath. And so, in the purity of communion within the Godhead as revealed in that wonderful name *Elohim* (Hebrew word designating the triune nature of God), a name first given to mankind in Genesis 1:1, a plan of salvation was forged. Deep in the purging fires of God’s everlasting love, a sword of redemption was crafted. A sword so mighty and sharp that it would shatter the brutal chains of sin that ensnares every soul.

For that sword to shatter those heavy chains of sin we all know to be true, someone would have to step forward and secure what Adam, the perfect man in being made without sin, a son of God, would throw away in disobedience. It would need be someone who matched Adam in every way, yet would stand strong in the face of temptation and remain obedient to the will of God. No angel would do, not even the tremendous power of the Archangel Michael would suffice in such a quest. The heavenly splendour of the Seraphim and Cherubim would not do either. They were not a sufficient substitute for the flesh of man. Furthermore, some of these beautiful heavenly beings would also Fall, and so the holiness of even the most radiant angel would not be sufficient to match the requirements of a thrice holy God. One who could not sin was needed.

So, deep in the mists of eternity, the wisdom of the Triune Godhead crafted a plan of salvation that would be secured through the authority of God. None other would do, the stakes were too high, and the cost too great for any other to bear. For God desired mankind to know His deepest and profound levels of love. Such immensities of gifts cannot be attained by any lesser means than the loftiest of costs. And so, the Son was



appointed to be the Lamb slain. He who would give His life to redeem those whom He made; those who would turn their backs on His wondrous love. Before the debt of sin was incurred, the price of redemption was set and declared to be sufficient in all ways and measures. For how could it be anything else but sufficient for the sins of all the world? It was a cost measured in the eternal purity of the blood of the Lamb of God. No debt of sin would be too great, for where even the greatest sins would abound, the grace of His shed blood would abound much more (Romans 5:20).

The magnificence of this heavenly redemption of sinful mankind climbs higher still! Higher than the beautiful wings of the adoring seraphim that surround the throne of God. The magnificence of the plan of salvation, was rooted in certainty of fulfilment through the eternal love known and expressed within the Godhead itself. A love that is true and unchanging, and as such, the victory of Christ Jesus at Calvary was secured before the stars of heaven first shone in their lofty splendour! For how else could it be but so?! Would the Father endanger His beloved Son, not knowing if His Son would be able to secure such a miraculous provision that is the salvation of repentant hearts?! Perish the thought!! The Father knew the unyielding love, the unswerving obedience, the passionate faithfulness, the undeniable power, the unshakeable authority, the unending grace of the Son from the halls of eternity past. He knew that no adversary could deny Him! Victory was certain, and so the sacrifice of the Lamb was appointed to be full and true, to be ready for the sad Fall of God's created son that was Adam. Thereby, the Gospel that Christ preached was ready for mankind from its very entry into Creation! We can see such certain redemption so tantalisingly through the gentle movements of God in Eden. Look on how He calmly but purposefully questioned Adam on his whereabouts and actions after Adam had succumbed to temptation (Genesis 3). God could move so calmly, yet with unswerving clarity of execution, because the path to salvation was already prepared and secured by the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world.

It is by this incredible truth, that all the saints of God have been redeemed. All have been counted righteous by faith in Christ Jesus. He who gave Himself as the Lamb slain, so that they might escape God's just wrath against their sins. None have been saved by any other means but by the Gospel. It is the Gospel that the one who secured its power came Himself to preach and prove unto mankind, so that none should doubt its truth!

Knowing all this, how can we subscribe to any false teacher, any imposter, any antichrist, or even the AntiChrist, when none have performed such selfless wonders of everlasting love, as that lived by Christ Jesus?! Wait for Him dear friend and give your heart to no other! Your waiting is not in vain! Even if you spend decades in service of Him to little earthly reward, and you go to the grave still awaiting His return, your labours are well spent! Every second spent in loving service of the Friend of sinners is time, energy and/or love given to a cause that was confirmed as secure long before the first hills and seas emerged on this little Earth. Step back and dwell on how magnificent, how holy, how righteous, how gracious, how merciful, how loving the Lord God is! Then bow the knee in humble reverence of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. He who is the

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He is so because of the immensity of love that rests in His mighty heart; and it is a love that you and I will rest in forevermore, to the glory of God always. Amen.

In The Beginning...

Sometimes it's a good thing to start again, to remind ourselves of the happy basics of life. One of the most basic things in life is to be able to answer the question 'Who am I?' It's an amazingly simple question but one that flummoxes pretty much everyone. There's a scene in a popular movie where a counsellor asks a client, 'So Dave, tell us about yourself. Who are you?' The character Dave replies by saying what he does for a living. The counsellor interjects and notes that he didn't ask what his occupation was, he asked 'who he is?' Dave responds in a flustered manner by reeling off some traits and attributes about himself he believes to be accurate. Again, the counsellor jumps in and highlights that Dave is now listing characteristics and he still isn't answering the question. Dave becomes deeply agitated in the movie at this questioning, reflecting how most people respond to such searching life questions.

The question of 'Who am I?' haunts us all, and I posed that question to those in attendance at a church gathering one Sunday morning. On being asked 'Who are you?', the same type of answers that poor old Dave gave in the movie came forward. To answer the question, a foundational question of life, we need a foundation stone upon which to build. There is no finer starting point for the 'big questions of life' than in God's Word, and in the Book of Genesis in particular. If we are to answer the question of 'Who am I?' we need to know where we came from, and Genesis tells us exactly that.

In Genesis 1:1, we read '**In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**' Within the first four words of Holy Scripture, we read a bold claim being made that no other cosmogony (explanation, theory, model for origin and development of the universe) dares make, whether it be ancient paganism (broad term for multiple gods religions) or modern naturalism (Evolution). Both ancient paganism and modern naturalism will begin the

cosmogony with elements already in existence. In ancient paganism, tales of Earth's origin commence with elements of time/space/matter being in a state of chaos, before being brought into order by some sort of evolutionary progression to its current state. Here we can see how much Evolution shares with ancient paganism, which isn't that surprising really considering that Darwin just repackaged what many ancient Greeks like Aristotle believed.

