

REBUILT

TO LIVE A GREAT STORY

ISSUE NINE

THE PERILOUS PURSUIT OF FINDING PURPOSE

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AND GOD'S BETTER WAY

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LONELY HEART

2022

REBUILT MAGAZINE
TO LIVE A GREAT STORY

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DISTRIBUTED AROUND THE GLOBE

— AN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE —

We're a global magazine with versions published in the USA, Southeast Asia, and the Philippines.

WELCOME TO REBUILT

Somehow you have stumbled upon a copy of *Rebuilt Magazine*. Maybe it was an accident, maybe you are just bored, but maybe it's because you want to know if it contains something worthwhile. We hope it does.

Rebuilt is written, laid out, and printed by young adults in the USA, Philippines, and parts of Southeast Asia. What brings us together is our love for Jesus. Our desire is to write about topics focusing on God, life, and college. We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking as it encourages you to pursue a strong relationship with God.

Rebuilt has been publishing issues since 2018. All credit goes to God. We're not sure how else to explain it!

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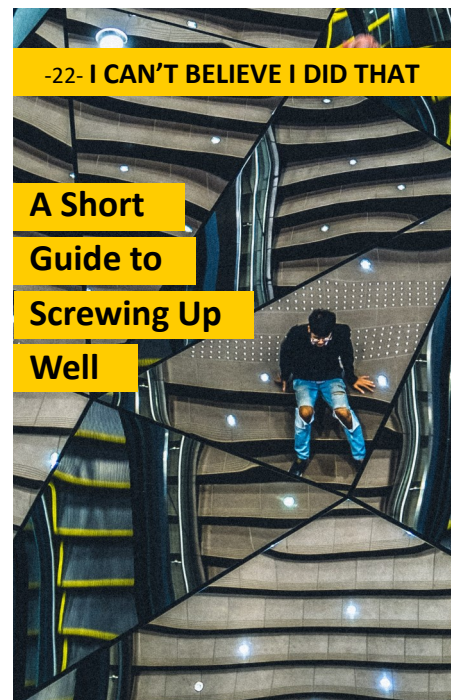
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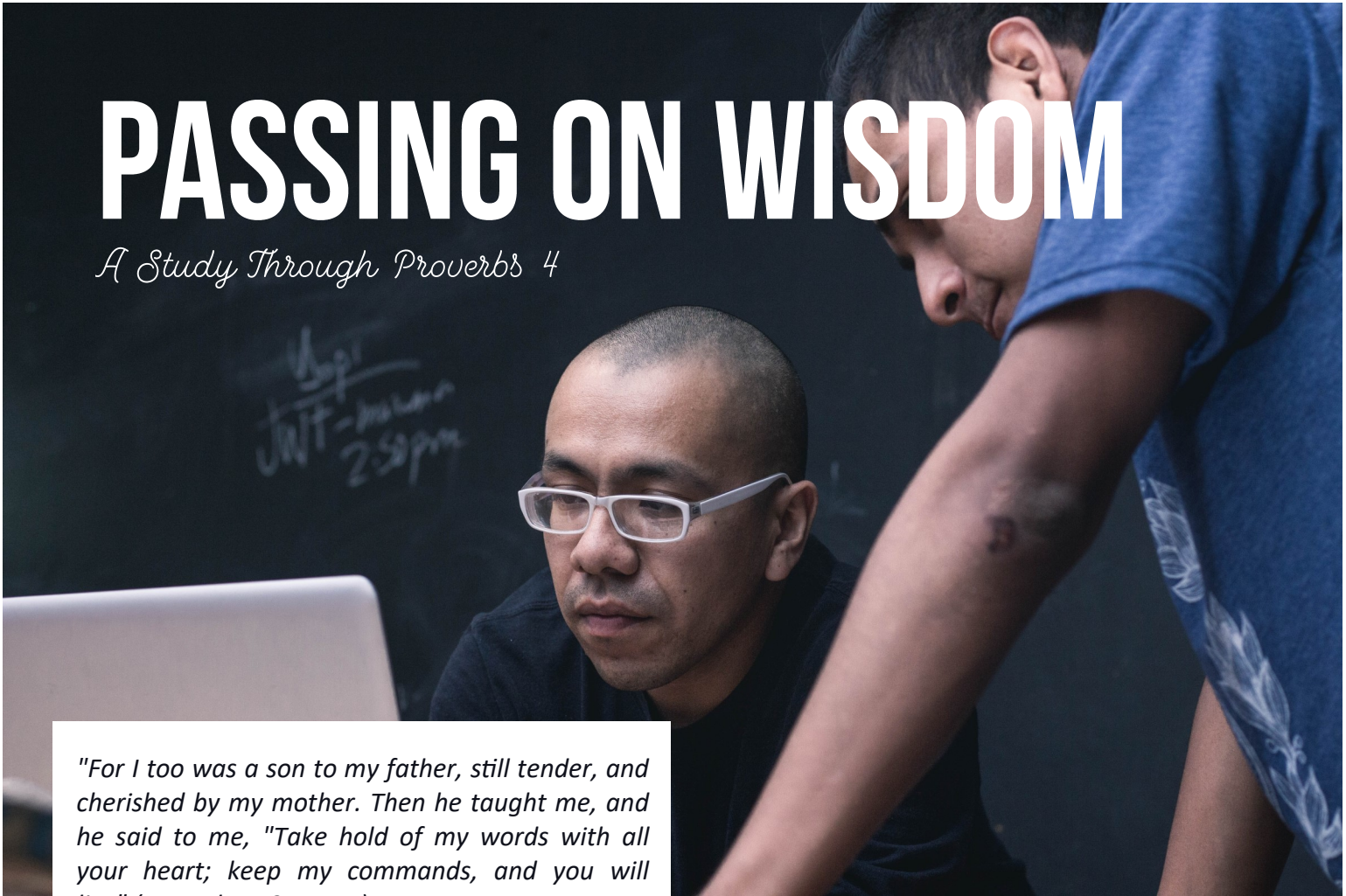
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PASSING ON WISDOM

A Study Through Proverbs 4



"For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. Then he taught me, and he said to me, 'Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live' (Proverbs 4:3-4, NIV).

Passing on a family legacy

Proverbs 4:3-4 describes how the way of wisdom must be passed on. A faithful grandfather's teaching is being passed on to a grandchild through a man who speaks both as a son and as a father. The father begins by saying, "Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding" (v. 1).

But then the father goes back in time to his own childhood, to his father's words: "When I was a boy in my father's house ... he taught me" (vv. 3-4). What the grandfather taught the father is the same thing the father is teaching his son: embrace wisdom, and you will receive a crown of splendour. The LORD has also made promises to us, and He is faithful to fulfil them. But he uses means to accomplish them – it doesn't happen automatically!

For I was my father's son

Solomon's parents were David and Bathsheba. God loved Solomon, and so did David. God chose Solomon from all of David's sons to be the next king of Israel.

Solomon knew his father especially loved him: "I was my father's son," and his father taught him many things (Pr 4:1-9). David's advice at Solomon's coronation was glorious (I

Chron 28:1- 21), and his deathbed advice was also very wise (I Kings 2:1-9; II Sam 23:1-7).

Here's something about fatherhood that is true. When a child is four years old, he says proudly, "My dad knows everything about everything." When he is 7, he says, "Dad knows almost everything about everything. When he is 12, he says, "Well, it's only natural that Dad doesn't know everything." When he is 14, he says, "Dad is old-fashioned." When he is 21, he says, "Dad is hopelessly out of step with the times." When he is 25, he says, "Maybe Dad does know something about a few things." When he is 35, he says, "Maybe we ought to call Dad and check this out with him." When he is 50, he says, "I wonder what Dad would have thought of this?" And when he is 65, he says, "I sure wish I could talk to Dad again."

Tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother

"Tender" refers to the early, innocent years of a child's life when his or her heart is soft and impressionable. David knew that his son would not be tender like this forever. Therefore, he took advantage of this limited window of opportunity: he stamped God's law, His Holy Word, upon Solomon's heart before it hardened and the world made its impression upon him.

“WE NEED TO DEVELOP OUR OWN SENSE OF WISDOM BY NOT ONLY HEARING BUT ALSO APPLYING WHAT WE LEARN—BELIEVING IT AND TRUSTING IT.”

