

7 Essential Truths

Pillars for Society

By Larry Fuhrken

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By Larry Fuhrken
1001 Corporation Street
Bristol, VA 24201
pfuhrken@juno.com

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PREFACE

There are many who would like to think there is more to life than their past or current experience, but repeated disappointment, bombardment from other voices and the confusion of religion seems to make it almost impossible to make any sense of life or how things ought to be.

I propose there are 7 essential truths to make sense of where we came from, where we are going, and what our purpose is in making the journey. Life is more than eating, sleeping, drinking, sex, work, and play. We are part of a marvelous unfolding love story filled with all the adventure of life.

The things that I tell you in this book are declarations of what I've seen and heard. Most of what I share is from my walk with God, study of the scriptures, and just living life. I have added a few possible explanations for some of the contemporary questions and theories about life (all discussions of science would fall into this category). I have included some resources and further notes at the end to assist in your further investigation.

I attempt not to defend, just declare and offer some explanation, and let you, the reader, weigh these things in light of your life, your world, your perception of how things are and how things ought to be. I leave all these things in your hands because I know the same Spirit of Truth who is teaching me can teach you, if you ask. There is a war raging in all of us to know what is true. Are there opposing views? They exist in my own heart.

We fill our lives with all sorts of things to drown out the deep troubling questions of life and the pain of those unanswered questions, because, after all, life goes on.

When the United States went to war in Iraq, the Bush administration said, "We want to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people." I suppose a few Iraqis saw us as liberators, but it is obvious the divisions in that country are extremely deep and the culture very foreign to anything we were remotely prepared for. It is questionable whether we accomplished our goal of winning hearts and minds. All

of this leads to a very interesting question: just how is an outside power to come into a sovereign society, community, or individual, and win hearts and minds? If God really does have something to offer us, something we all desperately need, eternal, abundant, glorious life, then how does this Living God invade our world and win our hearts and minds? There are deep divisions within our hearts, communities, and nations; our ways are very foreign to a kingdom of love. There may be some who view this God as a liberator, but many are resentful because it seems He makes our lives worse. Just the discussion causes anger to rise up with all sorts of reactions. Others, because of selfish motives to rule themselves, continue to fight, resist, and perhaps sabotage His work.

There are some who believe we cannot know truth. Unfortunately, many of those folks have a great deal of influence over our educational system. Many point to Einstein's theory of relativity and the whole new world of quantum physics as proof there is no absolute truth. The fact that our world gets rocked by new discoveries, challenging our current set of rules, doesn't negate truth. Truth continues to break out of every man-made box. The fact that sub-atomic particles behave much differently than the physical laws governing our seen realm, doesn't make truth arbitrary; it simply reveals other dimensions governed by higher law. It is the same in the spiritual realm of things - we don't know everything, but the things we are learning, both in the natural and in the spirit, don't change what has already been revealed; they just add depth, dimension, and clarity. It is in that Spirit that I write, that we *may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that (we) might be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18-19).*

TRUTH ONE

GOD EXISTS

The Invisible God

In the beginning Elohim (God) ... (Genesis 1:1).

What an amazing way to start an autobiography. No explanation of origin or development, just, in the beginning *Elohim* (God). Where did He come from? Who is this *Elohim*? What is His name? What is He like? The Bible says He is Love. How did He become love? Who taught Him? Is He also evil? Oh, so many questions. If God is real, then will be asked over and over throughout this book. Well, it has to be asked - everyone asks this question with the blank filled in with their own personal frustration with this invisible *Elohim* (God). I have as many questions as you do.

One thing that gives some comfort is that there are stories of people who have lived before me who have encountered this invisible, strange God. I still have questions, but because of their stories, my encounter makes sense. For instance, I don't have as many questions as Abram¹ who heard the voice of the invisible *Elohim* but did not even know His name. Abram (later became known as Abraham) lived around 2000 BC in the land now known as Iraq near the Persian Gulf. He was not Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. Those things didn't exist. He most likely believed in many gods and worshipped graven images (statutes of gods that people believe have power). God spoke to Abram and told him to leave his family and country and travel to another land. He obeyed the voice of this new, strange, unseen *Elohim* (God). Why did Abram leave everything to follow the voice of a God who he couldn't even see? If his experience was anything like mine, it's because when you hear this voice, it is more real than anything you have ever heard or known, providing complete confidence and peace to obey, even against conventional wisdom. He traveled northwest into modern day Syria and eventually left his father in Haran (Syria) traveling south to what is now known as Israel. Back then it was known as the land of Canaan.

Hagar, Abram's concubine wife also received a message from this invisible God, "Hagar, where did you come from and where are you going?" She was running away from her mistress, Sarai (later became known as Sarah), Abram's wife. Sarai was mistreating Hagar because she conceived a child by Abram while Sarai was barren. You can imagine the jealousy and competition that was going on between these two women. This invisible God told Hagar to name her son Ishmael. She was told her son would be a wild man and be against every man, and every man would be against him; and he would dwell in the presence of all his brethren. Most Arab nations claim to be descendants of Abraham through Hagar's son, Ishmael. Hagar didn't know what to call this invisible messenger God, so she gave him her own made up name, *Beerlahairoi*, meaning, *a well of a living one, my seer*. She named God *Beerlahairoi* because He spoke to her at a well and told her that He saw her affliction.

Later, three messengers of the invisible *Elohim* visited Abraham and gave Sarah a message that she also would conceive and bear a son. She laughed because she was old and past the age of child bearing. She did conceive and bore a son named Isaac. Most Jews claim to be descendants of Abraham through Isaac.

No introduction, no name; just a voice in the wilderness birthing nations and peoples. The conflict between these two people groups (Muslims and Jews) has drawn the whole world into the discussion. Well, maybe more than a discussion - a conflict; perhaps, even a war.

Oh, now we have more questions: If there is only one God, then why so many religions? Why does He birth Ishmael and make him a wild man? How do we know it was really God that said these things and not just stories in the Bible? Does He still speak?

Most people believe there is a god. They may not know His name, or know very much about Him at all, but the vast majority of the human race believes there is a god; perhaps not the Jewish God of the Bible, and perhaps not the Muslim God of the Koran, but a god none the less. Some refer to Him as a life force, an energy, or power. Many have a concept of many gods, but even among these they have some thought about a chief god or a god of gods.

There are also people who don't believe there is a god. They call themselves atheists. They are against the concept of god and hold firmly to a belief that god is a creation of man to fill a void and answer questions. Questions like: where did we come from? Where are we going? What is my purpose? How should we live?

These are good questions. I suppose everyone comes around to wondering about these things. Perhaps, in our culture, because there is so much leisure time and self-gratifying pleasures, these questions come a bit later in life, but eventually they come. So, in discussing truth number one – either God exists or He doesn't. The answers to these life questions take two very separate paths depending upon which you believe to be true. This raises another interesting question: does our believing or not believing have anything to do with whether God exists or not? If God exists, our saying He does not exist, doesn't change anything; it just makes us a fool for denying something that is real. If God doesn't exist, our saying He does exist, doesn't change anything; it just makes us superstitious for believing in something not real. However, the discussion does not come down to choosing to be foolish or superstitious; it comes down to knowing if God is real.

How Can We Know God is Real?

We are asked to accept the existence of God by faith. Our culture likes observable facts (science). The problem with science is we are limited to the physical universe. It is vast and quite extraordinary, but limited nonetheless. We are talking about God. If He is real, then it stands to reason that He is outside of our three dimensional reality, which raises another question. Are there other dimensions? Time seems to be a pretty powerful force to deal with. What if there are other dimensions not so easily discerned? What if there is a God who inhabits the unseen realm of the Spirit? What if this God, from time to time, invades our world to win our hearts and minds? Or what if He is all around us just waiting to be felt, seen, heard, or to have some relationship with us? Faith is an insult to the intellect and an unacceptable answer to most. For many, believing in the existence of God based solely on faith is the end of the discussion.

If you ask people who believe in God how they know He is real, they most likely will relate a personal testimony of how God revealed

Himself to them, like Abraham or Hagar. I know I would tell you about the time I was eight years old lying in bed crying at night because my Dad had come home from drinking and was screaming at my mom. My mom had gone back to the Nazarene Church and my dad was a partying man, definitely not interested in church. He married in hopes of having a drinking and dancing partner, but life changes things, and three boys and a girl between the ages of three and ten change things even more. My dad was screaming, yelling, and knocking things over in the house. I cried out to God, "God if you are real, we really need you." A warm, tingly peace came over me, comforting my heart, making me feel safe and secure. I was filled with such love and peace I stopped crying and went to sleep. I was touched by this invisible *Elohim* (God) when I was just eight years old. My life has never been the same; I have continued to seek to know this God who hears the cries of children and comforts them with peace and love.

Some have the idea that in order to know God they need to go to church or some 'holy' place. What church or 'holy' place would you go to? I have been to the Catholic Church and several Protestant Churches (Nazarene, Assembly of God, Charismatic, Non-Denominational, House Churches, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Messianic Congregations, Church of God, Episcopal, Baptist, Lutheran and a few others). I have stood in a Hindu temple, visited a Buddhist temple, visited a Mosque, visited a Mormon shrine. God is bigger than all these institutions and does not dwell in temples made with hands. Can you find God in these places? God is everywhere. We are not talking about the doctrines of man or the beliefs of a church or religion. We are talking about the Living God.