In modern naturalism, or Evolution, people are taught that there was a collection of elements deep in the corridors of time that came together and exploded one day. From that cosmic detonation, all the amazing order and precision of the universe we see today gradually came together over billions of years. One of the many problems with this theory however is that it doesn't tell us where those initial elements that caused the Big Bang came from! The theory doesn't answer where time began or how it began, it doesn't really tell us anything useful.

The Holy Bible supplies the only cosmogony that fully explains how everything in existence is here. It does this in four words. No heavy and tedious scientific theory to wade through, just a brief but all-important statement, 'In the beginning God...'. Before anything else was, God was. Before time first ticked its first tock, God had been in existence for eternity past. Indeed, it was He that devised time, but we get ahead of ourselves.

The Holy Bible, via the Book of Genesis, makes it beautifully simple by telling us that nothing else existed before God. No atom, no star, no time, nothing, only He existed. Here we have a clear and easily understandable starting point. This starting point is a wonderfully suitable starting point, for 'In the beginning



God..., provides us with a starting point that is perfectly powerful and sufficient to bring all things into existence from nothing. He is God after all! If He wasn't capable of such a feat, then He's not much of a God.

Furthermore, God, as detailed in Genesis 1:1, is not a lonely being. The Hebrew word for God as rendered in Genesis 1:1 is *Elohim*. This name and title refer to a Triune being utilising the 'uni-plural' functions of the Hebraic language whilst remaining singular in its meaning. This informs us that the God constantly referred to throughout the Old Testament, is not a lonely, isolated being, but one Godhead comprised of three equally divine beings. Therefore, the God revealed in Genesis 1:1 does not create the universe out of loneliness or boredom, but out of the expressing of the divine, loving relationship He had always enjoyed from eternity past. That means that everything in existence is no accident, but a beautiful expression of the love enjoyed within the Godhead for all eternity. You and all Creation were made out of love, not need.

Here then we begin to see the basic framework for the answer to the question 'Who are you?' or 'Who am I?' We all come from a being outside of everything in existence, made in love not loneliness, boredom or necessity. Furthermore, the fact that we are made in the love of God, is further highlighted to us in that God gave us His written record of Himself and where we each come from. That of course being the Holy Bible. He wants us to know about Him! So, we can establish that we are made by a powerful, eternal, Triune God who made us out of His gracious love. That's quite the starting point for us to begin our search for ourselves isn't it!

Next consider how 'In the **beginning** God created the **heaven** and the **earth**'. Within those opening words of the Holy Bible, we have a starting point for the foundational blocks of all existence. Time ('**beginning**'), space ('**heaven**') and matter ('**earth**'). We have an explanation for everything's existence because the Bible tells us that 'God created'. Simple yet effective language isn't it!

Next, we can note from this that the foundational blocks of existence, time, space and matter mirrors the triune nature of the Godhead. We can then take this further and note how the Bible tells us that each of us is made up of three states, body, soul and spirit. We, in who we are, reflect the triune nature of the God that made us, the God that made everything. Everything therefore is made and accountable to God the Creator. We can see therefore that without God, nothing can exist because literally everything relies on His triune being. This is the next step in being able to answer the question 'Who am I?' You are made by an eternal, self-existing, self-sufficient Triune God, who made you in love, needs nothing from you, and yet chose to place in you a reflection of His nature, and then gave you a Book (the Holy Bible) to let you know all this, so you don't waste life trying to figure out answers to basic life questions. Are you beginning to see how much you mean to God?!

So then, you can begin to answer the question 'Who are you?' by acknowledging that you are a unique and much-loved creation of God. This is the all-important starting point for all lives lived in wisdom and clarity. In this God led clarity, you will begin to see that who you are begins in God, is sustained by God, and ends in God. You are because He is. Without Him, we are all literally nothing. So, if you are a true believer in Christ Jesus, when asked 'Who are you?', you can answer with amazing certainty and joy, 'I am a child of God.' What an answer to a big question! Indeed, the answer swallows up this daunting question with an ease that gives an unmatched peace. It is a peace that rests in the very heart of God, revealed to us through His Son Christ Jesus, and made known to our own hearts by the witness of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

History of Be Thou My Vision

Be Thou My Vision, is one of the oldest songs still sung in the western world. The name of the writer of this beloved hymn lies in the murky mists of time. Its inspiration though, the life of Patrick (St Patrick as many know him), is better known to many Christians today.

Patrick, though heralded as the patron saint of Ireland, was actually Scottish (technically a Brythonic Celt - Roman British), having been likely born in Old Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton in southwest Scotland. Born around 385-387 AD into a Roman-British household, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates at the age of 16 and was sold into slavery in Ireland. In Ireland, he was made a shepherd by his slave masters. Patrick took on

the Gaelic language and customs as he looked after the grazing sheep on the rolling hills of Ireland. Here, in the fields, he came to know Christ Jesus, just as David had 1400 years prior in Israel.

After many years working as a slave, Patrick managed to escape his slave masters and returned to England. However, it wasn't before long that Patrick felt a burden on his heart to return to Ireland, the place of his enslavement, and serve his Lord and Saviour as a missionary.

During Patrick's missionary work, it is said that Patrick's powerful Gospel preaching stirred up the fury of the Irish King Loegaire. Loegaire hated Christianity with a rare passion and issued a decree for a pagan Druid festival to be held on Easter Sunday, as a means of mockery. He prohibited anyone from lighting a candle or flame on Easter Sunday, in accordance with the pagan rites of the Druid ceremony and against the symbol of Jesus being the Light of the world. Loegaire was seeking to prolong the spiritual darkness of his land and people. God though, had other ideas!

Even under the threat of death, Patrick defied the King. On Easter Sunday morning in 433, Patrick climbed the tallest hill, called Slane Hill, and lit a huge bonfire to signify the Light of Jesus. As Loegaire and the people rose from their sleep that morning, they all saw the huge bonfire blazing atop Slane Hill. Its message was clear, that God's light shines in the darkness, and that no Druid deity deserved praise, that is the reserve of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Following this stand against the darkness of paganism, many souls came to faith in Christ Jesus through the witness and preaching of Patrick. Legend has it that even King Laogaire became a devoted believer in Christ Jesus. Ireland had been brought the light of the true Gospel through Patrick's stand and preaching. In the centuries that followed, a melody was written to commemorate Patrick's stand; it was called 'Slane' after the hill that Patrick lit his great bonfire. This tune is still the melody used to the hymn *Be Thou My Vision* to this day.