Solomon was David's darling, beloved son, whom he loved above the rest; he was beloved of the Lord as well, and therefore God called him Jedidiah. Since his father had a peculiar love for him, he cared about his education deeply and taught him the way of wisdom earnestly. Solomon's mother Bathsheba also had a most affectionate regard for him and, as soon as he was able to understand instructions, gave them to him, which made a deep and lasting impression. In Proverbs, Solomon very tenderly recognizes the impressions made on his life by his parents.

The more dearly Solomon's parents loved him, the more carefully he was taught. The Bible calls David a man after God's heart (1 Samuel 13:14). The fact that David's heart was to instruct Solomon's heart tells us something about God's heart—He desires to teach His children to walk in wisdom.

He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words

The Septuagint translates "hold fast" or "retain" (Hebrew - tamak) as the verb "ereido," which is a command in the present imperative calling for the words to become fixed in your heart.

David taught Solomon from the time he was very young and growing up to a little before his own death (1 Chronicles 28:8; 1 Chronicles 28:9, 29:1). He taught him by the several psalms he wrote, some of which are called "maschil," instructive or causing to understand; two of them were expressly written for him: Psalm 72 and 127.

David's instructions concerned his moral behaviour, political considerations, the government of the people, and especially the everlasting welfare of his soul. He wanted Solomon to store his instructions in his heart and keep them as a rich treasure so he could draw from them when needed. Observe David's anxiety about his son's

heart. Often (which is a comfort to a weak memory), words may be lost to the memory yet retained in the heart with a permanent sanctifying impression.

Keep my commandments, and live. "Keep" means to heed, guard, obey, adhere, follow the precepts, and conform your practices to the commandments.

The teachings passed on to us by our mentors, parents, and God must be actively taken into each heart in order to be kept. We need to develop our own sense of wisdom by not only hearing but also applying what we learn—believing it and trusting it.

The result of keeping these lessons is life, which here, as in Proverbs 3:2, refers to the "length of days and years of life." Long life is considered in the Bible to be one of the chief blessings of man's lot (Ex. 20:12), including the idea of happiness.

ILLUSTRATION

Dr. Kevin Leman says that caring for others is like an airline emergency. Before takeoff, flight attendants instruct every plane passenger that if the oxygen masks come down, adults should put on their own masks first before attending to anyone in their care. In an emergency, kids would need their parents to be able to think clearly and act effectively. Similarly, if we don't take in oxygen, our thinking will grow fuzzy, and anyone dependent on us will ultimately suffer.

What's true about the air physically is equally true spiritually. If we neglect our own "spiritual oxygen"—our walk with God—our motivations will become polluted. Our ability to discern, empathize, encourage, and confront will waste away. We must see caring for others as a process through which God purifies us as he shapes those within our influence.





Rejecting the **RAT RACE**

WILL YOU TURN AROUND OR RUN WITH THE REST?



Beep, beep, beep. The all-too-familiar sound of the alarm clock jolts you awake and thus begins the game of, “How quickly can I shut this thing off?” After laying around for longer than necessary, you roll out of bed and throw on some clothes. You grab a mug of coffee from the still-dripping pot and slip on your shoes for another day. By 9 am you’re already exhausted. You blame it on a lack of sleep, but this tiredness has been around for months now, maybe even years. You run through your to-do list for the day but still can’t help feeling like you’re behind. The day goes on, and your suspicion that everyone else but you knows what they’re doing grows and grows. It looks like you’ve got a lot of work to do to compete with that. Nothing a little hard work can’t fix. You stifle your insecurity and put on a happy face. Fake it till you make it, right?

We’re living in an era of upgrades, and that seems to be fueling our already-present tendency to compare ourselves to other people. We always want more. New clothes. More clothes. A bigger house. A nicer car. The more and better stuff we have, the greater we think we look to other people. We tell ourselves if we can afford this or that, we should have it. Companies advertise how our lives would be better if we had their product or service, and we believe it. “Get more stuff, and you’ll feel superior.” “Build the life you want, and you’ll be happy.” So we replace what isn’t broken to get the newer, better version. We buy all we can to look better than those around us. We work hard, toughen up, and fight to be better than the next guy. Welcome to the rat race.

“NOBODY WANTS TO GET TO THE END OF THEIR LIFE AND FEEL LIKE IT WAS ALL FOR NOTHING.”

The rat race is the endless, unpleasant pursuit of the next best thing. The phrase reduces us humans down to mere rats and represents our exhausting attempts to compete with others for power, money, and the best reputation. The rat race demands that we pour ourselves out, at any hour, for our jobs at the expense of the people we love. It says we must buy *those*, eat *this*, or have *that* for our lives to be satisfying. It is the tiresome, menial repetition of our daily lives that leaves us grouchy and with bags under our eyes. The rat race is our never-ending search for ultimate happiness.

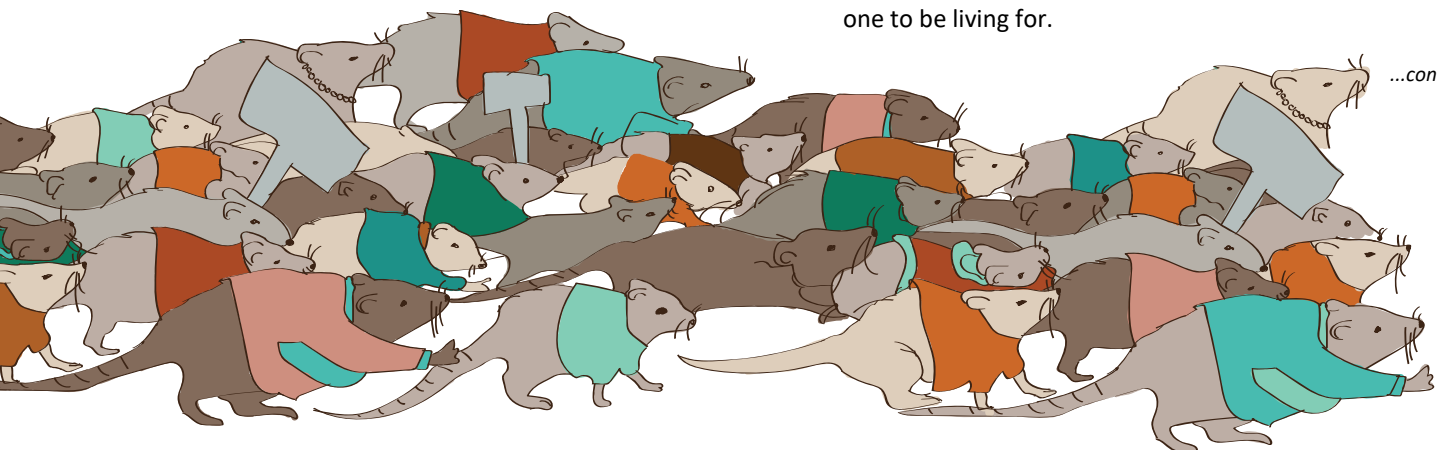
WHY IT'S A LIE

Every now and then, we're given slivers of the truth that this life (work, dinner, sleep, repeat) *isn't* all there is. Quiet moments have a way of letting us experience a touch of eternity. Ever had that sense of wonder while gazing up at a canopy of stars? In a mix of awe and fear, we're faced with how small our lives are in the grand scheme of things and it's refreshing somehow. Don't we all, in those quiet moments, realize we have a longing for our lives to mean something? Nobody wants to get to the end of their life and feel like it was all for nothing. Even if we don't aspire for a life of fame or to earn a ton of money, we still want our life to count for something. We hope, deep down, that life has a purpose beyond the 80 or so (if we're lucky) years we've got. The rat race has been humanity's most desperate attempt to make our lives count, but it is exhausting, and it is failing us. We weren't made to live and die in the rat race. We all know it.

For some people, it isn't long before they realize the rat race of life won't satisfy. With an inquisitive mind and adventurous soul, they move forward with a deep belief that life was made for something more, something bigger. They ambitiously search for the meaning of life. E.M. Forster called them “round characters” in his 1927 book, *Aspects of the Novel*. Round people are complex, soulful, fervent, and eager to learn. They surprise us in some way. They see that life is more than work and recreation. They're ready to find out why they're here, convinced there's more to life than what meets the eye.