There was a shepherd boy named David who wrote songs. He wrote one song that says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard*" (Psalm 19:1-3).

"God, if you are real, please, reveal yourself to me" - a humble prayer that will change your life forever.

TRUTH TWO

GOD CREATED

Creator God

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:20-21).

I worked with a man who once said, “If we are made in the image and likeness of God, then I’m not very impressed.” He was not taking into account that the human race has fallen way short of their original created glory. It is true that the current condition of humanity leaves a bit to be desired with all the wars, disease, murder, and many other injustices. Nonetheless, the human body is amazing: skin and muscle that heal themselves when cut; trillions of cells that are each living organisms with their very own encoded genetic information in the form of DNA that makes up a single unique person; the sense of taste; the wonder of smell; the way the body receives nourishment, and even the way it eliminates waste; eyesight is nothing short of miraculous; the way oxygen is separated out of the air, given to the blood, and pumped through the body to provide each cell with the breath of life; both the male and female reproductive systems are incredible; conception, development of new life, and the birth process is beyond words. This is just a very brief list of the marvel of our physical makeup. Consider also our mental, emotional, and spiritual life as well, and you have to come to the conclusion that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

The earth is a pretty incredible place, held in perfect balance to sustain life. So far, we have not found any place like it. I love standing on the beach looking across the vast ocean, listening to the majestic sound of waves crashing to shore. Take a little walk and you will find all kinds of sea life, both dead and alive. It was only recently (this past century) that we even began to understand a little of the contents of these vast waters. A trip to any aquarium or a video of the old

Jacque Cousteau programs (to really date myself) reveals creatures that are too wonderful to describe. The colors are so brilliant and wonderful. They are so unique and sometimes downright ugly, in a cute kind of way, of course. Many devoted and very smart people have dedicated their lives to study the behaviors and characteristics of these creatures. We have begun to understand the purpose for certain behaviors, colors, and functions of body parts. With this increase of knowledge, and science as our guide, many have come to the conclusion that these things must have formed out of necessity, rather than created by design.

The idea of creation has been part of human civilization for as long as there has been a record of humans. The idea of evolution is remarkably new. The theory of evolution begins with an unprovable presupposition; there is no God. Creation begins with the presupposition, in the beginning, God. I have read both sides of this argument extensively. The 'evidence' compiled in the fossil record can be explained with either presupposition. If you believe or know there is a God, the evidence fits the creation model quite well.² Are there questions or 'problems' with the creation model? Of course. However, I have to tell you, the questions and problems with the evolution model take much more faith to overcome, to the extent that now, there are evolutionists who propose there must be some 'life force' (energy) that started it all. So now, evolutionists are beginning to believe in a little god, not presently involved, not referred to as god, and definitely not personal in any way; they just need a little poof (energy) to get everything started. It makes you wonder where this little poof god is now.

God created heaven and earth. The earth was covered in water and in complete darkness. He created light and made an atmosphere in the midst of the waters. He separated waters under the atmosphere and above the atmosphere. It would seem the 'old' earth was protected by a water canopy rather than our current ozone layer. It was much more effective in keeping out ultraviolet light and other radiation from the sun. It is probably the reason that men lived so much longer prior to the collapse of this water canopy known as Noah's flood.

He gathered the waters under the atmosphere into one place and called them seas, and the dry land He called earth. God spoke to the earth to bring forth self-reproducing grass, herbs and trees.

God created lights in the vast outer space; sun, moon and stars. One argument for a universe that is billions of years old is the amount of time it takes the light from some stars to travel to earth (light travels at approximately 186,000 miles per second or 669,600,000 miles per hour; that's fast). A light year is the distance light travels in one year. At the above rate that is about 5.8 trillion miles in a year. That is 5,800,000,000,000 miles in one year. Our solar system is only about 5,900,000,000 miles across (it takes light about 8 hours and 24 minutes to go the entire distance of our solar system). Our solar system is part of the Milky Way galaxy which measures 573,500,000,000,000 miles (98 thousand light years). The Coma Supercluster is 1,750,000,000,000,000,000 miles from our solar system (300 million light years). The furthest reach of space, according to some scientists, is 76,400,000,000,000,000,000 miles (13.2 billion light years). That is why scientists say the universe is billions of years old. It takes 13.2 billion years for the light from the furthest places of the universe to reach us. However, there is this very interesting verse in Psalms 104:2, "Who covers yourself with light as with a garment: who stretches out the heavens like a curtain." Perhaps God stretched the fabric of space, which according to some scientists would dilate time and distance, giving the appearance of this astronomically old universe.³

God then spoke to the waters to bring forth moving creatures abundantly, and the birds that they may fly above the earth in the sky. God created whales, and every living thing that moves, and every winged bird.

There is one thing in this creation story that is very interesting, God made everything to reproduce after its own kind. Even with man's ingenious involvement we cannot cross two species. We have not been able to find a way to cross a chicken and a buffalo to make chickalo or buffken. I would definitely eat those wings dipped in hot sauce, but it just doesn't work. We have some success in combining certain types of fruit or vegetables to make new varieties; we have even crossed a horse and a donkey to make a mule, but no new species. Each species produces after its own kind.

Then after speaking to the earth to bring forth; making stars, sun and moon; speaking to the water to bring forth; God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over all the other earth stuff. That is why man is the dominate species. Now, I will be the first to admit that we have not done a very good job taking care of our home or the animals that are under our care - another effect of our falling from our original created glory. Yet, we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

The next time you are out on a dark, clear night, look up; drink in the wonder and awe of this vast ocean of stars and galaxies; let your problems melt away and just begin to think how big this creator God must be to make all that. Or the next time you look in the mirror, hear children laughing, taste your favorite dish, smell that wonderful spring rain, or feel the soft touch of someone who loves you, just stop for a moment and say, *I really am wonderfully made.*

What Difference Does It Make? My Life Sucks

I like people. I like watching people. I wonder what motivates and drives people to wear the clothing they wear, drive the cars they drive, buy the houses they buy, eat the food they eat. I like being in large crowds to watch, listen, and talk to people. The only reason I like going to the malls is to see different people. I especially like visiting Washington, DC or other major metropolitan areas because of the diversity of the culture (so many nationalities in one locality). I like sitting in the general store in southwest Virginia listening to the stories of the mountains. I talk to people wherever I go. I used to ask people what they do, but it is such a shallow question leading people to talk only about their job, but never getting to who they really are as persons. I now ask; what do you love; what is your passion; if you could do anything, what would you do? Those questions get to the heart, the dreams, and the real person.

I also wonder what drives a person to drink, rape, steal, lie, or murder. How does a person come to the place where they look through garbage for food or sleep on the street? What causes people to make the sacrifices they make, visit the poor, feed the hungry, lay down their lives to serve others, or really care about anybody? I like to listen to people without judgment, just to hear their heart, their story. I value people and I try to respect each life and the choices

they have made. After listening to many stories and relating to many different kinds of people, I have come to this conclusion: everyone has a story. Everyone has a sad story.

Some stories are just downright heartbreaking. We know a girl whose mother was a drug addict and prostitute, really would do anything to get money for drugs and alcohol to feed her addiction. This girl cared for her little sister and had many heavy burdens thrust upon her at a very young age. Her mother would ask them to buy small items with food stamps to receive the change for cash. There were times they had to steal.

We know another woman who was abused horribly as a child. The abuse drove her to hate men. She found herself, as a young Christian woman, receiving comfort in the arms and company of other women. The family is in denial, never an opportunity to discuss the pain. Years of counseling is just starting to heal some of those wounds.

We have another dear friend who was burned with cigarettes, shot at by her grandfather, and stabbed in the back by her mom. No, I don't mean her mother talked bad about her behind her back, I mean a literal knife to the back for being overbearing. She ended up on the streets when she was just fifteen years old.

The pages would fill with sad stories if we talked about the millions of orphans, the millions of refugees who have had to flee their homes because of war, famine, or other hardship, the young African boys who have been kidnapped and trained in gorilla warfare, the young Asian boys who are sold into the sex trade, or the young girls all over the world who are seduced, forced into, or otherwise enter the world of prostitution and pornography.

Compared to the above stories, my kids had it made. They grew up in a home with a mom and dad who truly love each other. They grew up with lots of love, encouragement, and affection. Yet, they still have a sad story: the struggles to please their dad, being misunderstood, having to live up to other's high expectation because they had it 'so good', or the hurtful words spoken in every household that cut deep to their dreams. Most parents have no idea how powerful their words are over their children. I say everyone has

a sad story, because everyone has been touched, somehow, with the death, corruption, suffering, and violence that is in the world in which we live.