Tradition tells us that the hymn's lyrics come from a 6th century Irish poet called Dallan Forgaill. This poem was entitled *Rop tu mo Baile*, and it honoured the work done by Patrick in the name of Christ Jesus and the Gospel. The oldest existing copy we have of this poem comes from the 14th century and has no indication as to who the author could've been. As a result, most hymnals declare the song to have been written by 'Anonymous'.

As time passed, both the melody and the lyrics were largely forgotten, fading away into the mists of the Irish hills. However, in 1905, Mary Elizabeth Byrne, a 25-year-old university student, came across a copy of the poem *Rop tu mo Baile*, and translated it for the first time into English. The lyrics we sing today emerged from the pages once more, and in 1912, an Irish woman named Eleanor Hull set the newly translated lyrics to the melody 'Slane'. The hymn quickly became adored having first appeared in a hymnal in 1919, perfect timing for a world emerging from the horrors of WWI and the Spanish Flu. When the world needed a clear vision of hope, of certainty, of new life found in Christ Jesus, a reminder of the power of the Gospel was sung loudly by faithful churches across the nations in this humble, old hymn.

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tow'r:
Raise Thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whate'er befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Are You Living A 'Performance'?

Do you ever find yourself 'performing' a version of yourself that you think will please people? Not the type of deliberate misleading of others through crafty character manipulation (that is a separate matter for another

day), but a genuine desire to help and please others that almost forces you to shift your life into a ‘performance mode.’

For instance, you may feel physically exhausted and mentally drained, but you’re in the presence of someone who you believe determines your exhaustion is not justified. As a result, you shift into ‘performance mode’ so that you appear strong and resilient so that you draw others praise, rather than potential criticism.

You may find yourself going into performance mode if you feel your job is under threat. You may have convinced yourself that if you display your very real exhaustion, frustration, illness etc to your colleagues or boss, they will consider you weak and find a way to force you out of your job role. This fear then leads you to adopt a daily performance, where you push through the struggle in hope that no one will catch on to your battle.

The examples of living in such a ‘performance mode’ are plentiful. Another one, probably one of the saddest, is when a Christian fears to speak openly of their struggles and weariness for fear of being mocked, belittled, dismissed or gossiped over. To avoid such painful situations, they go into a performance where smiles are plentiful but fake, and assurances of “I’m good”, are frequent but false. They will attend services, Bible studies, prayer groups, all with a veneer of peace worn convincingly. This done in the hope that no one will come poking at whether their performance is exactly that, a performance!



Sadly, such lives are commonplace, and indeed in many churches. As many pastors and preachers have noted, the behaviour of many Christians makes a mockery of the open, genuine, selfless love and service that we are commanded by Christ to live in. Instead, many Christians form cliques, where power and influence are held within a select few who quietly determine the direction of many lives. Others within the church/fellowship are aware of such groups and live in a performance to please and not stir up these groups. Granted, sometimes such cliques form unintentionally and without malice, yet still when influence is concentrated it often becomes bitter to the taste.

This can leave lives that orbit the cliques to feel that they have to perform a certain role or personality to find a home within the group, church, fellowship etc. Yet is this what God wants? God forbid! He doesn’t want any of His redeemed living in a ‘performance mode’, especially if it is done to please others over Him!

Firstly, such performances are fake and false, and God only communes with truth. Secondly, to live in hope of finding peace and a home with other people, betrays what Christ has done for every redeemed heart. He is our home, no other! We must remember that nobody else, no matter how vocal, influential, charismatic, bullish, etc, they are, made you! Nobody else sustains your every breath by their almighty power, mercy and grace! Nobody else gave themselves fully in purity of love on a Cross, so that you might be delivered from eternal hellfire and lifted you to eternal heavenly glory! In remembering such sobering truths, we see how strongly we betray the mercy and grace of Christ Jesus, when we live to ‘perform’ to please others.

To those who are living in a near continual performance, I beg of you to stop! I know firsthand how living in such a manner can consume a life. The performance can be lived for so long, you begin to believe your own lie. You have fooled others out of fear of being shunned, gossiped over, ridiculed, etc, and you have even convinced yourself to a degree. Yet you have not fooled God. He will not accept this performance as true, loving service of His glorious name. He sees you living in fear of man, and He will not be a secondary Master. He gave His only begotten Son so that all chains were smashed off your heart and soul, so that your spirit might live abundantly in His loving grace and mercy!

To such ‘performing’ lives, put down the mask of fear you live in, and take up the cross of Christ Jesus. There He took on the shame you live in so that you should never have to live in it ever again. It is removed from you, so step forward boldly for Christ Jesus and the true Gospel! If others question you, ridicule you, murmur against you, shun you, let them. Your allegiance is to Christ Jesus alone! Such allegiance is lived in gratitude,

not fear, not doubt, not performance. As a result, the fruits it yields are rich, real, resilient and remarkable. They show a life freed from fear and lived in loving service to Christ. No spite dwells within the heart, no lingering fear of others, just simple thanks unto God for your dear Saviour.

To those groups who have caused such lives to be lived in a performance, look upon yourselves and consider your own wants of living, as our Lord reminds us to do (Matthew 7:3-5). Live in reverent fear of the Lord God and remember it is He alone who judges hearts justly. Yes, we are to judge, but by His Word, not our preferences. Yes, correct others where needed, but in line with God's Word and with a loving heart (Ephesians 4:15), as your Heavenly Father does unto you.