Then there are those who don't think too hard about what comes next. They're what Forster called “flat characters.” Comfortable and predictable, these characters stay the same and rarely, if ever, develop. I'm willing to argue that more of us fall into this category, and I'm also willing to lump myself into that camp more often than I'd like to admit. We might ponder the meaning of life every now and then but for the most part, we're happy with our lives and don't feel the need to change or think too far into the future. We just want to be happy. We don't really need to worry about what happens when we die because, especially if we're young, we've got time, don't we? So, we accumulate. We pass the days away with work and food and family, buying all the things we want and can (or can't) afford along the way. We don't even realize we're filling up our lives with things that don't have eternal value. But eternity is a real thing. When we get to the end of our lives we won't be taking a single thing with us. The rat race is a lie because it tricks us into thinking this life is the most important one to be living for.

...continued



“LIFE OUT OF THE RAT RACE IS THIS CRAZY UPSIDE DOWN WORLD WHERE THOSE WHO ARE LAST BECOME FIRST (MATTHEW 20:16).”

OUR RESCUE FROM THE RACE

If all of our attempts at a truly satisfying life haven't brought us the contentment we're hoping for, it's clear that the only solution has to come from Someone outside of the rat race. This Someone can't be stuck in the mundane, repetitive lifestyle we find ourselves in. They must not be overcome by the same struggles we have. They must be strong enough to resist them. They must be Someone who knows what brings lasting fulfillment, and be able to say "no" to the things in life that don't. Jesus is that Someone. He came to earth where the rats were and lived a perfect life in pursuit of things that were eternally worthy, like "love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23, ESV). He came down into the rat race and showed us an entirely new way. He showed us that a life lived in close relationship with God and serving other people is the most satisfying life we can have.

Jesus' whole purpose was to rescue us out of our self-induced rat race. God planned for His death after He lived a perfect, sinless life, as a worthy sacrifice for you and I to be able to stand in God's presence someday. God sees us scurrying about, looking for cheese in an attempt to build a happy life, all the while standing back with open arms, inviting us to know Him. Through a relationship with Jesus, we can be adopted as God's kid, known and loved by Him, and made into someone entirely new. He'll change your mind about things you thought you already made a final decision about. You might have lived your whole life on cheddar cheese and suddenly you're taking a liking to Havarti. Our lives aren't constrained by the rat race because we're not looking for a reward for ourselves anymore. Our mission is to bring glory to God and to be used by Him to serve other people. We want to tell of the amazing God He is so that maybe others, too, will be brought into an eternal life with God, forever enjoying how good He is.

Life outside of the rat race, which is what Christians call living in God's Kingdom, is not about pursuing the best life for yourself. Life out of the rat race is this crazy upside down world where those who are last become first (Matthew

20:16). It's where the highest calling is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, which is an awful lot (Mark 12:29-31). In this Kingdom, the meek are blessed (Matthew 5:5) and we're told to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6). Living in the Kingdom means letting yourself be cheated (1 Corinthians 6:7), turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-40), and laying down your life for your friends (John 15:13). God's remedy for the rat race is to give it up, to help everyone else succeed, and forget about yourself. That's what Jesus did for us.

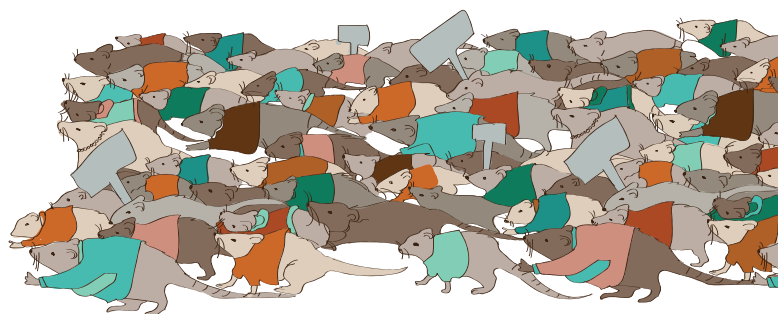
FULLNESS OF JOY

David, who wrote many of the Psalms, knew the satisfaction of life with God: "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11, ESV). David had discovered that his purpose in life was to know and be known by God. If you read about his life, you'll learn that he definitely didn't live out this relationship with God perfectly. Murder and adultery were involved, actually. David made a ton of mistakes that we might look at with judgmental eyes, and yet he is still referred to in the Bible as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). From David's life and the life of Jesus' first disciples in the New Testament, we see that living for God brings no guarantee of safety or success. But the knowledge of His love and what Jesus went through to be with us, brings the ultimate satisfaction we're desperate for. Living our lives with eternity in mind brings peace and hope as we consider Who we will share eternity with when this life passes away.

We created the problem of the rat race when we lost sight of our purpose, but God, who made us, gave us a purpose before we were born. The rat race tells us that we can be satisfied by working hard for what we want and pursuing a happy life, but God wants more for us than the disappointment of a whole life spent trying things that won't work. He doesn't leave us to figure out life in the rat race. He gave us a way out. Which life are you going to live for, this one or the next?



"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."
— 1 John 3:16, ESV



ONE GUY'S TRIP STORY

SHEDDING MY FAKE RELIGION



This testimony is from Thorne, a young man living in the USA.

My parents divorced when I was five, and my father gave up custody of me and my siblings for drugs and jail sentences instead. While he was absent, my mother helped me learn more about God and invited me into adult Bible studies as I grew up. By the time I was eight years old, my dad had begun to establish a home where I could visit him on the weekends. Shortly after, I asked God into my heart, frequently thanking my heavenly Father for a chance to have my dad back.

Childlike faith is a trait God commands, but my focus on faith was tested heavily as I approached my teens. The comfort I had once experienced from God dwindled once my family broke apart again. My father chose a life of addiction, and I decided that I wasn't ready to give him up. Forsaking God at thirteen, I smoked and drank whatever would get me closer to my dad. I found momentary worth from his acceptance and dismissed my guilt by further altering my state of mind.

In a depressed, broken state, I twisted my beliefs into a self-serving spirituality that fit the life I was living. I just smiled and nodded my way through the sermons I attended. Any conviction that the Holy Spirit blessed me with was undoubtedly ignored, hardening my heart.

I believe my holy "Christian" persona fooled those around me for a long time, leaving a wake of destruction in those who were spiritually unsteady. Pastors and leaders seemingly allowed me to skate by with my religious knowledge and well-placed convictions. I knew all the right words to say until God began to show me how real faith actually changes a person.

My best friend, having never been truly convinced by my unsightly display of religion, called out to God in the midst of a much worse time than what I had ever personally

experienced. She trusted God to move her across the United States to bless her with a loving Christian community. Her health improved, and her personality changed dramatically. As I saw God heal her, my proud, religious heart began to soften. He helped me take responsibility for my actions and let go of the blame I placed on others.

"AS I SAW GOD HEAL HER, MY PROUD, RELIGIOUS HEART BEGAN TO SOFTEN. HE HELPED ME TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS AND LET GO OF THE BLAME I PLACED ON OTHERS."

Today I have given up drug use and much of the importance I placed on the attention of others. God is still working on my heart, destroying my pride, and refueling my desire to know Him intimately. I trust in Jesus Christ's saving grace, knowing that religious knowledge does nothing to save me or those in my life.

I still fail daily by sometimes misplacing faith in patriotism, seeking fulfillment through work accomplishments, or letting my thoughts wander outside the realm of "things above." But when I bring my failures to God instead of burying them, I permit Him to direct my life and my desires. He is making me reliant upon Him as I serve Him in my church, my friendships, and soon in my marriage.

—Thorne

THE DAY I CONFRONTED A KING

AN ALMOST TRUE STORY...

I concentrated on the cobblestone steps that stretched out before me. I felt as though I had forgotten how to walk. So many thoughts swirled through my mind as I placed one foot in front of the other, slowly making my way up to the throne room. With each step, I rehearsed all that I planned to say. Years worth of pain, frustration, disappointment, and most of all, guilt gnawed at my gut that was twisting in fear about what lay ahead. Now that I was at the top of the stairs, I could see the door to the throne room. It wasn't too late. I could walk back down the stairs and act as if everything was fine, just like I had been doing all my life. I could avoid this painful confrontation altogether. But the hope of the new life I had recently discovered allowed me to press on. I cracked open the door. There was no going back now.