It is this death, corruption, suffering, and violence that makes us ask the question, “If there is a God, then why does He allow all this suffering?” We all have one thing in common - we are all children of somebody. Everyone was born. Wherever you might be in your development, you probably can think of a time when you blamed your parents for the way you are or the way you turned out. Obviously, our parents have a lot to do with who we are, but they don’t ultimately determine who we become. Children who blame, hate, or don’t forgive their parents ‘turn out’ much differently than children who take responsibility for their lives and choose to be grateful for life, even if it wasn’t perfect. Orphans have to deal with the fact their mom didn’t want them. Many stay hurt and angry, affecting their own lives and everyone around them, while others accept their life as a gift and ‘give their mom a break’. Perhaps, they don’t call it forgiveness, but it goes something like, “who knows what she was facing; I’m sure she did the best she could and thought she was doing the right thing.” They accept their lives and make choices for themselves. Nobody has a perfect situation. My kids would probably complain that I was too protective and perhaps too involved. They don’t complain, but they could, and some kids do. It’s the same with God - those who want to be angry and bitter turn out much differently than those who accept to believe the best about God and His intentions.

Originally, God planned for man to live in paradise. No sickness, no death, no violence; but God gave the first people a choice to gain knowledge through relationship with Him or gain knowledge independent of Him. They chose to give it a shot on their own. God drove the first people from paradise and death entered the world. In some ways we are all orphans. This is why we get angry with God - He really did allow death to enter the world. The other suffering, corruption, and violence is the result of our anger, frustration, and complete ignorance over being kicked out. If God had not allowed death to enter the world, we would be the most miserable eternal creatures ever to exist. There would be absolutely no end to the pain and suffering. Time and death are a gift to us from a God who loves us. Both are temporary realities, and it is why so much of our

scientific understanding is skewed; we do not have the natural ability to view our world from an eternal perspective. I am not saying death is THE answer, but death is an answer. I'm glad Hitler is gone, and quite frankly, there are a few others I'm glad are no longer with us in this life.

Creation to Secularization

Now with this death, corruption, suffering, and violence come all the questions about God, creation, love, and purpose. The creation story I related in the beginning of this chapter is not the only one. Most cultures have some version of a creation story. "Which god is the true god?" is a question that not only has been debated for millennia, but has also been the cause of countless wars since the dawn of history. It seems among the Greek philosophers an idea arose about the possibility of no god. This raised serious questions. If no god, then how did we get here? The evolution theory starts with that question - if no god, then how did we get here?

Then Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) and Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) show up on the scene and begin to propose some answers to the question. Charles Darwin provided a theory of existence without a Creator God.⁴ Karl Marx provided a theory of government and society without the authority of God.⁵ Then a guy named Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) comes along and declares that God is dead. The phrase is lifted slightly out of context from *The Gay Science* published in 1882, but the idea of casting off the restraints of Christian teaching on society is popularized and finds tremendous momentum.⁶ Then two other contemporaries add to the discussion; Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) and John Dewey (1859 – 1952) provide an explanation of soul and knowledge without a personal, involved God.^{7,8}

When you consider the history of the church, the many wars fought in God's name, and how far the church had fallen from anything that remotely resembled a God who sacrificed His son out of love for His creation, it is no wonder an idea that God is dead begins to find a place in society. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim conflict tilled the ground for the planting of atheism, humanism, and secularization. It is most unfortunate, but understandable.

Religion (man's idea of god) first failed the people, giving rise to secularization of society. Secularization is defined as the activity of changing something (education, morality, art, society, medicine) so that it is no longer under the control or influence of religion. Secularization, with evolution and humanism as its cornerstones, is the popular king of the day. Secularization, however, has also failed the people by neglecting their spiritual life. So now there must be a religious life that can be tolerated and yet does not directly confront or challenge the cornerstones of secularization. Buddhism fits nicely, along with other eastern philosophies. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are on alert to not be extreme, or they will not be tolerated.

The problem is, both religion and secularization both have left a deep spiritual void, leaving people utterly destitute. The number of teenage suicides and homicides, along with the number of young people suffering from deep depression, are serious indicators of a belief system gone wrong. Normally, young people, with their wild dreams and passions, are the fuel for society to be propelled into the next age. It seems these dreams and passions are so corrupted by a repeated and reinforced idea of 'no God' and 'no creation' that the fuel driving society today is for man to become more like animals than like God.

It is no wonder the man I worked with, mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, was not impressed if man was created in the image and likeness of God; that image and likeness has been very marred. I'm just grateful that this is not the end of the story.

What Does the Creator Have to Say?

Below are some very beautiful words about creation. They are spoken by a man named Isaiah, moved by the Holy Spirit, as if God, Himself, were speaking. As you read, ask God to speak to you like He spoke to Isaiah, and then listen with your heart.

The Lord says, I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

For the LORD says that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he has established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.

I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

Tell you all, and bring them near; yes, let them take counsel together: who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no other God beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:12,18-22)

The Prophet Isaiah

TRUTH THREE

GOD CREATED MALE AND FEMALE

Undeniable Attraction

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. (Genesis 5:1-2)

So what about this male / female thing? It has always been quite an issue, and today is no exception. Someone asked me, “When did you start liking girls?” I don’t remember not liking girls. I have always been fascinated by the way they look, by the way they act, by the way they smell, dress, eat, move, etc. They are just plain fascinating and attractive. I’m not just talking about the models; I am also talking about the quite ordinary, plain ones. Women are amazing to me. Even the strong, political ones - the ones about whom you say, “I wouldn’t want to tangle with her.” Even they fascinate me, because they are different than me - their strength comes from a different place than mine.

There is a profound, unexplainable, almost mysterious attraction between the sexes. Who has not felt the change in the atmosphere when a woman walks into the middle of a bunch of guys? You can almost taste the chemistry in the air. I love to watch my son do his moves on his skateboard. He is not great, but he can do quite a few things with that board on wheels. Oh, but how it changes when a girl is watching. The moves are bolder and faster, with one eye to make sure she is still watching. The resulting chemical reaction of having a girl present throws everything out of equilibrium causing him to lose his balance, his sense of direction, and any ounce of sanity he had to begin with. All that before she even says hi. This interaction is nothing new and continues to be at the very center of who we are and who we become. It is the reason the vast majority of the entire earthly population pair off with a member of the opposite sex. This attraction is powerful, mysterious, wonderful, and at times, heartbreaking.

Being United in Holy ... Something

Marriage can be the most blessed human experience or the very worst. We all share a sense of awe and great respect when we meet an elderly couple who has been married for fifty years or more. Like a precious gem, it is rare, and because of its rarity it is valued. It is rare because of the level of commitment and dedication we all know it takes to live with the same woman or man for one's entire adult life. A life of always turning your heart back to the one you chose so long ago. A life of forgiveness; a life of understanding and preferring the other; a life of finding common ground in the midst of conflict; a life of resisting other temptations and seductions whether they come in the form of another person, career, or opportunity; a life separated to love just one person with your whole heart. It is what fairy tales are made of, and it is what we all hope to find - true love.

My grandfather, married to grandma for 53 years said, "Larry, sometimes you can't even stand to be in the same room with her ... but it always gets better." I understood there was something to the promise, something to the covenant, something to the choosing, something to the sticking with it because at one time you said, "I want you, and no other."

The other side is the absolute misery of a loveless marriage. After the passion, attraction, and sexual desire there was not enough glue to keep the couple together. There are many factors for the broken union: unfaithfulness, abusiveness, negligence, unforgiveness, being emotionally distant, critical, various addictions that break communion and trust, or otherwise disconnected and disagreeable.

An increasing number of people are choosing to live together rather than embracing the more traditional bond of marriage. The main reason for this is they have seen so much heartache in marriage they try to protect themselves from the disappointment and devastation of divorce. Of course, it doesn't work, because there is still separation. The sexual union is at the heart of any relationship. In that union, there is a bond that goes deeper than the physical connection of sex; there is a connection in a person's soul. Separation, whether it is divorce, moving out, or just going home in the morning, rips at the heart.

Two Very Different Worlds

Now I am going to speak in generalities. I know there are exceptions and deviations from what I am about to share. However, generally speaking, it seems men and women come from two different worlds. It is these differences that make the man / woman thing so fascinating.

Young women have this very romantic image of their own prince charming. He will be kind, sensitive, thoughtful, strong, courageous, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. You see, young women want someone to love them the way they are wired to love: soft touches; non-sexual hugs; listening; sharing details, not of just what happened, but how you feel about what happened. Sex for most young women is the ultimate giving of her-self to a young man in order to be loved and appreciated. The reason so many young women are hurt after giving themselves physically is because the sexual interaction doesn't mean the same thing for the young man.

Young men have quite a different view of their sexy, adventurous, playmate (I mean soul mate). She will be attractive, sexy, strong, adventurous, hardworking, faithful, and loyal. You see, young men want someone to love them the way they are wired to love: a bit aggressive; taking initiative; sexual touches; their girl defending, standing and fighting off threats. Sex for most young men is the ultimate conquering of a prized possession in order to fulfill himself. The reason many young men are hurt after taking their prize is because they find the sexual interaction doesn't mean the same thing for the young woman. She wants commitment, appreciation, and love; he wants fun, freedom, and someone to share in his adventures.