In closing, imagine the bond that can be enjoyed within the Church if such simple truths were lived each day! Imagine what gatherings of true believers could accomplish if all that were gathered were able to live boldly, unreservedly for Christ Jesus! Nations would be different as a result! Let us all pray that God gives the strength of faith to those frightened, 'performing' hearts to live unrestrained for His glory! Let us pray that God stirs up humility in the hearts of those who have stifled others, whether this has been done knowingly or unknowingly. Let us pray that God may bless the tie that binds us together in Christ Jesus. Let us live as though that prayer is already answered; for how it could not be?! For the Holy Spirit will always move swiftly to lift such good and true prayers to the ear of the Father; and the Father will always answer prayers that look to glorify His beloved Son. Amen.

Peter Waldo (1140-1217)

Peter Waldo was a successful merchant in 12th century Lyon, France. Known for his generosity and kindness, something happened one day that shook Peter to become concerned for people's souls, not just their physical condition. That incident was the death of a dear friend who suddenly died in front of Peter whilst they were dining with others.

The suddenness of the loss stirred Peter into considering his own life. He looked deeply on how many around him and himself, would do penance (voluntary act of self-punishment to show sorrow, devotion or attempt at atonement for wrongdoing) to ease their conscience over sin. Yet it never seemed to help. He asked Catholic priests as to what he was missing, and they could not help him. Peter wasn't ready to die, he knew he had sins to account for, but the answers the Catholic church gave him did not satisfy his unease.

Though Peter was a wealthy man, he didn't own a Bible. That was reserved for the clergy and the libraries that only the elite of society could access. So, Peter bought some books (expensive things in pre-printing press days!) written by early Christians which had many portions of the New Testament quoted within them. These few but precious words of God brought Peter comfort and showed him that peace was to be found within the pages of the Holy Bible. This discovery fuelled a new passion to somehow, purchase his own copy of the Holy Scriptures.

After careful saving of his money for a good length of time, Peter was able to finally purchase a copy of the Holy Bible (would we do such a similar thing to own a Bible today?). On reading its pages, the good news of the Gospel pierced the heart of Peter, and he came to saving faith in Christ Jesus.

Freed from his burden of sin, Peter felt moved by the Lord to give away his now sizeable wealth to the poor. He had been moved by accounts of young man named Alexis, who had been very wealthy, but had given it all to the poor after having read Matthew 19:21. On hearing Alexis' extremely generous act, Peter felt led by the Lord to follow suit.

After given away his wealth, Peter felt a growing awareness of the spiritual blindness of the people of Lyon. Having been freed from the weight of his sins by the Gospel, he sought to bring that same good news to others. So, Peter began to visit the poor in their small homes, and shared with them how God only requires repentance of sin, and faith in His Son to gain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Penance and good works would not save them, only the grace of Christ Jesus could.

Peter took this message of the free gift of salvation through Christ Jesus alone to the sick and the dying also. Along with this, he began to hold meetings in the woods near Lyon, where he would deliver sermons that spoke out against the falsehoods and corruptions of the Roman Catholic church. After these meetings concluded, he would sit and pray with those in attendance, and look to provide them with food or clothing if needed. Peter was beloved for his truthful preaching and his loving provision, as people saw the Gospel he preached being lived by his actions.

Despite his earnest actions for Christ and the Gospel, Peter still yearned for something. That was a Bible in the language of his home, the language of his people, a Bible in the French tongue. Bibles were written in Latin under the rule of Rome, a deliberate ploy to keep the Word of God out of reach of the largely uneducated, illiterate masses of Medieval Europe. Peter wanted the common man to have access to God's Word in his own language, so that they could know God personally, in the same manner that Peter had been led to through reading Holy Scripture.



This yearning moved Peter Waldo to undertake a mammoth task, to translate the Holy Bible into French. It's unknown as to whether he did this by himself or if he had help in this Godly enterprise. This bold enterprise was blessed by the Lord and soon the people of France had a pure Bible in their own language at last! Every copy made of the Holy Bible was a painstaking process given that the printing press had yet to have been invented. As each Bible was handwritten and was an extremely laborious and expensive business, but Peter was determined to have the common man be able to access the Lord's Word. So, many times Peter would simply give away the expensive and rare fruits of his labours to the poorest of society, all so that they could know the hope and joy of Christ Jesus.

As painstaking as this work was, it was not Peter's only work in the name of Christ Jesus and the Gospel. He also founded a missionary society that sent out converts to Christ two by two into the surrounding regions of Lyon. Carrying their books with them, these 'poor men of Lyons' travelled hundreds of miles, venturing into other countries, all to bring the good news of the Gospel to others. None of these travelling preachers ever gained any sense of financial security, as all of them lived in poverty in the same manner as their Lord and Saviour did in His earthly ministry.

These travelling preachers would move about the vast countryside as peddlers. They would sell small items along the way, and when they entered people's homes, especially those of the wealthy, they would say they had something with them that was truly precious. Obviously intrigued by such a statement, people would enquire what this precious item was. This drew the response of a Bible, New Testament, or even just a single book of the Bible to be taken out of a bag and presented. It was by this simple means, that the Lord's Word found its way into many homes across Europe.

Such charitable endeavours, one would've hoped, would've been endorsed by the Catholic church. Peter sent some of his preachers to the Pope for permission to preach. The Pope agreed on the condition that the archbishop of the region also gave his permission. When Peter accordingly asked for permission from the archbishop, the response was, "If you continue to preach, I will have you condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake." Such a violent reply drew the following response from Peter to the archbishop as he stated, "How can I be silent in a matter that concerns the souls of men?" On hearing this, the archbishop repeated his threat and sent Peter and his preachers away.

So, Peter continued to preach, quickly drawing the fury of the archbishop upon himself in the process. Troops were sent to arrest Peter, yet these troops were afraid of the people of Lyon, all of whom deeply loved Peter. These same Lyon natives hid Peter for three years as the timid troops reluctantly searched for him. This failure to capture Peter put Pope Lucius III into a rage as he excommunicated Peter and his preachers, proclaiming they were 'accursed'. Renewed in his anger filled crusade against Peter, the archbishop of the region stepped up his search for Peter, causing him to finally flee Lyon. As he fled the city, he preached and gave away Bibles on the way, further spreading the Word of God in a manner that reflected the early days of the persecuted Church in Jerusalem.