There he was, that disgusting, vile, sorry excuse for a king. He was perched upon his throne like a vulture waiting for its next victim. The image was shocking, and it was difficult for me to admit that at one time I found him attractive and looked to him for comfort. "Hello, my dear," he crooned from his perch, "It's been too long since we've spoken. I was beginning to worry. How are you?"

His words were so smooth like they always had been. It would be so easy to slip into my old habit of trusting him, but I knew differently this time.

"Don't act as if you care about me. You've promised me so many things, and I trusted you! But you are a liar!" I shouted suddenly, surprising myself.

"Don't fool yourself," he replied without expression. "You know that I always do everything I can to make you happy. We've had some very good times, you and I. Remember?"

"I remember how you ruined my life," I answered, speaking in a low tone. "You've taken everything from me. It took me a while to realize it, but now I understand very clearly. You don't even have the ability to keep the promises you make. You are not the powerful king you pretend to be. You're a fraud! I will not serve you anymore. I have found a different king."

His lips curled into a sneer, laughing, "You think a different king will make your life better? Don't you know we are all the same? Go! Serve this other king of yours! But when he takes everything from you and gives you nothing in return, you remember how good you had it with me, my dear."

"No." I stared directly into his piercing eyes as my words came rushing out of my mouth. "This King *is* different. He is unlike any other king there ever was or ever will be. He is faithful and true. The promises He makes will happen because He has the power to make it so. He is loving and just. And yes, He will get everything from me because I will willingly lay everything down before Him. He is worthy of that. He gave up his life for me."

"Oh, you fool. Do you honestly believe that a king would have given up anything for you? You're worthless! No king in this world would do that for anyone," he retorted.



**“I TURNED AND BOLTED
OUT OF THE DARK THRONE
ROOM, THROUGH THE
DOOR, AND INTO A
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DAY. FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN MY LIFE, I FELT FREE.
I *WAS* FREE!”**

"I know. My King is not of this world," I said gleefully, and with those words, I turned and bolted out of the dark throne room, through the door, and into a marvelously bright day. For the first time in my life, I felt free. I *was* free!

I'd like to tell you that this story above actually took place, that I confronted all the false kings that I had placed in charge of my life head-on and never looked back, but that isn't quite how it works. It would be nice if false kings presented themselves in such a visibly vile manner, but most often, they don't. These so-called kings sneak into power in our lives in all forms. Perhaps it is through a career, the pursuit of higher education, a specific relationship, or status. What is it for you?


Take a look at your life to find out. How do you make your decisions? How do you spend your time, money, and talents? What, or who, do you turn to for comfort, joy, and security?

If the answer is anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ, you are worshipping and serving a false king that does not care about you and will not do anything but destroy you. Sound harsh? It's true. Don't believe me? Okay, so how has your false king been treating you lately?

Jesus is the only worthy King. All other kings will ask you to lay your life down in service to them, but Jesus is the only one for which you can willingly and joyfully do so. Before you ever did anything for Him, He already died for you. What King does that? Only a loving one does. If you'd like to read more about Jesus as the perfect King, dust off your Bible. Every part of it points to Him and who He is. Get to know Him.

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God...He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

- Revelation 19:11-16, NKJV



THE PERILOUS PURSUIT OF FINDING PURPOSE

WHAT THE WORLD WON'T TELL
YOU AND GOD'S BETTER WAY

We're all chasing after something. For most people, their pursuits include some combination of normal things like finding their soulmate, landing a fulfilling job, finding fun hobbies, assembling a squad of loyal friends, and maybe even building a family. We think that when we get these things, we'll finally feel happy and satisfied. We've been told that pursuing our dreams is what will give us purpose. What most people have not considered, however, is that life often does not go as planned. For some, these things just won't happen. Despite all their efforts, their love life won't pan out, their dream job will be inaccessible, and finding good friends will prove much more difficult than they had anticipated. Others may achieve some of their pursuits, but will lose them when hard times strike. In the end, no matter how successful or unsuccessful you end up being, you and everyone that matters to you will die, rendering even the most enjoyable life possible only temporary at best.

Are you feeling depressed yet? It's understandable if you are. These are all inevitabilities that we're not exactly encouraged to think about. If we consider them at all, it's typically not for long. They're quickly buried under a positive everything-will-work-out-in-the-end attitude and forgotten as we push forward towards potential disaster.

But if you're still reading this far, you probably aren't satisfied with that solution. Know that there is hope coming. But first, one more grim reality must be exhumed.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU COULD GET EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER WANTED AND STILL BE UNSATISFIED.

DEALING WITH DISILLUSIONMENT

It's possible that you could get everything you've ever wanted and still be unsatisfied. Award-winning actor and comedian Jim Carrey can attest to this. After a successful acting career involving over 58 movies and cultivating a net worth of \$180 million, you might think he would feel satisfied with everything he's accomplished. However, that's not the case. Instead of talking about how fulfilling his life has been, he advises that "...everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of, so they can see that it's not the answer."¹

Jim Carrey is not alone in his disillusionment. This is a very common occurrence. In fact, British author C.S. Lewis wrote about it as well. He explains the disappointment by saying, "There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality...The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very interesting job: but something has evaded us."²

If you're honest with yourself, you know exactly what these two men are talking about. We've all set our sights on something, held it within our grasp, and then were unexpectedly left wanting. It's frustrating and unsettling. Many people come to the conclusion that they've simply chosen the wrong thing. They go looking for a new spouse, another job, a better group of friends. But what if you never find what you're looking for? Others give into cynicism and bitterness. But what if there's a better way?

LIFE ADVICE FROM A MAN WHO HAD IT ALL

The Bible doesn't shy away from the fact that pursuing your dream life can be disappointing. In fact, the entire book of Ecclesiastes is dedicated to this uncomfortable reality. Written by an extremely wealthy and successful king towards the end of his

life, Ecclesiastes offers a cautionary tale to anyone who is brave enough and humble enough to listen.

With nearly endless resources, this king was able to craft a life for himself that should have been, by all accounts, supremely satisfying. First, he pursued a good education (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18). He observed everything and accumulated a vast amount of knowledge. But the more he learned, the more depressed he got. So, he decided to go after pleasure instead (2:1-11). He drank good wine, built a beautiful home, hired lots of employees, accumulated treasures, enjoyed the arts, and slept with lots of women. But none of those things were quite satisfying either.

Finally, he decided to invest in his career and just work hard (2:18-20). But even in that, he realized that he would die and someone else would inherit the results of all his hard work. Thirty-eight times during the book, you can almost see the king throwing up his hands in frustration as he repeats: "It is all meaningless, like chasing the wind!" Even with all his unending resources, something had evaded him.

At the end of the book, he specifically addresses those just starting out in life (12:1). Fueled by years of painful experience and disappointment, he summarizes what he's learned and implores readers to take a different path than he had. He explains that the things in this world are wonderful and should be enjoyed, but that they're not meant to be what life is all about. No amount of achievement, pleasure, possession, or relationship is ever going to be enough to satisfy you. And in the end, they will all slip through your fingers.

So, the king points us down a quite uncommon path. He implores us to look outside the walls of our world for our purpose. Instead of focusing on what we can see or feel, he begs that we focus on the God who created it all (12:13).

...continued

1 - "A Quote by Jim Carrey." Goodreads, Goodreads, www.goodreads.com/quotes/1151805-i-think-everybody-should-get-rich-and-famous-and-do.
2 - *Mere Christianity*, by Lewis C S (Clive Staples), Simon and Schuster, 1996.



INSTEAD OF YOUR LIFE BEING CONTROLLED BY GETTING WHAT YOU WANT OR CRUSHED BY THE THOUGHT OF LOSING IT, YOU WILL FINALLY BE FREE.

SEEKING THE GIFT OF A BETTER WAY

If you had the chance to ask Him, Jesus would heartily agree with this king in Ecclesiastes. He also does not want you to get caught in the trap of chasing after the things you think will be fulfilling. He explains that since everything we could ever hope to get here is perishable at best, and easily taken at worst (Matthew 6:19), we'd be wise to put our efforts towards going after something more stable. Thankfully, Jesus offers this to us.

He advises that you, "Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that [I] can give you" (John 6:27, NLT). This reveals a unique aspect of the Christian life. First, that it's given. Second, that you'll have to pursue it. These two things may sound contradictory at first, but in reality they work together.