How can these two worlds ever come together to form a bond of marriage that even remotely resembles happiness and bliss? The passion that drives a young man and a young woman together simply is not enough glue to keep them together. The young man must mature and learn to become sensitive, understanding, able to hold his wife longer than ten seconds without needing sex, thoughtful, and caring. He must develop the ability to listen and hear the many unspoken desires and wishes, giving himself emotionally, the same way he desires his wife to give herself physically. The young woman must mature and learn to gently force her way in, be lovingly

aggressive to ‘get into’ the man’s emotions, not take silence as rejection, develop the desire to do the things the husband enjoys, giving herself physically in the same way she desires the man to give himself emotionally.

This takes time and commitment from both, but the reward is to learn to love and live with someone different than you. Have you ever noticed that couples who live with each other for a long time begin to think alike, act alike, even look alike? They are truly becoming one.

Why It Is Important to Love Someone Different

Is God male or female? The Hebrew book says we are created in His image, after His likeness. *In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.* It appears God first formed man / woman from the dust of the earth, then later taking a part of the man, he formed a separate woman. God made male and female in His likeness. So, back to the question, is God male or female? It seems to me that God is neither male nor female, and, at the same time, both male and female. He is something other than human even though we are made in His image and after His likeness. God is Spirit.

After God created Adam, God said it was not good for man to be alone, but there was no suitable *ezer neged* (poorly translated “help meet”) found for this new created being. God then caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, took a part of his body and formed a woman. When God presented this new fabulous creation to Adam, he said, “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” Initially, a woman came from a man and since that time, all men have come forth from a woman. There is a deep interconnection between the sexes from the very creation. That’s the reason a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife in order to be joined as one again.⁹ Why all this trouble of separation and coming together again? Because through this unique relationship of man and woman, God is revealing His very own desire for a suitable *ezer neged for himself*.

The King James Version of the Bible translates the Hebrew word *ezer neged* as help meet. Religion has taken the word ‘help meet’ and

made it to mean that wives were a mere helper and mate to their husbands. An entire gender role has been created in many religious circles that keep women in subjection and bondage. The feminist movement has tried to right this wrong by suggesting there is no difference between men and women - that women can be men and men can be women. They propose society is responsible for the differences and the roles. Of course, one only needs to look at the very different physical make up to see clearly we are not the same. I have at times been envious of a woman's ability to give birth; I cannot imagine a greater privilege given to a human. Even this has been distorted by the feminists to be an unfair burden. Instead of being equal, the feminists make women unhappy about being women, and in all their efforts to be more like men and do 'man things', many women have lost their identity. This has led to even greater bondage and disappointment, kind of the old proverb of out of the pot and into the fire.

Women are every bit equal and counterpart to man. This help meet thing is not about who is better or who is over the other. It is about being able to see face to face someone who is made of the same stuff as you are and in every way your counterpart to provide completeness and wholeness, to have someone outside yourself to love and to share the journey of life. *Ezer* is a Hebrew word that means aid, support, surround, protect, assist, relief, comfort. *Neged* is a Hebrew word that means counterpart, opposite, before or in front of, in sight, to view. So that *ezer negad* really is to have a helper, protector, support and aid in front of you in plain view. It is an intimate face-to-face communion with someone of your own kind. This face-to-face communion is at the very heart and desire of God creating man in His own image and likeness.

That is the real importance of the man / woman thing. We learn to love someone different than ourselves creating a foundation for a deeper, intimate, eternal relationship with God as the lover of our souls.

How about 'Real' Life?

I have asked my kids, "Of the hundred or so married couples we know, how many of those do you think love one another in a way that makes you say, I want a marriage like that." I'm not talking about

the movies and books; I'm talking about real life marriages between a man and woman. Perhaps there are ten to fifteen out of a hundred, and they begin to list them.

What about the other eighty-five to ninety? They are a mess. They live together, but it is not peaceful. If it is peaceful, they are living contractually (mutual convenience) rather than with any passion or love. Many are totally broken, and some are abusive either to themselves through alcohol or drugs, or abusive to others through fits of rage, cheating, verbal or physical assault. Most police calls in our society are in response to domestic issues.

Adultery, fornication, pornography, divorce, homosexuality, spouse abuse, child abuse, fighting, contention, screaming, yelling, cursing, incest, neglect, etc, are all very much a part of our human story that has affected us all in some way. God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn us. I am not in the condemning business either. That is what man's religion does when trying to do God's work. God sent Jesus into the world to save us from our own destruction. When left to ourselves, we deteriorate into a whole list of pretty ugly things (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wanton sensual pleasures, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, quarrelsome debates, jealous rages, wrath, strife, back-stabbing divisions, erroneous beliefs, malicious envy, murder, drunkenness, riotous living, etc.). Much of society has accepted and embraced this deteriorating life style as normal, but it most definitely is not healthy. Healthy is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, trust, humility, and self-control. That really is what God intends for us all.

So, the question is how do we get from the destructive life to the healthy life? It seems we would need a brand new life free from all the selfishness if there is to be any hope of true, lasting love.

I propose this offering of a brand new life is at the heart of all that God has done to touch our lives through Jesus - an invitation extended to see God face-to-face, know God, and become God's *ezer neged*.

TRUTH FOUR

GOD FORMED US IN OUR MOTHER'S WOMB

Is God Presently Involved?

Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations. (Jer 1:5).

We know that God created the first man, but did he create you? A sperm from a man and an egg from a woman joined together to form another unique, amazing, special you. A man produces millions of sperm, each one with a unique genetic code randomly selected from his own DNA (genetic code) through a process called meiosis. A typical male has what seems to be an endless supply of sperm. A female has a limited number of eggs determined at birth. She normally produces one egg per menstrual cycle (in a few cases there are multiple eggs produced). Likewise each egg has a unique genetic code randomly selected from the woman's DNA. If you were to have only one woman producing one egg per menstrual cycle and one man with his millions of sperm, the possibilities of you being you seem endless, especially when you add time to the equation. Now, think, there are 7⁺ billion people in the world at the time of this writing allowing for a mind boggling number of combinations of men and women. Just the mathematic probability alone of you being you makes you pretty darn special.¹⁰

Now the question is: who made you, your parents or God? The answer is: People have been given freedom to make choices and equipped to join together to produce more people. God, being the life force in all of creation, forms and knits each individual in the developmental stages from the very first joining of egg and sperm. From your high school biology, you might remember the term 'mitosis' which is the division of cells that begins immediately after conception. One new cell becomes two and the two cells become four and the division continues. It really doesn't take long to get trillions of cells (it only takes 30 divisions to get the first trillion cells). All the information of the individual's physical make-up is in the genetic code registered in each new cell reproduced in the mitosis process. The puzzling question is: how do certain cells know to

become bone, skin, various organs, brain, eye, or blood cells? This is known as cellular differentiation.

We know that in this process of cellular differentiation portions of the genetic code are switched on and off to 'specialize' each cell to perform its 'determined' function. We also know that certain chemicals activate the switches, but even the scientific community uses words like tricky, complicated, finicky, peculiar, phenomenon. This cellular assignment is amazing in and of itself, but then consider each human is given a soul – the thing that makes you – you. Your soul makes up your personality, your ability to think, decide, reflect, be self-conscious, and conscious of the world around you with emotion and understanding. In addition each human is given a spirit - that mysterious part of our being that is associated with words like intuition, perception, revelation, perhaps even inspiration. I suggest this is precisely the point at which God, as a life force, forms and knits each individual.

If you consider that God is involved in which sperm meets with which egg, provides the direction / instruction required for individual cells to become something different, forms a person's very soul, and gives you a spirit to communicate with Him, then you must conclude the uniqueness of each individual life and its value as simply wonderful!

This very basic realization that you are special, you are lovingly made, and you have received the greatest gift ever given, the gift of being uniquely you, changes your entire outlook on the world, your own self-consciousness, and most especially, your attitude towards others.

If it were true that everything has come about by random chance, that you really are nothing special, or there is no loving God, or at least no God presently involved, then we are among the most miserable creatures ever to exist. We would have no purpose, no belonging, no direction ... really, no hope.

Unfortunately, this lie has found a firm footing in just about every area of our society and thinking. It is the deepest, most fundamental struggle of the human heart. What is my purpose? Where do I belong? What do I believe? Why do I believe what I believe? Does it

make any difference? If you buy into the 'no God' lie, then a person really is left to his basic instincts to live as an animal. A person just does whatever feels good and seems right at the time.

Once a generation is indoctrinated or rather intoxicated with this world-view or life style, then it is only a matter of time before that generation is brought into slavery to someone else's ideas and purposes. Once enslaved, only two options exist: endure suffering or medicate it with more self-pleasure. However, once a person realizes he/she has been made for a purpose and feels loved, it changes everything, and that person can make the most significant changes. That person is among the happiest people on the planet, because above all, he/she has hope.

Then Why Did He Make Me like This?

Let me go ahead and ask the questions that are now screaming at me from my own head, and I'm sure yours as well. What about the baby who is born without a brain? Did God forget to direct something? Did the 'life-force' get interrupted? Did the 'builder' go to sleep or go get something to eat? What about my baby? What about me? What about conjoined twins, downs syndrome, mental retardation, or in very, very rare cases hermaphrodites (generally defined as individuals born with both male and female reproductive parts)?