Whilst many gladly received Peter and his preachers, many more treated them poorly. It was a supremely superstitious age, and anyone who stood against the Church of Rome was viewed by many as dangerous. And so, Peter and his preachers would be labelled by the superstitious masses as 'sorcerers' or 'turpulines' (people who live with wolves). The term 'poor men of Lyon' became a slur amongst many of the superstitious people of the time. Sleeping in the forest, with no shelter and meagre sustenance was often the daily existence of Peter and his preachers. These men lived the words found in Hebrews 11:37-38.

The next Pope, Pope Alfonso II, continued the war against Peter and his preachers, threatening that anyone who supported Peter or his preachers would be severely punished. Many of those who were found to have supported/cared for Peter or his preachers would find themselves tied to a stake and burnt to death. In one instance, 35 converts to Christ Jesus through Peter's preaching, were burnt to death all together. Yet each time, every life condemned to the flames exited this world with songs of praise and not fear or pain. Each time, the dying sung hymns loudly as the flames and smoke engulfed them. Their song was one of thanksgiving that they were privileged to suffer for the name's sake of the King of kings. Anyone would've thought such bloody scenes would've terrified others from following Peter and his preachers. It did quite the opposite however, as people saw the courage, peace and joy that those who died for Christ and the Gospel, all possessed in great abundance. Others wanted that same certainty and peace in an uncertain and violent world. And so, the blood of those martyrs watered the ground of salvation for others to rise up into the light of Christ Jesus.

Due to this fierce persecution, many of the 'poor men of Lyon' fled into other countries. Many of them found a home with another small group of Christians who refused the corrupt teachings of Papal Rome. This 'little flock' as they were known, settled in the north-eastern regions of Italy, known as Piedmont. This 'little flock' still suffered from raids of persecution, yet each time, God watched over a remnant so that His Word was safely passed on in its purity from one generation to the next. This remnant became known as 'Waldensians' or the 'Vaudois' after Peter Waldo (Valdes as he was also known).

Despite a continual hunt by Papal authorities for Peter Waldo, he was never captured. God protected Peter all the days of his life, and he passed on to glory in peace in Bohemia in 1217. The Waldensians carried on Peter's work faithfully, as they continued to stand against the corruptions of the Catholic church and its false doctrines. The Waldensians grew rapidly, particularly amongst the poor. However, intense persecution in France and Spain saw them settle in greater numbers in Germany, Bohemia, Poland and Hungary. Here, God used much of their work to plant the seeds for what later became the Reformation. Once more God had used humble souls in the face of violence and darkness to bring the light of the true Gospel to countless millions of lives.

Dopamine Deficiency

The Lord moves in mysterious ways, so they say according to the 1773 hymn by William Cowper, entitled *Light Shining out of Darkness*. And so, it has been the last couple of years in my life. After a deterioration of health, I decided to investigate any recent medical research done on my differing ailments. One recent finding has been that the physical effects of one of the ailments I suffer with daily, can be detected on brain scans. Scans such as SPECT or DaTscan scans, PET scan (Positron Emission Tomography), and Neuromelanin-sensitive MRI's, have revealed that patients with my condition, often show diminished levels of healthy dopamine neurons and brain signals, along with poorly functioning basal ganglia's. These effects can look similar to those affected by diseases such as Parkinson's. These findings explained some of the symptoms I face daily and on an increasing level.

Learning this, I looked further into the effects of low dopamine on the body, given how I now knew that patients with my ailment, frequently show damage partly caused by poor dopamine levels. Low dopamine levels can reveal themselves in the body through the following symptoms:

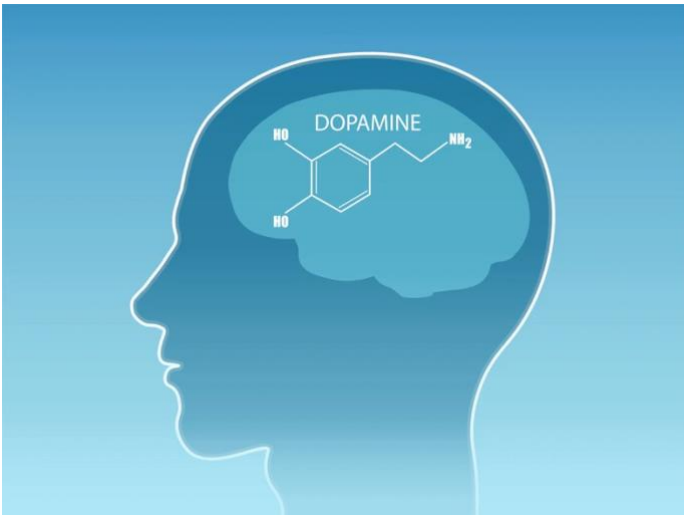
- Fatigue
- Sleep disruption
- Movement difficulties (stiffness, tremors, slowed movements)
- Physical weakness, muscle cramps, spasms, tremors
- Unexplained weight fluctuations
- Cravings for sugar, caffeine or other stimulants
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of interest in activities
- Mood swings, irritability, depression, emotional 'numbness', anxiety
- Cognitive difficulties, poor memory, etc

Reading these symptoms, I had a clue as to why writing this magazine and updating the TTW website regularly has been increasingly challenging (along with other tasks/jobs/chores etc, I could once do easier/more frequently). Whilst my challenges with dopamine production due to my physical condition is increasingly showing a brain damage/malfunction related source, I couldn't help but think on how many people today are complaining of issues listed on the low dopamine list. Many people today, adults and children, are complaining of fatigue, poor quality sleep, sugar/stimulant cravings, lack of motivation, etc. This seems to have rocketed in the last few years alone. Whilst I became unwell back in 2000, the numbers of people complaining over symptoms that mirror low dopamine levels has increased dramatically in the last 5 to 10 years. What could be the cause of this sudden surge? And what can stimulate the malfunction of dopamine levels across the masses?

Dopamine is a crucial neurotransmitter and hormone that's produced in the brain. It as a chemical messenger to relay pleasure signals and is often termed the 'feel good' hormone, and the 'reward hormone'. The brain releases dopamine when you expect a reward or experience a pleasure (eg, winning a game, achieving a goal). While primarily it is known as a neurotransmitter, it also acts as a hormone that affects blood vessel relaxation and regulates regular body functions such as sleep and motor control.