First, eternal life has to be given to you by Jesus. You can't get it on your own, and you won't be able to figure it out by just trying really hard. You're going to need to ask for and accept His help. Fortunately for us, helping people is what He's all about, and eternal life is something He is more than happy to give (Matthew 7:7, John 10:10).

So, step one, whether you've been a Christian for a long time and you desire clearer direction for moving forward, or if you don't even know if you are a Christian, but you want to be, ask for His help. Seriously. Stop reading, whoever you are, wherever you are, and ask Him for help right now.

Second, know that pursuing the eternal life that Jesus offers is going to require effort from you. Lots of effort. If you already knew that, you could always use the reminder. Becoming a Christian is 100% a free gift (Ephesians 2:8), but continuing on after that into maturity will be a challenge (Matthew 7:13-14).

Practically, this means you'll have to get your nose in a Bible, find a good church, think critically, ask good questions, humbly accept answers, and then actually apply the things you're learning. Don't you dare stop asking for His help. You'll be required to give lots of things up, take lots of other things on, and constantly be open to Jesus' plans for your life.

Finally, expect that it will be difficult. Some days you're going to want to quit. But, if you stick with Him right up to the end, you will have no regrets. This is the only pursuit that can't be taken away from you. All you have to do is not give up.

PURSUING INDESTRUCTIBLE PURPOSE

All that said, pursuing the life Jesus has for you doesn't necessarily mean you'll be forced to work a job you hate or to stay single and celibate for the rest of your life. Marriage, work, friendships, and family are all lovely gifts from God meant to be received and enjoyed. The crucial thing is that these gifts stay in their proper place, always secondary to pursuing God. That way, if you don't get these things when or how you were hoping, you're free to trust that Jesus has better plans for you.

When this is your reality, you'll be free to marry or stay single. You'll be able to find enjoyment doing any job. You can have hobbies without them consuming your life, and a great pressure will be taken off the relationships you have with your family, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. Instead of your life being controlled by getting what you want or crushed by the thought of losing it, you will finally be free.

So, rather than focusing your efforts on gaining things in this world like everybody else, dare to consider a different way. Your purpose can be found in going after what Jesus wants for you. If you choose that, suffering will only be an opportunity to push you in deeper, and ultimately death will be the consummation of everything you've been working towards. This is what we were made for. What will you choose to pursue?

"Jesus replied, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty...those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life.'" - John 6:35-40, NLT



Surprisingly Exhausting

THE PROBLEM WITH CHASING OUR OWN WELL-BEING

Let's consider for a moment just how much of our day is spent thinking about ourselves. We think about the meals we're going to have for the week, whether or not we're getting enough exercise, and how our personal relationships are doing. While we're at it, we obsess over our physical appearance, the future of our education or career, and the current state of our mental health. Is all of this concern helpful, or is it exhausting?

On one hand, it's a good thing to take care of the body, mind, and soul God has given us. It would be wrong to be intentionally lazy about our health and hygiene. However, if we perpetually overindulge in ourselves, we start to give off a spiritually selfish stench. This condition is lethal because, "Self-focus," author Sharon Hodde Miller writes in her book *Free of Me*, "hurts our relationships, shrinks our faith, kills our confidence, and ultimately steals our joy."¹

"OUR OWN WELL-BEING IS MOST SATISFIED WHEN GOD CONSUMES OUR THOUGHTS, AND SINCERE JOY COMES FROM UPLIFTING OTHERS."

Ironically, God says that the best way to take care of ourselves is to put Him first and others second. "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself,'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NKJV). Our own well-being is most satisfied when God consumes our thoughts, and sincere joy comes from uplifting *others*. But because our default setting is selfishness, it takes serious effort to reorient our thinking.

The tension between taking care of ourselves and not obsessing over it can be tricky. Hodde Miller continues, "Thankfully we don't have to choose between fulfillment and self-forgetfulness or between abundant life and the obedient

one. We can have both in Christ." We accomplish this not by carefully balancing all the cares of our life, worshipping God, and loving other people like stacking a house of cards. Rather, all we have to be concerned with is one piece: putting Jesus first. He promises that when we "seek first the kingdom of heaven of God and His righteousness all of these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NKJV).

Putting God first is not like a vending machine where we put in the right amount of devotion and in return receive perfect health, great relationships, and our dream career. Those things may happen or they may not. Rather, the well-being we'll really receive is the forgiveness of our sins and a close, incredibly real relationship with Jesus. If we don't have that, nothing else matters.



¹ Miller, H. S. (2017). *Free of Me: Why Life Is Better When It's Not about You*. Baker Books.

MEN OF GOD

THE LION & THE LAMB: JESUS' EXAMPLE TO MEN

Aggressive conquest. Conceal your feelings. Compete. To be a man you must be “insert varying cultural standard here.” What it means to be a man changes generationally. Men have been expected to keep up with new norms or be considered an outcast. Thankfully, God doesn’t change. His roles don’t change. His idea of what it means to be a man can still be found and pursued in a climate hellbent on flipping the masculine norm on its head. So, what does it look like to be a man of God? To answer, we must look to Jesus Christ.

THE PERFECT MAN

Jesus is our example of perfect masculinity, so to be a man of God is to know your role within His Kingdom. “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:3, NKJV). Men are to be submissive and fully surrendered to God and His perfect will. Jesus spoke this clearly while praying in the garden: “Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42, NKJV). Jesus wasn’t about seeking His desires and fortune but instead sought to help, heal, lead, teach, and protect others. Men are called today to do the same. Whether single or married, men have a responsibility to seek the good of others before themselves and to protect them from evil.

TRUE PASSION



Toxic masculinity refers to the overly aggressive, dominant, and competitive type of guy who controls and uses intimidating brute force. This is not what Jesus calls men to be. However, men are, at times, called to be lionlike. Much like when Christ braided a whip and chased the ungodly out of the temple, men can show passion, zeal, and holy anger when God’s name has been slandered. Men should be seeking to build and advance God’s kingdom,

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“MEN SHOULD BE SEEKING TO BUILD AND ADVANCE GOD’S KINGDOM, NOT THEIR IDEAL WORLD.”

not their ideal world.

Men are also called to be lamblike: gentle, warm, caring, empathetic, and emotional. Jesus was very tender, fully expressing and experiencing the whole range of human emotions including weeping, sorrow, and joy. God does not want men to be passive, however. Guys acting too scared to make a decision are not godly. Some men fall into the camp

of being too lamblike, or too lionlike, but Jesus demonstrates when to be which. The church needs both, and men can grow by making the kind of decisions that benefit others and bring glory to God.

MEN NEED MEN

Hollywood has pedaled the illusion that men are to lead “Lone Ranger” lives. According to God though men must submit to authority and they need others. “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17, NKJV). It’s necessary to share struggles, mental battles, and sin issues together.¹ There is no need to pretend or put on a façade. Getting over yourself and being vulnerable is a scary thing to do, but it’s healthy. Repent, be brave, and be real with others. Besides, you can’t be brave without first being afraid.

We need each other’s help. It’s good to show emotion and passion. It’s also good to be firm, unwavering, understanding, and vulnerable with others. It all begins by looking to Jesus for your marching orders and strength.

READ THIS BEFORE YOUR NEXT IDENTITY CRISIS

Who are you? There are so many attributes, qualities, and things you probably attempt to use to identify yourself as a person and as a woman. Add being a Christian woman to the mix, and the waters unfortunately don't seem to get any less muddled. What it means to be a godly woman is a giant subject to tackle and one that will not be fully covered here. I can only hope to pass along a tidbit of wisdom that has helped me enormously as I try to make sense of what being a godly woman looks like. That is this: the only identity that matters is *whose* you are. If you are a Christian today, then you belong to Jesus. You don't have to struggle to figure out your own identity, He has taken care of that.

So if we are to let God determine our identity, it is most helpful to read what He has already said. It's no secret that Proverbs 31 is the go-to chapter for women, with good reason. It is packed with godly wisdom that we could talk about for hours on end, but for now, let's focus on the verse that sums it all up: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

CHARM IS DECEITFUL

The realization that we can leverage how we act, talk, and dress to make people give us what we want, begins at a very young age. It starts innocently enough, but let it go a few years, and

this attitude can quickly take on much more sinister consequences. For example, there was a woman who used her daughter to manipulate her husband to murder John the Baptist simply because she didn't like what he said (Matthew 14). It's hard to admit our

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“THE ONLY
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YOU ARE.”

sinful nature tends towards deceit and manipulation, but it does. When we pick an identity for ourselves instead of allowing God to define it for us, charm becomes a tool to get us where we want to go. A godly woman actively fights against this tendency and instead conducts herself in an authentic, honest manner that desires good for others instead of just herself.