I am a father of five children. We had a girl first, then two years later another girl. Then three years later we had twin girls. Then after another three years we had a boy, our youngest. They are healthy, smart, and pretty good looking. I credit their mother with the good looks. My wife's right foot turns in when she walks; so do a few of the girls. I have severe near-sightedness; four out of five have that wonderful gift. My son talked of being a fighter pilot. He was devastated as he matured and the road signs became blurry. Crooked teeth, bad eyes, turned ankles all seem like kind of minor defects, but the truth is they got these defects from my wife and me. We got them from our parents. We all got them from the very first parents.

The real rub for all of us is how does a loving God allow all these defects? The real stumbling block to believing in God at all is

somehow reconciling a loving God with so much pain, suffering, and a human condition that oftentimes is terribly wrong for so many.

I believe God has given us (society, communities, families) individuals who need special care primarily for 3 reasons: First, how we treat these people reveals our heart; second, the sacrificial love required to care for these special needs is the closest we come to loving the way God loves us; and last, they serve as a reminder of our own mortality and desperate need. Birth defects and special needs really do bring about the very best and worst in society. The best is demonstrated in that there is no greater love than the compassion and care for the weak among us; the worst is the utter contempt and pride that is willing to murder 'undesirables'.

God made you who you are because He loves YOU!

The real question should not be, "why did God make me like this?" The real question should be, "why is God mindful of us at all?" We are the ones who left Him. He has never left us. We are the ones who continue to invent new ways of destroying life. He continues to give life in the midst of our destruction. We are the ones who think our goodness can restore hope to the human condition. He is the one who sacrificed everything to truly give hope and true restoration. If there is any goodness, any virtue, any justice, any love, any hope, any honor, courage, light, truth, or life, it is from God!

What about Destroying This Life?

This nation is truly divided over the issue of abortion in all of its forms, from stem cell research to partial birth abortion. Some think the younger developing cells are less human than a fully developed baby. It does seem to me that we should be able to agree that killing a fully developed baby who is partially born is murder, but the division is deep and the fight is fierce.

This is not the first time in human history that society has approved the killing of babies. During Moses' day, the Pharaoh of Egypt ordered the killing of all Hebrew male babies as soon as they were born to keep the children of Israel (Jacob) from becoming a mighty nation and hence a threat. In Jesus' time, King Herod ordered the killing of all children two years old and younger in hopes of snuffing

out the announced young king Jesus. Soldiers rode into Bethlehem and the surrounding community and tore little babies from their mother's arms, thrusting them through with the sword. You can well imagine many mothers and fathers died also, clinging to their babies in an attempt to save them from this slaughter.

However, our technology has advanced to allow us to perform this 'procedure' out of sight by putting instruments of death inside of a woman's uterus and killing the life growing inside before anyone has a chance to see it as truly human and alive. This technology makes it easier to deny the reality of what is truly happening. It does amaze me that, under the guise of 'women's rights', women are somehow convinced to lay on a table, spread their legs, and allow a stranger to enter their vagina and uterus with some instrument to take the growing life out of the safest place God could have provided for this miracle to occur. Somehow these women have been bewitched into believing this 'procedure' will 'assure' them a better life. The truly amazing difference between this modern phenomena and past times is that today women have been 'seduced' to voluntarily allow their babies to be killed before the baby sees the light of day.

There is much argument about when life begins. We name the various stages: conception, embryo, fetus, baby, infant, toddler, child, adolescent, young adult, adult, mid-life, senior, old. The percentage of those who support some form of abortion drops off significantly as the development progresses. But then, those who support death as an answer in the beginning stages of development are more likely to support death as an answer in the later stages of development or decline. Many who support 'taking' embryos do not support partial-birth abortion. In the same way those opposed to killing seniors may be persuaded to support some sort of euthanasia for the really old who have no real 'quality of life'. Once society dehumanizes or demonizes a segment of the population, using death as a solution to society's problems becomes frighteningly easy.

Separated from God

So we live in this world of good and evil with death (mortality) as the common enemy to every human being. It is interesting to see how different people deal with the eventuality of death: some ignore it, some fear it, some fatalistically embrace it, some face it with courage,

some fight it, some philosophize about it, some speak proudly against it, some use it to control others, some see it as the answer to their problems, some simply accept it as a part of life.

Some intellectuals claim that man created god and the idea of eternal life because of our unwillingness to accept death as a final end to what seems like a very short life. In the intellectual world the best we can hope for is a legacy or a memorial. Perhaps this legacy or memorial is from fame, fortune or invention, or from the more common legacy of reproducing offspring but the sad truth is that most people live and die without any remembrance of where they walked, lived, or any note of what they accomplished. Death is common to all people, and most people die quite commonly.

This death entered the world because of the disobedience of our father, Adam. Adam was given a choice to live in a dependent relationship with God as his Father and friend, or learn knowledge separated from God with the false promise of becoming like god for himself.

This separation has not worked out quite so well. Apart from God there is no real life. The life we do have is but a shadow of the glorious life originally intended. All the death, suffering, corruption, and violence now experienced as part of this shadow life eclipses the little bit of glory that we still have as a result of being created in the image and likeness of God.

Take a moment to consider the glory of man in his choice to learn knowledge separated from God. Let's just forget the bad stuff for a moment and focus on the cool stuff. Think about books, art, music, cathedrals, movies, skyscrapers, trip to the moon, reusable spaceships, computers, cell phones, cars, food production, water purifying, reforestation, conservation, medicine, etc. It really is absolutely overwhelming to look around and consider the wisdom and discovery of man to get all this stuff that we can see and touch out of this planet we call home. We take minerals, metals, gases, petroleum, plants, and trees out of the earth and create a whole bunch of cool stuff.

Yet, in spite of all the collective accomplishment, there is such a void in our souls, such deep emptiness. There is a longing for something

more, something real. Marriage, family, and friendship come as close to anything natural being able to fill this void, yet the hole in our hearts remains, because even the most loving relationships are but a shadow of the one true love lost so long ago.

As hard as some try to convince us that this seen reality is all there is, each one of us has something deep down in our hearts that says, "There has got to be more." As a result many turn to some form of religion, meditation, cult following, occult practices, or other spiritual journey. Few find what they are really looking for.

Closing Thoughts

God is presently involved. He did not just start things with a big bang, create the first humans, and let everything go. No, He is intimately acquainted and involved in the forming of each life. John, one of Jesus' followers, says in the book named after him that Jesus was in the beginning making everything that is made. He is the Light of the world and He lights every person who comes into the world.¹¹ He was in the beginning and He is still involved.

What I have written so far with the boldness to call truth applies to every single human being who ever lived or ever will live. What I am about to write applies to those who have faith to believe that there is more to life than being born, breathing oxygen, and then rotting in the ground.

I imagine if you are reading this book, you are at least looking for some answers. If you seek, you will find.

TRUTH FIVE

JESUS IS FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN

A Brand New Life

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

If someone came up to you right now and made you a promise that you could have a brand new life, not a fixed up old life, but a brand new life - the life offered is real, has its foundation in love and acceptance, cannot be destroyed or diminished, brings peace and joy, is designed specifically for your unique personality, is full of purpose, and a deep satisfaction and contentment beyond anything you ever imagined possible, would you take it?

It seems there are a lot of promises made and a lot of promises broken. We all believe something. We all make choices based on those beliefs. For most in the world, those beliefs are a result of family / tribal / cultural tradition. Some go to college and are influenced to believe something besides what they learned from their particular family or community. Those looking for 'something more' may adopt some religious teaching or a variation of several different religions.

No matter what you believe, your particular belief system has a promise associated with it. It may be a promise of becoming honorable in your tribe, successful in your field of expertise, famous, rich, powerful, a good person, being happy, accepted, having someone to share life with, a promise of having your own family, making it on your own, an inheritance, being a survivor, or even a negative promise of 'you will never amount to anything'.... some promise attached to what you believe about life and about yourself.

Many of you have never really seen your life in light of you having believed a promise. Who made the promise? Many times it is parents, teachers, or those who govern. The disillusionment comes when the promise doesn't come to pass. We do everything we are

supposed to do to get the promise, but nothing happens. Worse, sometimes it does happen, we do work hard and get rich only to come to the end of our lives to find that we are empty. The promise sounded good in the beginning, but left us wanting. My point is simply, all kinds of promises are made, but how are we to know if the promise is worth believing or if it is even true?

Background of God's Promise

God made a promise to Abraham that in his seed (descendant) all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham had no children. Sarah, Abraham's wife was barren. God said that Abraham's descendants would grow and inhabit the land that he was living in as a stranger. The boundaries of the land promised as an inheritance stretched from the great river in Egypt (the Nile) unto the great river Euphrates. Both Jews and Muslims lay claim to this promise based on their claim of being the offspring of Abraham. After Jesus' time on earth, a third group arose, known as Christians, who also claimed these same promises by being descendants of Abraham by faith in Jesus.¹²

Abraham ended up having eight children: Ishmael (father of many Arab nations) by Hagar (Sarah's servant); Isaac (father of Hebrew nations) by Sarah (miracle birth after Sarah was past the age of childbearing); then six more sons by Keturah (Abraham's second wife after Sarah died). These last six sons were given gifts and sent away to the east (perhaps modern day Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan) away from Isaac and Ishmael.