Understanding this then, we can begin to see how this 'feel good' hormone, is being triggered excessively by modern life. Modern life has become all about 'living your best life now', or the pursuit of pleasure. Such a pursuit causes spikes in dopamine releases, causing the 'feel good' sensation that modern lives are in desperation to secure. However, not long after the dopamine 'spike', there is a 'crash', where the body will experience many of the symptoms listed above. Such unpleasant effects then drive the body to seek relief through the stimulation of dopamine production once more. And so, a vicious cycle is created, where the body soon begins to demand bigger and bigger 'hits' of dopamine to trigger the desired response of feeling good/pleasure/rewarded. The body, seeking a quick remedy to its physical struggle, looks for quick sources of dopamine stimulation, and medical researchers have established that modern technology is being used to

satisfy this self-induced craving. When this craving becomes chronic, the symptoms can mimic those of physical/mental burnout, something that is becoming epidemic amongst developed nations.



Modern technology and its constant availability have created a perfect storm of dopamine dependency. Social media scrolling, constant emails, mobile gaming, being constantly 'online' etc, has bred a populace that has become hooked on that little rectangle of plastic, metal and glass they carry in their pocket. You may even find yourself reaching for your phone after a busy, tiring day over other hobbies, interests or activities you once enjoyed, simply because its quick and convenient. There aren't many in the modern world that haven't experienced this compulsion to reach for their phone when tired or bored, as a means of quick release pleasure to soothe the strains of the day away.

One such perverted pleasure so easily accessible through the dopamine inducing screen, is pornography. It has never been easier for anyone to access a world of fornication. Its promise of being an easily accessed and speedily delivered source of dopamine, means that lives can quickly find themselves literally addicted to it. Horribly though, as any addict will tell you, the hit that once 'felt good' soon wears off, leaving you searching for a stronger dose to achieve the same effect. This means a 'soft entry' into a source of fleshly pleasure, soon becomes a heavy drug. For instance, one American pastor who was convicted for possession of indecent images of children, when interviewed in jail stated that when he first began dabbling with pornography, didn't for one minute think it 'would lead' him to what he became. Truly then, the Apostle Paul was correct when he noted that sexual sin is against our own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). The physical effects of such a sin makes itself known on the body through the damage caused by dopamine crashes. These can then become chronic.

So, what is the remedy. If we are to look at this issue as a purely medical exercise, then natural ways for safe levels of dopamine production to be stimulated include a balanced diet, regular exercise, prioritising of sleep, exposure to sunlight, listening to soothing music, engaging in creative activities (writing, cooking, playing musical instruments, painting, etc), limiting screen time, and interestingly engaging in times of 'self-reflection' and prayer.

What is evident is that steps that boost healthy production of dopamine can all be found within a life lived in thankful service to God. It would be tremendously interesting to see a study conducted on dopamine levels on those who are clearly living a true faith and compare them to those of no faith and are indulging in chasing their 'best life now'. The simple ways of living set out by God, those that shun sin and quick indulgences of the flesh, are fast becoming proven by medical science as being highly profitable for the body and indeed the mind! It brings a wonderful scientific layer to the words of 2 Timothy 1:7!

Modern life has become dopamine deficient. People are walking around 'numb' in their heart and their emotions. As a result, suicide rates are rising each year. The over stimulation of life today, is leaving millions of lives stuck in malaise, exhaustion, depression and anxiety, and the medical industry is attempting to solve the problem with medication. Whilst there are some who have a genuine physical difficulty to produce and regulate dopamine levels, the majority have been led into a way of living that is slowly destroying them (could this be a factor in the shocking rise in rates of dementia and Alzheimer's, particularly amongst the young?).

The hope is that lives so affected by the dopamine deficiency of the day, can be corrected. One of the swiftest and most impactful ways is to live a life abiding in Christ, the **true vine**. In Christ Jesus, we have a Master who leads us to utilise our creative gifts for His glory (dopamine producing); look after our bodies, for they are a temple (dopamine producing); explore, subdue and utilise the world in accordance with His command (dopamine producing); commune with Him consistently through study of His Word and prayer (dopamine

producing). All this produces the very words of 2 Timothy 1:7, and we should not be surprised by this, for God will always confirm what is written in His Word.

And So It Begins?

The ongoing war between Iran and America has stirred up some interesting eschatological (End Times) thoughts. Firstly, that once again, the West has no real understanding of Islam, and that America's threats to 'bomb Iran off the face of the Earth' will not cause any concern to many Muslims. In fact, many Muslims are awaiting the arrival of the 'Mahdi', a conqueror who interestingly shares many of the traits of the AntiChrist as revealed in the Book of Revelation. For the Mahdi and his prophet (whom many Muslims believe to be Jesus) to come to the world's stage, the planet must be in a state of chaos and war. The fact that America is threatening such an environment to come upon their nation, could be spurring on many Muslims in their war, as it may trigger the arrival of their longed-for Mahdi, according to their beliefs.

Secondly, that this rapidly crumbling world is looking for a peacekeeper. One who will hold power and sway over the disparate nations, religions and creeds, so that at long last the 'brotherhood of humanity' can exist in peace. This will of course be the AntiChrist, one who will ascend to his position of global power through the willingness of the weary, frightened and Godless nations.

Amidst this recent backdrop of war in the Middle East and its global impact, could that longed for 'peacekeeper' be slowly emerging on the seven hills of Rome? A recent CNN news article reported on the 'spat' between President Trump and Pope Leo XIV. These two figures have long been vocal critics and opponents of one another, and President Trump has made various impulsive comments against the Pontiff on his social media platform. Pope Leo XIV, however, has been far more thoughtful in his response. Rather than engaging in a 'tit-for-tat' reprisal, Leo has looked to seize the moral high ground by stating that he has "no fear of the Trump administration" and that he would not be deterred from speaking out "loudly" about the message of God. The Pontiff also stated, "I do not think the message of the Gospel should be abused, as some are doing...too many innocent lives have been lost... I believe someone must stand up and say there is a better way."