BEAUTY IS PASSING

We all fall prey to attempting to achieve some beauty standard even though we know it is temporary. We still believe that by achieving some level of outward beauty, whether that is how we

physically look, the lifestyle we live, or the things we do, that these outward things will fix who we are on the inside. These external things are much easier to define ourselves with instead of letting anyone see who we really are. A godly woman realizes that the only thing truly beautiful in her life is Jesus, and she aims to make Him look good to others, not herself.

FEAR THE LORD

Fearing the Lord is foundational. Remember when I said your identity is about *whose* you are? Jesus, God's very own Son, suffered, died, and endured God's wrath so that you (and me) could be adopted into God's family and belong to Him. If you are a part of God's family, you will begin to take on family resemblance in every aspect, like loving and obeying God because of who He is and what He has done. That's all. We overcomplicate things when we try to align our actions to some made-up version of who we think God wants us to be instead of just listening to what He is actually telling us to do.

That's where I want to leave this for now. I don't know exactly how your life should look, but godly women should all look similar since we are following the same Jesus. And *that* is beautiful.

It's a Matter of a Fact: WHAT IS WORSHIP?

At times Christianity can be confusing. When you start to read the Bible, there can be names of people and places you have never heard before. There will be words that have little to no meaning outside of the world of faith. And even more confusing, there are words that you do know, but when they are carried over to Christianity they have an even greater depth of meaning than you ever realized before. Knowing that navigating concepts within Christianity can at times be overwhelming, *Rebuilt Magazine* is tackling some common questions that are not only integral for the new believer, but also for the seasoned Christian and anyone who is skeptical about the Christian faith. They are truths that you never graduate from. In this issue, we are going to discuss worship.

WE ARE ALL WORSHIPERS

When you hear the word worship, what pops into your mind? To some, it's strolling into church on Sunday to sing a few songs. To others, they picture an ancient painting of people bowing to a statue or dancing in a circle to please a deity. But worship is quite simply what we do with our affections, and it manifests itself in who or what we ultimately bow to. Simply put, we are worshipers always worshipping something or someone. It is an innate, fundamental part of how God created us. However, not everyone worships the true God. Only those who really know Him can truly worship Him because their affections are now fundamentally rewired to love and serve Him.

TAKING THE FILTERS OFF

Who calls the shots in your life? What is your top priority? What do you give your heart, mind, desires, and pursuits to? What do you think most

about? What is your greatest treasure (Matt 13:44)? That is what you worship. In every day context, common worship traps might be college, careers, family, and even yourself. Now, is it bad to get a college degree, have a family, or land a really nice job? No. But they can be wrongly worshiped when our affection dead ends on the thing itself, rather than fuel our affections towards God as we thank Him for them (Romans 1:25).

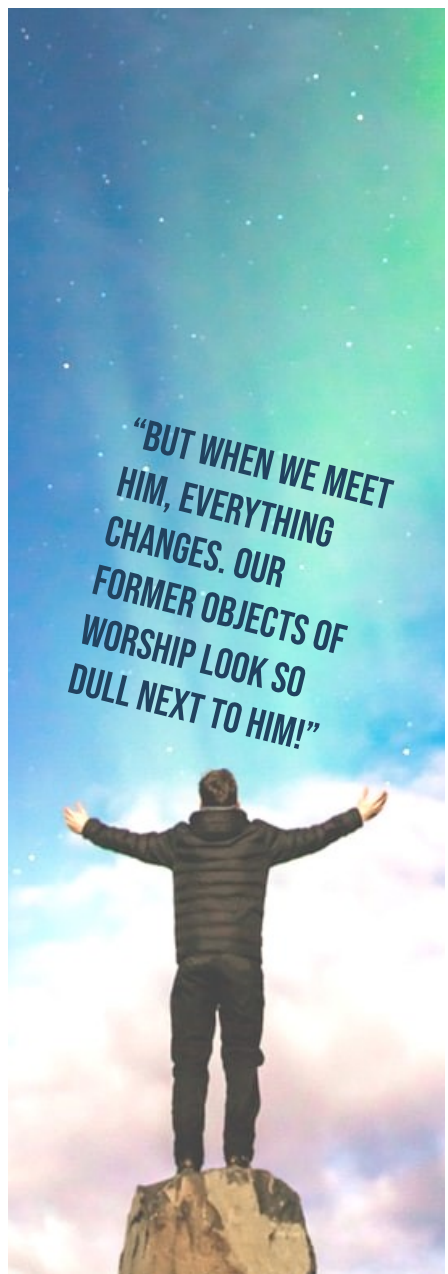
THE HEART OF THE MATTER

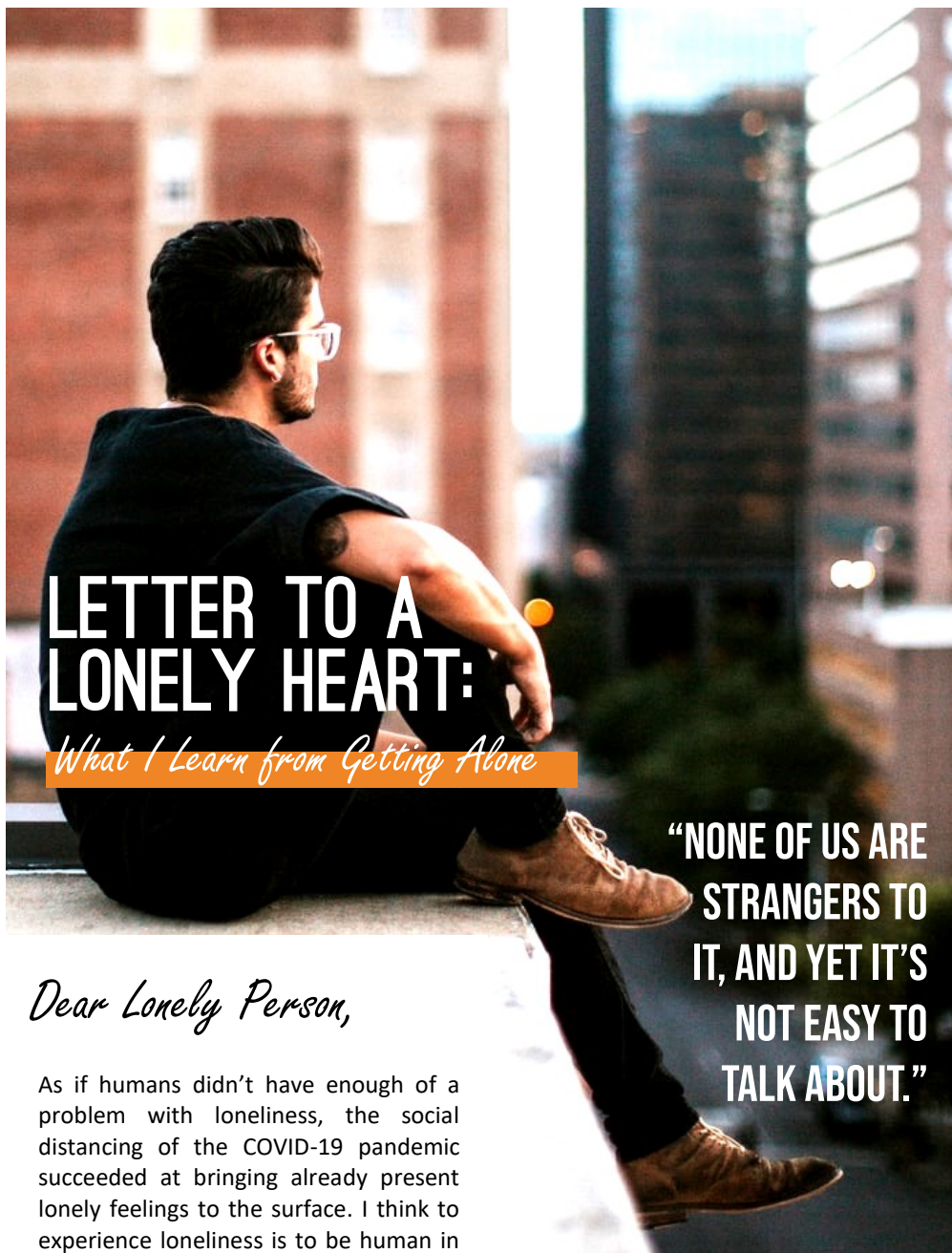
Christians are called to work hard and be good students, but putting other priorities before God is what the Bible calls "worshiping the world" (Colossians 3:5-6). Without intervention from a holy God, we are stuck in this state. But when we meet Him, everything changes. Our former objects of worship look so dull next to Him! The life-giving relationship He forms with us transforms our minds that were formally consumed by created things rather than the Creator (Romans 12:2).