You can well imagine, there are many people who can trace back their lineage to 'father' Abraham. You can begin to understand the conflict over 'the land', even though that conflict is focused on just a sliver of property now known as Israel. The entire region is embroiled in the conflict and its effects are global.

Here is the real stickler in all of this: God said that His promises (covenant) would be established in Isaac. You may be asking, what does all of this have to do with a promise of a brand new life? I hope to show you that the promise made to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his seed include you, and that promise is much more important than who owns the land or the oil.

God made the promise to Abraham and to his seed (singular), not all his descendants throughout history. Jesus is a direct descendant of Abraham through his son Isaac. All the promises made to Abraham are received and fulfilled in Jesus. Let me explain why I am able to make this emphatic statement.

The historical record of Jesus as a man is sound and widely accepted. Only the willfully ignorant deny the existence of Jesus. Most believe He was a good man with profound teachings. Some believe in the record of His miracles, and several accept Jesus as a prophet. However, there is a claim that Jesus makes about Himself that is extraordinary. He claims to be the son of God. He calls God His Father. This claim is what caused the Jews of that day to deliver Jesus into the hands of the Roman authorities to be executed on a cross.

There is one event that either proves Jesus is the son of God or is the biggest hoax in all of human history. That event is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If Jesus was resurrected from the dead, then everything has changed. A man, claiming to be God's son, lived in a flesh and blood body like us, died, and rose from the dead - unheard of. If He was stolen or rotted in the tomb, then let's go eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is overwhelming for anyone who desires to know the truth.¹³

This issue of the resurrection is critical to the true promise of a brand new life. If Jesus did not die and did not rise up from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, then there is no new life or trustworthy promise. We all might as well just make up the kind of life we want and do whatever seems right. On the other hand, if indeed, Jesus was born of a woman with God as His father, lived in the earth as a man, was falsely accused of being a blasphemer, died a horrible death, and was raised from that death to live for evermore, then He is the only one qualified to make a promise worth believing.

The promise made to Abraham was that in your seed (Jesus) all the nations of the earth will be blessed! The only one capable of being a blessing to all the nations of the earth is Jesus. Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of God!

What Is the Blessing?

You who were lost in your sins and trespasses as mere mortal persons to live out your days upon the earth in the shadow of a former glory are now redeemed (purchased from slavery), forgiven, and made a new creation in Jesus Christ. The promise is eternal life. Jesus blesses all the nations (every ethnic group) with the promise of LIFE!

Eternal life is not simply living forever. It may sound ok at first, but living forever in our current condition and circumstance is not a very pleasant gift or promise. That is why people add the part about dying and going to heaven in order to receive the promise. But the truth is, Jesus promised to make us His brothers, and in so doing makes us sons and daughters of God, with the same glory, life, and fellowship that He has had with the Father for all eternity. That life is something you experience the moment you believe.

What is in this brand new life? Your conscience is cleansed from all guilt and shame. Your spirit is made alive to communicate with God. You receive the same Spirit who raised Jesus Christ up from the dead. You receive the spirit of adoption whereby you are able to call God your Father. Your countenance is lifted up (no longer downcast and depressed), your hope restored, you have eyes to see what you previously could not see and ears to hear the voice of the one who created and formed you. Your conversation changes to blessing and praising God, who has forgiven all your iniquities and healed all your diseases. You begin to have a sense of what you were created for, and a grace (a divine enabling) influences your heart and decisions.

You begin to be led by the Holy Spirit to walk in a God-kind of life like Jesus had when He lived as a man in the earth. You begin to sense and know a different kind of life working in and through you. You walk in the power, protection, provision, belonging, knowing, living, laughing, dancing, proclaiming, loving, believing, trusting, enduring, abiding, abundant life with the Father that Jesus has. You are God's sons and daughters.

Now you see the promise made to Abraham greatly transcends all the claims made by Jews, Muslims, and Christians of being the true recipients of the blessing simply because of their lineage. The

promise is fulfilled in the One who is raised from the dead and given to all who believe in Him. The promise and its fulfillment is not based in politics, religion, economy, your station in life, your intellect, laws for or against, creeds, doctrines, philosophies, institutions, or systems. The promise and its fulfillment is based in the life of the One who fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law and satisfied the offering for sins with His own blood, giving freely to all who believe a Brand New Life!

How Do I Receive the Promise?

In many ways God has already done it. God made the promise to Abraham and then promised Himself to fulfill it. He watched over the offspring of Abraham who were born through Isaac until it was time to send Jesus Christ. There were many attempts throughout history to wipe out Abraham's children. There was even an attempt to snuff out the life of Jesus when He was just a baby.

Jesus increased in wisdom and maturity and in favor with God and man. Jesus was baptized by a man named John the Baptist, and God filled Jesus with His own Spirit. Jesus lived on earth as a man, dependent on God through the power of the Holy Spirit. God confirmed Jesus as His own son through many wonders and miracles. Jesus showed the world that He had come to give life, not punishment or condemnation. He healed people, set people free from tormenting demons, touched and healed the lepers (unclean), fed the multitudes, had compassion on the poor, and raised the dead. He taught the people about another Kingdom that was not of this world and demonstrated that Kingdom's power to give life.

There was one man, Adam, who transgressed in disobedience bringing sin and death into the world. God was looking for one man who would live in complete obedience in order to redeem the human race from sin and death. There was no righteous man found to undo what Adam had done. God sent His own son. Jesus became obedient to God as His Father, and accepted the responsibility to pay the penalty of sin for the entire human race. Jesus was made to be sin, even though He knew no sin, so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus was falsely accused, mocked, beaten beyond recognition, whipped until His flesh hung off His body, nailed to a tree, forsaken of God, and died once and for all.

God raised Jesus from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thereby destroyed the power of sin and death for every human being. Jesus ascended to the Father offering His own blood in exchange for our sins. Jesus then appeared to more than five hundred different people over a period of forty days so that they could testify of His resurrection from the dead and be prepared to receive the promise! Jesus then ascended into heaven and poured out the same Holy Spirit into the hearts who were waiting for Him. They were now filled with the same God life that Jesus had, the same life that overcame death, the same life that Jesus had with the Father.

Jesus lights every person who comes into the world. God has given a measure of faith to every person. The Holy Spirit is drawing every person to Jesus, and Jesus is revealing and making known the Father.

So what is there left for you to do? Believe. Really, this believing is more of an awakening to the work that is already being done in your heart. Believe the light that has come to you. Believe the faith that has been given. Believe the Holy Spirit who is drawing you. Trust Him and entrust your life to Jesus. You can die with Jesus to the old and be raised up into His new life. Receive Jesus. It's HIM. It's His life ... His life is Him. You get Him; you get a Brand New Life!

Religion Is the Great Counterfeit

In the second book named after Peter, a fisherman who became a disciple of Jesus, says this better than I can.

2Pe 2:1 But there were also lying prophets among the people then, just as there will be lying religious teachers among you. They'll smuggle in destructive divisions, pitting you against each other—biting the hand of the One who gave them a chance to have their lives back! They've put themselves on a fast downhill slide to destruction,

2Pe 2:2 but not before they recruit a crowd of mixed-up followers who can't tell right from wrong. They give the way of truth a bad name.

2Pe 2:3 They're only out for themselves. They'll say anything, anything, that sounds good to exploit you. They won't, of course, get by with it. They'll come to a bad end, for God has never just stood by and let that kind of thing go on. (The Message)

Honestly, most of what we know from religion and church is described above. They really do give the way God has made for us to experience a new life a bad name. Some of the strongest words Jesus spoke were to the religious leaders of His day. Those religious leaders kept people from experiencing true life by all their rules and demands. It really is a shame how many people have been turned away from the truth because of religion and the various churches distorting the gospel for their own gain.

All I can say is I am sorry. It isn't God.

What Do I Do Once I Believe?

Start a conversation with the One who created you, redeemed your life, and filled you with His Spirit. He has given you the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth. If a man tells you that you must join a church or group in order to get all that God has for you, RUN the other way. Ask the Lord to show you those who have God's life in them and talk to them about all the cool stuff Jesus is doing in your life. That is called fellowship.

Many of those people are in the prison walls of some organization, but you can still visit them if you want. Just be careful because the religious leaders of these organizations will try to get you in prison also. Just stay free in the Holy Spirit and let Him teach you. You can also meet a whole bunch of people who got out of the prison walls of man's organizations and institutions. Sometimes, they just move to a smaller prison, but many do love Jesus and want His Life. Perhaps you will meet others like you who just receive the promise of a new life and begin Living!

The one thing about this that can be a little confusing is that the true sons of God are all mixed in with the same old sons of Adam. But God knows who belongs to Him and you will too, because they have the same Spirit that you have. Just never forget who rescued you and gave you the new life.