These comments drew widespread praise as many news outlets, CNN included, labelled Pope Leo XIV as the 'calm leader of the Christian message'. The Pontiff's focused but measured response that seemingly claimed the virtue of the Christian message as his own, cleverly left President Trump and his supporters looking like impulsive fanatics in the eyes of many. Indeed, many see these so-called fanatics as those who are mishandling the Gospel narrative for political gain. There is some

merit to such a notion, as Trump has shrewdly tapped in on the still widely held, if compromised, evangelical Christian base of much of America for his political ambitions. With Pope Leo XIV highlighting this with a deft touch, he has possibly subtly laid the foundation stones for a renewed view that the Papacy is the 'true voice of Christendom'.

Pope Leo XIV's first year in office has been strangely quiet. He has avoided using sweeping executive orders to reform the Catholic church, unlike his predecessors. Instead, as CNN noted, he has spent his first year 'listening and making gradual changes.' He has shown his support for global bodies such as the UN, further going against the statements of President Trump. In short, if Trump zigs, Leo zags. Pope Leo XIV is patiently



building a persona of the one who is the spiritual and political remedy to the ‘impulsive, nationalistic, fanatical views’ of Trump and his ‘radical, evangelical Christian’ supporters.

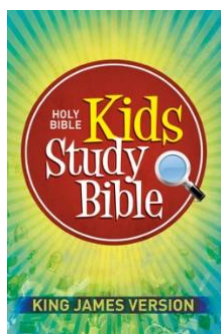
Again, CNN and other large news corporations, are probably unwittingly strengthening Pope Leo XIII’s case, as they all highlight the Pontiff’s roots in the Augustinian Order. According to CNN, the “Order of St Augustine, whose friars and sisters take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience with a focus on unity and community”, with Pope Leo XIV showing these ideals with his focus on unity and bridge building across peoples and groups. On an initial scan of these points, one could easily look at it and say, ‘What’s the problem with all that? That sounds Christian to me.’ And therein lies the issue, the spirit of antichrist looks to mimic the merits of true Christianity so closely that it is barely discernible to the eye. The average Christian will see the name St Augustine and think, ‘Oh yes, he was a Church father and great of the Christian faith’. He was, as he was particularly great in being the father of much of what Catholicism teaches. Furthermore, the goals of community bridge building are fast becoming the staple of many western churches today, even those with no affiliation to Rome. Many churches near me have the name ‘community church’ and have a focus on ‘community engagement’ over the true purpose of the Church, to study and proclaim the Pure Word of God.

In these carefully choreographed steps by the Papacy, we are seeing the slow and patient emergence of a leader who is widely acclaimed as the calm, thoughtful, community-based leader of the Christian faith shared by billions across the globe. Furthermore, the wealth of the organisation he leads is unrivalled, and therefore gives influence and sway to all matters relating to finance. Also, the enormous political influence this organisation holds over every political office in the world, leaves it in a unique position to act as peacekeeper between potential enemies. Such is the power of the Papacy politically, that former British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan once stated, “Among the three institutions no sensible person should attack is the Vatican.” That was said in an age when Britain was far more removed from the sphere of influence held by the Vatican, and yet still it was acknowledged in these lands of the immensity of power wielded by Rome.

It would be no surprise to me, if in the coming years, with the rising anti-Trump sentiment that is growing (his approval ratings in America have slumped in recent months), more and more vocal and powerful opponents of his government will turn the cannons against those who supported his election, the ‘evangelical Christian’ base of America. The world will slide into greater chaos, and much of it will be laid at the door of the impulsive Trump government. And so, the masses will be rallied against Christianity, as it will be labelled socially disruptive, and its followers marginalised/demonised (just as in the days of Nero and similar Roman Emperors). This could lead to a breaking down of this already compromised Christian base, leaving many on both sides of the Atlantic to look for a new spiritual lead. The already frail and spiritually weak Christian church will look for a new head, a new reference point, one who has the history and terminology to sound like them. Here a thoughtful, calm, community based ‘Christian’ voice from Rome will invite all the brotherhood of Christ to come under his wing. Then, a new world religion that bears striking similarity to Biblical Christianity, but crucially isn’t in its key doctrines, will rise to capture the globe.

This may all take some time, but it would not be a surprise to me if it did come to pass in a similar manner. Many of the greats of the faith shared this view of Rome and its objectives. Men such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jan Huss, Ulrich Zwingli, John Wycliffe, John Wesley, Philip Melancthon, John Knox, Matthew Henry to name a few. If we hear such witnesses from the past, watch closely the events of our day, and filter them all through the Pure Word of God, we can see the way this road is leading. It is leading to the great deceiving of the nations under the AntiChrist. Let’s be wise to this late hour of history and look to share the good news of the true Gospel whilst we can. All so that the name of our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, may be glorified forevermore.

Resource Corner



KJV Kids Study Bible

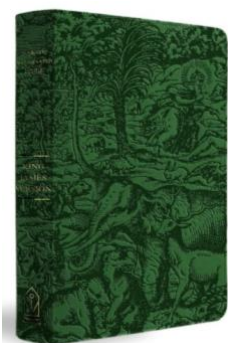
Kids know the Bible is important: after all, it contains God's message of love for them, all other people, and the universe he created. But where does a young person begin studying what's between the covers of this big book? What kind of things will help a child get the most out of the history, stories, and teachings it contains?

This special edition will encourage readers aged 8-12 to begin the adventure of lifelong Bible study. It contains the complete Old and New Testaments of the renowned King James Version, plus a wealth of extra features that will deepen their understanding of the Word of God.

Features:

- Presentation page for personalizing the Bible as a gift
- Words of Christ in red letter
- 16 full-color charts and illustrations
- Book introductions
- Hide It in Your Heart in-text memory verses
- Bible People You Should Know in-text cameos of important personalities
- The Passion in Parallel and Prophecy
- Parables and Miracles of the Bible
- UPDATED Dictionary/concordance
- 8-page full-color map section
- Available from Eden.co.uk

The Majestic Illuminated Bible KJV



Experience the beauty of the Scripture in exquisite full color with The Majestic Illuminated Bible.