American author John Piper said, "The inner essence of worship is the response of the heart to the knowledge of the mind when the mind is rightly understanding God and the heart is rightly valuing God. We worship God authentically when we know Him truly and treasure Him duly."¹ Hebrews 13:15-16 records that this true worship of God shows up in two ways. One is what our mouth says: acts of praise and repentance. The other is what our body does: acts of love that reveal the Father to the world.

How is your heart today? Do you like God lately? You cannot worship a God you don't know, don't have any interest in, don't agree with, or merely tolerate. Now, if you're a Christian, you will not worship God perfectly. Frankly, there will be moments where you will barely

remember Him. But if you are truly a child of God, you will always be drawn back to Him. The gospel not only stirs us to worship, but it's the reason why we get to in the first place. Jesus died for our sins that we may know the Father—the Creator of the stars!





LETTER TO A LONELY HEART:

What I Learn from Getting Alone

Dear Lonely Person,

As if humans didn't have enough of a problem with loneliness, the social distancing of the COVID-19 pandemic succeeded at bringing already present lonely feelings to the surface. I think to experience loneliness is to be human in the rawest sense. To feel lonely is to feel unwanted, overlooked, abandoned, and unloved. It's feeling like an outcast, with no one to turn to. None of us are strangers to it, and yet it's not easy to talk about. Each person's experience of loneliness is unique, and while there's definitely no quick fix, I want to encourage you with three things that help me find peace in my loneliness.

1. I GET ALONE WITH GOD

When I feel forgotten and left behind, I have to get alone and tell God how I'm feeling. I go alone to be with Him, just like Jesus did in Mark 1:35. I ask for understanding about my situation, probably while wiping away tears. Since

"NONE OF US ARE STRANGERS TO IT, AND YET IT'S NOT EASY TO TALK ABOUT."

I know He's done it before, I ask God to teach me something in my loneliness. I pray that my situation, no matter how painful, would bring me even closer to Him because I trust that He can use my struggles for good. Anyone who's been in a close friendship with another person knows that humans are eventually going to fail us. So, I praise God for being faithful when I, or others around me, have not been (2 Timothy 2:13). I remember that to rely on my friends, family, and relationships to fully satisfy me is to set myself up for disappointment. I ask God to remind me that Jesus alone is my answer, my peace, and my hope.

2. I LISTEN

God's promises are my assurance, a solid guarantee. I read and re-read the promises written in God's Word and hold on desperately to them. I listen to what God has told me before and is telling me again: "I'm never going to leave you" (Hebrews 13:5), "don't fear, I'm with you, I will strengthen and help you" (Isaiah 41:10), "I will teach you which way to go" (Psalm 32:8), "come to Me when you're weary and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), "you're going to have trouble in this world, but I've overcome it" (John 16:33), and these don't even scratch the surface.

3. I DON'T STAY ALONE

I lean in close to the community God's given to me. God's church is so much more than a building. It's a group of people committed to following Jesus and serving Him with their lives. When I'm losing heart and wanting to isolate, I fight the urge to stay home and wallow. I show up anyway and ask for help and encouragement from my friends who have said, "no matter what, I'm not going anywhere." I tell them what's *really* going on. Through thick and thin, we're family.

Loneliness can teach us valuable lessons like dependence on and satisfaction in a God who never fails. Humans, even good-intentioned ones, will eventually let you down. But God? He never will. Through Jesus, He's offered us eternal life. Loneliness can, if we have the right perspective, give us reason to hope because it reminds us that a sinful world is not what we were created for, and it's not going to last forever for those who know Jesus as a friend. Steve DeWitt published an article called, "*Loneliness Has Been My Faithful Friend*," and wrote in it, "Every loneliness on earth is an internal confirmation that our greatest relational joys lie ahead of us."¹

*With care,
A Sometimes Lonely Christian*

¹ desiringgod.org/articles/loneliness-has-been-my-faithful-friend



VIRUS OF THE HEART

A Cure for the Sickness that Ails Us All

As the sun peeks through the curtains of the window and meets my eyes, I know it is time to start another day. I dread this moment every morning. What will the day bring? It has been a week in the hospital already, but I can't find any relief from the pain. As my eyes slowly open, the shine that once came from within them can now only be seen by the reflection of the sun. No longer eager for living, but rather worn down with evidence of deep despair.

How did this happen? Why did it get this far? Will I ever be cured?

The thoughts come flooding back. In my mind, I travel step-by-step from the beginning, trying to figure out how I got to this point. It was only a thoughtless comment, but it became so much more than I ever expected. I can't get her words out of my head. They're on repeat all

day long. It was that moment – a single conversation – that sparked an angry fire inside of me.

Does she even know what she did? How can I get revenge? Her words cut deep. Do my words have the same power over her?

One moment. One conversation. One new infection. How easily the virus spreads.

Of course, I heard about the virus, but I thought I was immune to it. I preferred to dwell in ignorance rather than face the truth: I am weak and vulnerable, just like everyone else. Something that I took so lightly has suddenly become life or death. I'm slowly being consumed from the inside. What could I have done differently? Perhaps I was just destined to die this way. As they say, what goes around comes around.

Then I remembered.

On the day that I was admitted to the hospital, I met a patient who was being discharged. At first, I only saw him from afar, but even from a distance I could tell there was something different about him. As he got closer, still in a wheelchair, I could see that his body was weak. His bones poked at his sagging skin. His cheekbones were hard, as if he was a boxer who had been punched too many times. His hair was long and shaggy. He was disheveled, but not dismayed. His spirit was strong. There was light in his eyes. I wondered how I, too, could have that light again.

We met in the hallway as our wheelchairs passed each other. The moment his gaze matched my darkened eyes, he asked the nurses to stop. They reluctantly agreed. Apparently, he had been doing this a lot over the past few days. After his recovery, but before he was discharged, he asked to stop and

talk to every new patient that he passed by. I guess I really did look that hopeless.

Our meeting was brief. He explained how he, too, had caught the virus. It was a memory that he kept hidden inside since childhood. It was something he held against his father that finally, inevitably, spilled out. It exploded into something he never meant it to be.

That's the problem with the virus. It's never what you expect it to be.

But he beat it. He conquered it. He survived. And so, on his way out the doors of the hospital, he wanted to tell everyone how they, too, could have life again. Although the illness seems hopeless at first, that's all it is. It only *seems* that way. And he was living proof of it. The virus could be beaten. The heart could be healed.

He explained how he tried every treatment, but it only made him weaker. He tried to ignore the problem so he shut himself in. He wouldn't let anyone get close enough to know the truth of who he really was. None of the things he tried could heal the wounds that were deep inside of him. With each passing day, the bitterness spread throughout his body. It consumed him and he could think of nothing else. Every day brought him closer to his death. In his desperation, he admitted himself to the hospital to find the cure.

But it wasn't the treatment he wanted.

The doctor told him it was one of the most contagious diseases in the world, but also one of the most curable. He explained that the only way to beat it is to spend two weeks in isolation with the person whom he was bitter against. Nothing else would do. Everything else would only kill him faster. The choice was his: life or death?

Experience proved that nothing else would cure him. Deep inside, he knew he had to take the treatment if he really wanted to live. So, he admitted himself to the quarantine. His father – completely unaware of his own son's bitterness against him – was brought to the hospital. As they entered Room 612, neither of them knew what the next two weeks

had in store. The wounds were deep, but they could only be healed by bringing them into the light which seemed to shine so brightly on the sixth floor.