TRUTH SIX

JESUS WAS DEAD AND IS ALIVE FOREVERMORE – ETERNAL LIFE

The Kingdom of God

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Psalm 145:13)

There are many kingdoms of this world. The Kingdom of God is not of this world. There have been many world powers. By that I mean a single nation or empire that has primarily dominated or influenced the rest of the world. The world is made up of all the systems that relate to human existence on earth. The Kingdom of God is not of any of those systems.

The kingdoms of this world are mere shadows of the governmental authority, provision, protection, freedom, and life that one might expect or dream of when speaking of the Kingdom of God. There is nothing we know naturally that adequately compares with God's kingdom. Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God. He told us that we need to change the way we think about everything we have known and been taught in order to see and enter the Kingdom of God. This change is not an intellectual exercise; it is the exchanged life I told you about in the previous chapter. Without that experience, you cannot even see (perceive, understand, comprehend) that there is *another kingdom*.

The main difference between the kingdoms of this world and God's Kingdom is their substance. The kingdoms of this world are established in wisdom and knowledge. The Kingdom of God is established in LOVE. Another difference that is just as profound is the structure. The kingdoms of this world are structured as a pyramid with a hierarchy of leadership, the few ruling the many. The Kingdom of God is a circle with God's throne at the center. All life, authority, activity, provision, protection comes from God in the center, as the author of all life and worthy of all praise, glory, and honor.

Love, light, truth, glory, honor, power, blessing proceed from God like light and heat proceed from the sun. All those gathered around about His throne are moved upon, energized, empowered by His LIFE. In return there is an outflow of adoration, blessing, strength, praise, glory, and honor back to God. In this exchange the very life of the believer is established. Out of this life, the believer begins to rule and reign with God.

This Kingdom started with Jesus and is never going to end. The ruling power and peace of His Kingdom will continue to increase and fill the whole earth.

Eternal Life

Eternal life is not simply living forever. It is not dying and going to heaven. Eternal life is intimately knowing Jesus Christ and God as Father by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was in the beginning with the Father. They had fellowship one with another. They delighted, preferred, and completely loved one another. They shared the love, life, light, truth, and glory that was in each of them. They worked in harmony, peace, and with unspeakable joy. They had life and fellowship with each other. Jesus came into our world and made known that life that He had with the Father. The life that accepted, affirmed, empowered, protected, encouraged, strengthened, and delighted in one another.

Jesus' main purpose for coming was to completely take away our sin and destroy the works of the devil so that God could pour His Spirit out upon our flesh. Jesus then asks His Father that we might be one with them even as He and the Father are one. He made a way for us to enter the fellowship that they have one with another. That is eternal life.

Religion is the Great Counterfeit

Religion is just people trying to serve and please God in their own wisdom and strength. A lot of the stuff sounds good, but it ends up being the same old thing you were trying to get free from before.

Religion makes up rules to help you stop sinning and make you more pleasing to God. You need to serve. You need to witness. You need to give. You need to join. You need to pray more. You need to read your Bible more. You need to come to church more. All of this is provided to satisfy the longing in your heart for real life and freedom. It doesn't work.

Religion takes all joy out of life because you have to give up your former life, but all you get in exchange is a church life. At first it is ok, because there are people, programs, ministries, and all kinds of things to keep you really busy. But eventually, you realize you don't have the personal relationship with God the way that it was promised when you first believed. You are still empty.

Of course you are not able to voice this without consequence, so you just wonder what is wrong with you, and continue to go through the motions. If you do find the courage to say you think something is wrong, there will be plenty of religious folks to help you through your 'difficult time'.

Unbelievers come and leave unchanged because they can see through the charade. There is no joy; there is no power; there is no peace; there is no eternal life.

Some places have recognized this and tried to do something about it. Religion attempts to make the correction with livelier music, entertainment, flashier programs, bigger buildings, recruiting more charismatic leaders, and more money. Yes, much more money. All the substitutes religion makes for God's glory and His presence have left many precious souls angry, frustrated, confused, and in some cases crippled.

Jesus came to give us life.

Habitation of God

Jesus told us that He was going to prepare a place for us. He said that He would come again and receive us to Himself, so that we could be where He is. Jesus is with the Father. He has faithfully prepared a place for us so that we might abide with Him and His Father.

Later in the same writing by John, Jesus said that He would manifest (show, make known) Himself to all those who loved Him. One of Jesus' followers asked how He was going to show Himself to those who love Him and not to the world. Jesus then says the same thing, but even stronger. If anyone loves me, I and my Father will come to him and make our abode with him.¹⁴

You see, Jesus desires that we would be where He is abiding in the Father, and in turn He and the Father will make their dwelling place in us. God has made Himself an eternal home for us and is making us an eternal home for Himself.

Now here is the full impact of what I am telling you about eternal life. I am not talking about dying and going to heaven. I am talking about a way that has been opened up to us right now. We have access to the throne of God, His presence, glory, and life. We can be with Jesus where He is without leaving the planet, dying, or having an out-of-body experience. Heaven is the realm of the spirit and it is as near as your hand.

Likewise, God is working in the hearts of those who love Him to prepare us as a dwelling place for Himself. God does not dwell in the buildings made with our hands. Instead, He has made our lives living stones to fit together with all those who love Him as a resting place for Himself. Even now He comes to us.

Presently, It seems that our 'going' to be with Jesus where He is with the Father in heaven is more along the lines of a visit rather than an abiding. In the same way, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith and from time to time we are made aware of His presence and glory in our lives, but this reality is increasing until we know it in fullness.

The greatest declaration in all of the writings that make up what we call the Bible is found in Revelation chapter twenty-one, verse three, "*The habitation of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God!*"

Everything is working to that end.

Ruling and Reigning with Jesus

Jesus Christ has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God our Father (Revelation 1:5,6). Jesus was slain and with His own blood has purchased us back to God out of every tribe, language, people, and nation, and has made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

Once your life begins to change from being ruled by those over you, and you ruling those under you, to ruling *with* God at the center of your life, then you have begun to enter the Kingdom of God.

There are a people who make God their abiding place who will rule and reign with Jesus. The earth belongs to the Lord and the fullness thereof. Everything must yield to Jesus. He is THE King of all the other kings, and He is THE Lord of all the other lords. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

TRUTH SEVEN

ALL THINGS RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH JESUS

Reconciliation

All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation: that is to say, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19).

The world is alienated from God. Alienate: be estranged; arouse hostility or indifference in, where there had formerly been love, affection, or friendliness. This love, affection, and friendliness was a long time ago, and much has happened to further estrange a broken relationship between God and humanity. It is God's desire for us to be reconciled.

We have known or perhaps been involved in a marriage or relationship that was so far gone that there was no way for the relationship to be reconciled. There was just too much damage, hurt, and separation. A person in that situation really has no choice but to let go and start over.

It is kind of like that between Adam and God. The separation is too great to be fixed. Those born in Adam (natural human race) are hostile towards God. So much so that when God sent Jesus to a people who had been chosen and uniquely singled out to receive God's son, they rejected Him and had Him crucified. Then hostility grew in non-Jewish people toward the Jews calling them Christ killers. The truth is, even though many of the Jews were hostile towards Jesus, many of the Romans and the rest of the world were indifferent. Indifferent, that is, until some of Jesus' followers began to preach and teach in Jesus' name disrupting the Roman's way of life by causing people to turn away from idols. Then the same hostility was aroused, and many followers of Jesus have been persecuted and killed throughout the ages. How can all this be repaired? How can we ever hope to be reconciled to God?

Paul, the guy who wrote much of what is known as the New Testament, tells us that God was in Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself. God forgave us. In the marriage scenario, we were the ones who committed adultery; God remained faithful. Not only did we commit adultery, but we went whoring after other gods - everything and anything besides the one true love. And not only did we commit adultery, we are murderers. There is hostility that rises up and cuts down anything that remotely looks like it is coming too close to disrupting our little carved out kingdoms where self is king. The world is full of every evil practice that mostly has its roots in selfishness; the same thing that causes adultery and murder.

A person can react to the above accusation by saying they are a good person and even pointing to all the good things they have done. The truth is, your goodness is rooted in the same tree as all the evil. (The tree that Adam ate of which caused the alienation was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). When examined closely, a person's goodness is selfish by nature and hostile towards God. Sometimes it is easier for an evil person to receive God's forgiveness than it is for a good person. The good person is deceived into thinking he/she is good and has no need for forgiveness.

Forgiveness is wonderful, but what guarantee is there that anything has changed. If something is rotten at its root, then it will always be rotten. Most people preach the gospel (good news) that God has forgiven you, and if you receive that forgiveness you will go to heaven when you die. If you don't, you go to hell. I suppose that is good news, but is being forgiven enough? Take the marriage scenario again. You're a rotten dog who cheated. Your spouse has forgiven you and lets you back in the house, but if the relationship has not changed to love, affection, and friendliness, then you may find yourself in a prison of guilt and shame always trying to make up for your rottenness. A lot of people do that with God. Religion never lets us forget how rotten we were.