In the early days of the Reformation, illustrated versions of Martin Luther's new translation were extremely popular as a way for newly literate readers to be drawn into the extraordinary story of the Bible. One publisher of the day commissioned a set of woodcuts to create the very first illustrated Bible to contain a unified art style by a single artist. Those woodcuts have been lovingly restored and reimagined to emphasize their simple elegance, and they appear for the first time in their new incarnation in The Majestic Illuminated Bible.

Originally created to provide an immersive experience for new Bible readers, these timeless works of art are now accompanied by beautiful original hand lettering and captions to create a truly unforgettable interaction with the Word of God. Suited for either individual reading and for gift giving, this Bible is both a perfect daily companion and a perfect keepsake.

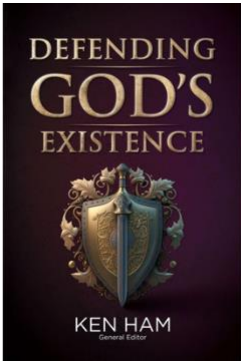
The Majestic Illuminated Bible combines technical craftsmanship, theological symbolism, and stunning color to bring the timelessness and refinement of God's Word to the modern reader.

Features include:

- Beautifully and timelessly debossed and gilded emerald green Leatherluxe cover
- 100 four-color Reformation-era drawings
- Captions for each illustration
- Maps in color
- Topical verse finder

- Ribbon marker
- 9.25pt font for easy legibility
- Available from Eden.co.uk

Defending God's Existence



For those who have grown up in church, it may be easy to believe that God exists and that the Bible is true, but explaining these things to a sceptic? That's a different matter. In this new book, Ken Ham (General Editor) explains what apologetics is, the kinds of arguments people use to defend their beliefs, which ones fall flat (and why) and what is effective.

Learn how to refute false doctrines, recognise fallacies and inconsistencies and disprove atheism while studying about the Trinity, God's attributes and how the Bible stands up against other "holy" books.

Available from Answers in Genesis UK

<https://youtu.be/o34UMoFP7fw?si=Ib6DvT1yqC4VCx1X>



What Rick Warren's Book Did To American Churches That Nobody Is Allowed To Talk About

Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life sold 50 million copies—but what happened to the churches that adopted his model? This documentary exposes the hidden crisis behind America's best-selling Christian book. Between 2003-2010, over 30,000 churches implemented Warren's "40 Days of Purpose" program. The results? Massive congregational splits, longtime members

pushed out, and traditional worship destroyed in favour of "seeker-sensitive" corporate methods.

Discover the untold story of:

- How the Purpose Driven movement transformed American Christianity
- Why Willow Creek admitted their model failed
- The "blessed subtraction" that pushed faithful members out
- Saddleback Church's decline after Rick Warren's retirement
- Real testimonies from churches torn apart by these changes

https://youtu.be/WK4xKe_JkUE?si=WTtN-5tGEtBIT64



You Love God's Word But You Hate God's Will

You highlight the verses. You defend the doctrine. You love the Word — but when God demands obedience, you resist. That is not faith. That is hypocrisy. Inspired by Charles Spurgeon, this video exposes the most dangerous deception in modern Christianity: using Bible study as a hiding place from the God of the Bible. You can know everything about grace and still refuse to walk in it. And Satan loves every minute of it. Loving the

sound of the Word without doing the will of the Lord is not devotion. Spurgeon calls it what it is — and so do we. Examine yourself before God does it for you.

A powerful and eye-opening message from the Prince of Preachers. This sermon will challenge and arrest the heart, but it may prove a blessed challenge if it stirs a soul that is sleepwalking to Hell under self-delusion.

<https://youtu.be/pbOzYh9n4OA?si=ej6EJrDq8JzPTZLX>



God is Creating Weakness In Your Life

Your problem is never that you are too weak. As a matter of fact, what God does in our lives, from the moment we are born again and until we die, is He is constantly working to create weakness in us. The problem is not that you are weak; the problem is that we don't know how weak we are; because that weakness would drive us to prayer. Just as being truly incarnate drove our Savior to prayer.

10 Verses For Encouragement

2 Timothy 1:7, Psalms 37:4, Psalms 121:1-8, Proverbs 30:5, Mark 11:24, Psalms 28:7, Psalms 34:4, Philippians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Psalms 55:22

10 Verses For Strength

Deuteronomy 20:4, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 11:28, Psalms 31:24, Exodus 15:2, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Matthew 6:33, Isaiah 41:10

Useful Websites

Answersingenesis.co.uk

Creation.com

Timefortruth.co.uk

Kingjamesbibleonline.org

Livingwaters.com

Truthtowonder.org

A Final Thought

Life is tiring and hard. It is the effect of the Curse that has made it so. Yet too many of us today wear the effects of the curse like a strange badge of honour. We fill our conversations with how exhausted we are, how stressed we are, how demanding our job is, how difficult our children are, etc, etc, etc. Everything is done with a soundtrack of murmuring, discontent and ingratitude. Yet we continue to live in this manner because we believe it will draw the praise, admiration or pity from others. Such a way of living is dishonest in that it is filled with guile and manipulation of other's thoughts, all so that we may profit from it.

However, what we fail to realise is that by living in such a 'performance', we talk ourselves into being genuinely stressed, tired and miserable. We are to do all things with thanksgiving, not ingratitude. We are to serve the Lord with a happy and generous heart, not a grumbling, moaning, reluctant one. We are to edify and strengthen others who are struggling, not look to outdo them as to 'who has the harder life'. We are to live the joy of salvation with a full and open heart, so that our delight in Christ is visible to all we meet.

We can only do this by calling upon the strength of Christ Jesus, for in Him we can do all things. Then we might have a life that is filled with the Spirit and overflowing with the peace of God. This is the life we are to aim for, to work for, to live for, for this is the way of our precious Lord and Saviour. Let's look to live so faithfully each day, not relying on our abilities, but by calling on His provision constantly. Then the name of Christ Jesus will be the badge of honour we wear with happy thankfulness. A badge that testifies of the Good Shepherd who will lead us home to glory. Amen.

Written and edited by Jonathan Badger