The first few days were the most painful. Confusion, anger, regret. It all came to the surface as accusations unfurled. Day six was silent. On the seventh day, something started to change. The patient realized he was no better than his father. He could see that his own bitterness made him equally as guilty. In that moment, his heart started beating again. It wasn't the raging heartbeat that he had before. No, this was something altogether new. It was as if his cold, dead heart had been made alive. He didn't want to hold any bitterness against his father anymore. The change inside drove him to break the silence. He forgave his father and asked for reconciliation. The virus inside was subsiding.

On the fourteenth day, the doctor discovered the virus had completely disappeared from the patient's body. In the meantime, the father had become immune to the virus. Apparently, the treatment worked, and he wanted everyone to know it.

When I first met him, I thought he was crazy. His story didn't make sense to me.

How can anyone survive this virus? The pain is too deep. The treatment is too difficult to endure. He just got lucky. I'll never make it out of here alive.

So, I ignored him. I wrote him off as one of those "special cases," and told myself that I am destined to succumb to the virus. Really, how could any part of his story be true? But now, as I replay the conversation from my hospital bed, I'm starting to wonder if he was right. Maybe I should try the treatment. After all, nothing else seems to work. What do I have to lose?

I now know what I have to do. The choice is mine: life or death?

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." – Ephesians 4:31-32, ESV

**"ALTHOUGH
THE ILLNESS SEEMS
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THAT'S ALL IT IS.
IT ONLY SEEMS
THAT WAY."**

I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THAT

A Short Guide to Screwing Up Well

Have you ever made a huge mistake? I mean a really, really big one? Have you ever said the wrong thing, let your emotions get the best of you, or ever ruined a relationship?

What did you do about it?

Many of us react in one of two ways: we either ignore the issue altogether or we wallow in self-pity. However, neither of those tactics make the situation better, do they?

God isn't surprised when we screw up, and we shouldn't be either. When those times come around, and they will, we don't have to be stuck. We can move on and do it well. Here's where to start.

OWN IT

When we make mistakes, it is crucial that we take responsibility for what we've done. We can't blame our past, our emotions, our circumstances, or other people. Even if those things do contribute to our failure, we are still responsible for how we react to them. When we humble ourselves and genuinely admit fault, the Bible promises that Jesus will forgive us: 1 John 1:9-11

says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (NKJV).

Putting our failure into words and approaching those we've wronged can seem extremely intimidating. It would be far easier to let the relationship suffer or ignore it altogether. But, what we don't realize is what we're missing out on when we don't own it. Proverbs 28:13 explains, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (NKJV). That's just it—when we keep these things bottled inside, we tell God, "Thanks, but I don't need or want your mercy," even though He is poised and ready to give it to us. There is much to be gained on the other side of our mistakes if we are willing to do the hard work to get there.

LEARN FROM IT

This life is not easy, and the Bible is full of narratives of imperfect people just like us. Jacob literally wrestled with God who broke his hip, Jonah tried running away from God and got swallowed by a huge fish, David slept with his friend's wife and then killed his friend to cover it up, and Peter denied knowing Jesus at a very critical time.

Yes, all of these people failed in huge ways, but they all came out the other side knowing God better.

They didn't waste their experience, and we don't have to waste ours. We can learn how sinful we really are, what areas God is trying to point out in our life that need to change, and we can learn how faithful He is in the process. Some of the most intimate, real experiences with God happen when we're in the most trouble. As much as it hurts, failure is always an opportunity to learn something new.

CHOOSE COMMUNITY

When we screw up, the people we have around us are crucial. If they are real friends, they won't abandon us but will help us through it. Pastor Drew Hunter elaborates, "We need companions who sit with us in days of darkness. We need them to embody and remind us of Christ's heart for sinners and sufferers. One of the greatest gifts we can give one another in depression is our companionship."¹

True community is only found within the local church. The church is a place where fellow Christians build deep, sincere relationships, and they don't give up on each other. The commitment found there isn't mustered up by willpower but rather it's a reflection of how Jesus doesn't give up on us, either. Do you have a community like this? It's important to find where we belong as soon as possible so that others can help us when we mess up and we can also help them in return.

HOLD ONTO HOPE

If there is anyone who knows what it's like to mess up big, it's the Apostle Paul (formerly Saul). Before he became an apostle, he persecuted and killed Christians until the day, "a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are persecuting Me?'" (Acts 22:6-7, NKJV). With a past like that, one would think he had a heavy conscience. But, in Philippians he writes, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14, NKJV). He moved on because he wanted to pursue God's calling in his life, despite his own failure. He had hope.

For us, it's hard to have hope when we are flooded with thoughts like, "I shouldn't have done that," "Why am I such an idiot?" or, "How could I hurt them like that?" In that emotion, we can be led to make irrational decisions that can be costly and that we will likely regret later. Instead, stay put regardless of how hard it feels. Remember that God is faithful when we are not, and this is not the end of the story. There is more to come.

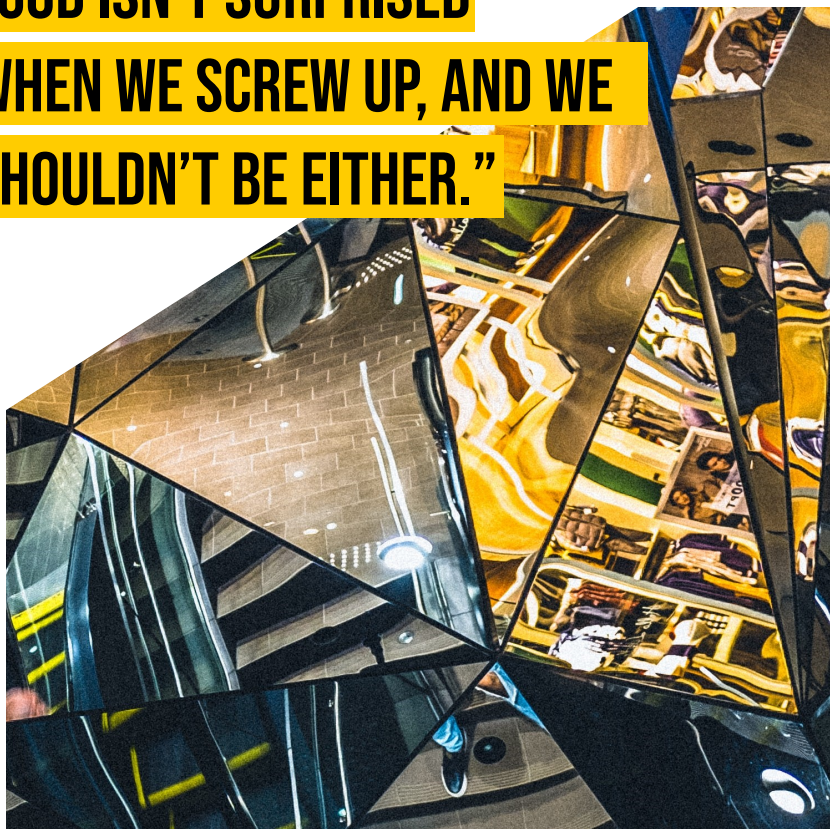
GIVE THANKS

Finally, moving on well means being thankful for what God has shown us and believing that we still have a future. It's because of His kindness and mercy that we aren't squashed every time we fall. Rather, like a loving Father, He reaches out to help us back up. We have a lot to be thankful for because we can keep going, we can keep failing, and we can keep getting up. It's not over until we're dead. That kind of mercy should make us sing.

All of us will screw up and make big mistakes. D. Michael Lindsey, president of a Christian college in Massachusetts, provides a helpful perspective when we find ourselves in that place: "If you let the failure get you down and you stay in that pit, you rob yourself of potential growth. Your past isn't your future. It doesn't define who you are or what the rest of your life will look like. What matters is what you do after you fail and how you move on."²

It's not so much *if* you screw up, but *when*. So, what will you do then?

**"GOD ISN'T SURPRISED
WHEN WE SCREW UP, AND WE
SHOULDN'T BE EITHER."**



¹ Hunter, D. (2018, September 24). *You won't make it alone: Five reasons you need good friends*. DesiringGod. desiringgod.org/articles/you-wont-make-it-alone

² Linsey, D.M. (2018, June 22). *3 ways to succeed in failure*. The Gospel Coalition. thegospelcoalition.org/article/3-ways-succeed-failure



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