Thank God, He has done more than forgiven us. Forgiveness is the open door back to God. It is wonderful to be forgiven, but He has done more. He has washed us and cleansed us from all the guilt and shame. He has cleansed us from all unrighteousness. Forgiven and cleansed - truly amazing. But He has done more. He has put the Spirit of His son, Jesus Christ, into the very center of our being (our

hearts) in order for us to be completely changed and made a brand new creation. We don't have the same nature that used to motivate us and drive us. We are made new! God has reconciled us to Himself in the same loving, affectionate, friendly relationship that He has with Jesus.

What about the World?

Everything must be reconciled to God through Jesus. Not because God is a God of punishment, although He does punish. Not because God is God, although He is God. Not because God has anything to prove, although He has proved all things. Not because God is the ultimate authority of the universe, although the earth and everything in it belongs to God. Not because God is angry, although His wrath and indignation are kindled from time to time.

Everything must be reconciled to God through Jesus, because God is coming to make His dwelling among men. He is coming to live with us and we are being prepared to live with Him. The whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Most people have a very fearful and pessimistic view of the times we are living in. The deep fault lines in all the systems of man are beginning to show up, and there is a little shaking going on. Those who are drunk on pleasure and absorbed in their idolatry are indifferent, but most of the world is aware that things are changing.

God is not moved. He is not shaken. God is not anxious or nervous. God is not fearful or pessimistic. I even sense God may be excited and filled with anticipation. He is simply drawing near, and everything that is not of Him is being shaken. The reason He hasn't come in all of His glory sooner is He doesn't want to scare us. He wants as many as are willing to be changed - changed in a way that allows them to live freely and joyfully in His presence. God has no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked, but He is coming. The wicked will be destroyed, but God would rather have them healed and lovingly placed in His kingdom to live forever in His presence.

Ministry of Reconciliation

God has given to us as His followers, filled with the same Spirit who was in Jesus, the same work of reconciliation. This is often misunderstood to mean going out and trying to get other people to believe in Jesus, which often proves to be quite ineffective. The best way to participate in this work of reconciliation is to recognize that it is primarily God's work through Jesus in you. As you allow this work of reconciliation to be fully accomplished in you, being changed into the image and likeness of Jesus, then the life that we live will naturally touch others. Jesus wasn't trying to be Christ. He wasn't trying to tell people about God or the kingdom. He was Christ and all He knew was God and His kingdom. We need to become that.

Hope of Glory

The life that God has given in Jesus Christ is our hope of glory. We cannot change ourselves, but we can be changed! Because Jesus removed all the hostility and everything that was working against us, we are able to look into God's face. We see His love, acceptance, and glory. We then look and see that the same love, acceptance, and glory is in us because we have opened up to Jesus. As we continue to look at that instead of all the other rotten stuff, we are changed from glory to glory into the same image and likeness of God.

I want to finish with one of my favorite passages from a letter written by Paul. I think this passage sums up nicely all that we have been talking about. It is God's desire for us to be filled with His fullness. It is His desire for us to be with Him, and for Him to be with us. Sometimes, it really is too wonderful to even imagine, but more and more we are gaining understanding into all that God has purposed and is doing.

[Just a side note: Men wrote the Bible while the life that I have been talking about was working in them. It really is a very precious gift once you recognize and have the Spirit who inspired the writings.]

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That He would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts

by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God! Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)

ENDNOTES

¹The man, now commonly known as Abraham was born to Terah in Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham's birth name was Abram. God changed Abram's name to Abraham when Abraham was ninety-nine years old. Abram's wife name was Sarai. Her name was changed to Sarah when she was ninety years old. This name change corresponded to an encounter they had with God just prior to the birth of Isaac. You can read the entire biblical account of Abram and Sarai in Genesis chapters eleven through twenty-five.

²Following are three websites that discuss intelligent design and how the fossil record fits a creation model. The sites also have many other resources. www.answersingenesis.org with Ken Ham ; www.icr.org with Dr. Henry M. Morris ; www.creationevidence.org with Dr. Carl Baugh.

³Russell Humphreys discusses the scientific concepts of the expansion of space fabric in his book, Starlight and Time (Green Forest, AR: Masterbooks, 1994). I only offer this as a plausible alternative explanation to an astronomically old universe. Many of our scientific theories interpret data according to current conditions or made up models. The problem with interpreting data according to current conditions is the conditions most likely have not always been the same. The problem with made up models is they are based upon the theory and the presupposition they are trying to prove, which may be erroneous from the start.

⁴Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) was a British naturalist with his most notable work being *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* published in 1859. In this work Charles Darwin proposes natural selection as an explanation of evolution and the diversity of species all coming from common ancestors. Natural selection is the process whereby favorable inheritable traits are enhanced and passed to successive generations and less favorable inheritable traits diminish. This, of course, requires the genetic material to make 'good choices' and avoid 'bad choices'. If it were true, it seems we would see more of this favorable selection in our children; but, nope, it is still the story of the good, bad, and the ugly all getting passed on quite randomly.

⁵Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) was a German philosopher most famous for writing the *Communist Manifesto* published in 1848. This document's main thrust is the denunciation of capitalists (employers of wage earners) and introduces the idea of a classless society. This classless society will need a transition period where the state (working class) takes dictatorial control to crush capitalism and eventually lead to a stateless, classless society. The state would be empowered to abolish personal property, give the state (ruling working class) the authority and ownership of all lands, communication, industry, transportation, money (central state banks), and education in order to destroy the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists. Marx's manifesto further proposes the destruction of the traditional view of family, most importantly parental authority, by destroying home education and enrolling children into 'free' state run public schools. The manifesto also suggests 'free love' is a better means of producing children than traditional marriage. It proposes a heavily progressive or graduated income tax, along with the abolition of all rights of inheritance. Among other things, it proposes the abolition of any distinction between towns and countries with an equal distribution of the populace over the country. In essence, the state (ruling working class) becomes supreme authority. The failures of Communism cannot be overstated.

⁶Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) was a German philosopher with many published and unpublished writings. He is most famous for his often repeated quote, "God is dead." This quote is best known from his work titled *The Gay Science* published in 1882. In his book, *The Anti Christ, Curse on Christianity* published in 1888, Nietzsche blasts the morals of Christianity, becoming known as an enthusiastic attacker of Christianity. Friedrich Nietzsche went insane and was admitted to a psychiatric institution in 1889. His sister, Elisabeth, retrieved him from the institution in 1893 and cared for him until his death in 1900.

⁷Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) was an Austrian physician famous for his work on dream psychoanalysis and dream interpretation as a result of his theories of the unconscious. Perhaps, he is remembered mostly for his theory or redefinition of sexual desire directed towards different objects beginning in infancy as the primary motivation for human development. Sigmund Freud died in 1939 by doctor assisted suicide.

⁸John Dewey (1859-1952) was a US philosopher known as ‘the father of modern education.’ He is best known for promoting his ideas about pragmatism, especially as it relates to education. Pragmatism basically calls for an examination of the consequences and real effects as a means of interpreting truth. It is the foundation of ‘out-based’ education and moral relativism. He helped write and was one of the original signers of the *Humanist Manifesto I*. The main point of all three of the Humanists Manifestos is to establish rules for the growth of society without belief in or dependence upon anything supernatural, especially a ‘prayer-hearing God.’

⁹Gen 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

Gen 2:20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him.

Gen 2:21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

Gen 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Gen 2:23 And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Gen 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Gen 5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

Gen 5:2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

¹⁰Interesting facts concerning reproduction:

- A man releases between 20 – 100 million sperm per milliliter of semen multiplied by 2 – 6 milliliters of semen in a single ejaculation, that is 40 – 600 million sperm in a single ejaculation. www.wiki.answers.com.
- Each sperm and each egg has a unique genetic code derived from the parent cell through a process called meiosis. The parent cell typically has 23 pair of chromosomes making up the DNA for a total of 46 chromosomes in a healthy cell. Each sperm and each egg is a random selection from these 23 pairs to form a new cell consisting of 23 chromosomes. Now if you simply selected one entire chromosome from each pair of chromosomes there are 8,388,606 possible combinations each, for the sperm and the egg. A sperm, with all of its combinations, joining with an egg with all its combinations gives us more than 70 quadrillion possibilities. That is pretty amazing in and of itself, but in the process of meiosis each pair of chromosomes can exchange sections of information from the other pair creating an entirely new chromosome (Note: only pairs exchange information. Chromosome one does not exchange with chromosome two, etc.). This exchange varies, creating an almost infinite number of possible combinations to make each person truly unique. www.thetech.org/questions/ask. Scientific information from Dr. Rama Balakrishnan, Stanford University.

¹¹John 1:1-9 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. **That was the true Light, which lights every man who comes into the world.**

¹²Genesis 12:1-3; 12:14-17; 15:1-18; Luke 1:68-75; Acts 3:24-26; Galatians 3; Hebrews 8-10

¹³Check out Josh McDowell's book, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. Josh McDowell offers compelling evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In this well documented apologetic, Josh McDowell explores the historic, archaeological, and bibliographical evidences for many of the claims of the Bible.

www.josh.org

¹⁴It would be good to read the entire chapter of John fourteen, but below are excerpts referred to in the book.

Joh 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Joh 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Joh 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Joh 14:22 Judas said unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world?

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.