

# JESUS, GAYS, AND LESBIANS

## A COMPASSIONATE, YET FRANK, MESSAGE FOR HOMOSEXUALS

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by **Timothy Cross**

### FOREWORD

*"It has been my lifelong belief that there is a reason for everything that happens in life; and that this holds true throughout the Universe, and in our lives as well. I believe it is no accident that you are holding this booklet right now.*

*"Timothy Cross' has been my friend for most of my adult life. He has been there for me, through all of my struggles with homosexuality, as I searched for the truth as to who I am in relation to God. He is the most loving and honest person I have ever known, with a passion for the TRUTH, which can make us free to live life to its fullest.*

*I challenge you to read what he has to say with an open mind. It could change your life!"—  
Ron L.*

### INTRODUCTION

At the outset, let me say that I am writing to those of you who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. I am *not* writing primarily to fellow Christians, nor am I writing to say you must give up being gay or lesbian. Neither am I saying it is right to remain gay or lesbian. Those are issues you must hammer out with God. What I feel called to do is share the incredible love God has for you. Once you truly know God's love, your life will never be the same. If you are in a meaningful relationship with God, God is more than capable of directing your sex life, and revealing what is best for you. For the time being, there are far more important things to discuss than whether you are gay or straight.

I know many homosexuals have felt abandoned and rejected by those in the church.—Jesus they can handle, but they have trouble with His followers. Because I am a Christian you may be wondering whether I am homophobic.—I am not, although I am heterosexual. The man who was best man at my wedding is homosexual, and I love him dearly. I have had two very good friends die of AIDS. Both were gay. Over the years I have had close colleagues who were gay or lesbian. Some of them have had same-sex relationships that put many heterosexual marriages to shame.

So, before you write me off as one of those \*\*\*\*!! Christians, will you cut me some slack and at least hear what I have to say. My intent is not to judge you, and I hope you will return the favor.

I want to be up front with you. My goal is to make you *think*, and I don't apologize for that. There are some eternal issues you must reckon with, because one hundred years from now it may not matter much whether you were gay or straight while on this earth, but it will matter a lot where you are spending eternity. I don't know where you stand with God, but right now, this instant, you are living on the threshold of eternity. You are only one breath and one heartbeat from leaving this world.

Once you grasp the truth that you are living on the edge of eternity, your life will never be the same. The issue you should be most concerned about is *not* homosexuality, nor how much money you make, nor how smart you are, nor how much education you have, nor how much pleasure you can squeeze out of life, nor AIDS, nor how to keep from being nuked.—God is the one with whom you should be concerned. When [not if] you die, will you be ready to step into the presence of Almighty God? Are you ready to step into the presence of absolute holiness and truth?—Will you be ready to meet your Maker?

Imagine a piece of chalk the size of a telephone pole (50-60 feet tall), and a chalkboard hundreds of miles long. Now, pretend you take that chalk, and draw a thin line that goes and goes until the chalk runs out. Think of this as a time line representing eternity. Now, put a tiny dot at the front end of that line and let that represent your whole life here on earth, compared to eternity.

Does it matter whether God exists?—You bet. If there is no God, you might as well erase the time line, for when you die your life is over— permanently. On the other hand, if God is real, and there is an afterlife, then nothing on earth could be more important. You are literally at the beginning of eternity; be it good, bad or otherwise. Nothing in the entire world compares in importance to that which will affect you eternally.

Jesus said, “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet loses his own soul?—Do you know how much money Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, will leave when he dies?”—He'll leave it all. You can't take it with you. From an eternal perspective, that which is spiritual is not only more important, it is infinitely more important. If God is not central in your life, I'd say it is high time you rethink your life in light of eternity.

The French mathematician and philosopher Pascal came up with what is now called Pascal's Wager. Pascal was no idiot. In fact, he was the inventor of the first manual calculator, was the inventor of calculus, and was the first one to figure out the formulas for determining the laws of probability and chance. Without him, modern science, math, and physics would not be the same.—Pascal was also a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ.

For skeptics he made a simple wager.—Go for it. Risk seeking God.—His logic was very simple: if you search for God, and you find God, then you come out an incredible winner, for you are now tapped into the source and giver of all life. On the other hand, if you pursue God, and you determine that God is *not* real, then you have lost nothing [except a little time], because in the end you will die and it won't matter anyway. The only way to lose is by not seeking God. If you find God, you win. If you don't, then you might as well party because once you die the party is over—*forever*.

The temptation for all of us is to worship a God of our own making, one who will passively approve of our choices like a senile grandfather. It is easier to rationalize and live in a fantasy world of our own making than to seek the naked truth. Absolute truth takes us out of our comfort zones.—Please ask yourself the following questions: “How is fear controlling my life?”, “Am I really open to truth?” “Am I willing to obey and yield my life unconditionally to God?”

My observation is that for most of us the crucial issue is not so much our sexual orientation [which is usually a symptom], but rather whether we are willing to submit to God? At the center of all of us is a core of rebellion that must be overcome if we are to be truly happy. Will it be *my* way or *God's* way? Am I so stubborn that I will *only* take life on my terms?—Before reading any

further, I urge you to address these questions. It is hard to change or heal what you do not acknowledge.

## DOES TRUTH EXIST?

Tal Brooke, a former Hindu mystic who converted to Christianity, said there is a danger plaguing our postmodern culture: “*Once people have been seduced into abandoning reason, you can no longer reason with them.*”—I agree. I would like to do some reasoning with you, but unless you believe truth exists, and that God gave us brains to reason out truth, then all that I have to say will be meaningless.

[If you believe truth exists then feel free to skip to the next section.]

I sometimes hear people say such things as, “*We can’t know anything!*”, “*There are no absolutes. Everything is relative so don’t impose your morals on me!*”—These sound very open-minded and humble, but are they really true?—No, they’re not.

Why, you ask? Because every argument used to prove that there is no such thing as absolute truth appeals to absolutes. To say, “There are no absolutes,” is an *absolute* statement. To say, “There is no such thing as absolute *truth*.” raises the question, “And you *know* this to be *true*?” When one says, “You can’t be *sure* of anything,” I would ask, “And you are *sure* of this?”

Others argue that it doesn’t matter what a person believes, or does, as long as he or she is *sincere*.—To me that is sloppy thinking. Truth does matter, and it has very little to do with sincerity. People can be sincere but sincerely wrong.—What would you think of a doctor who told his patients, “It doesn’t matter what medicine you take as long as you are sincere.”? Would you go to that doc? No. In every area of life we know that truth does matter. Try living as though truth does not exist and you will go insane.

Those who say truth doesn’t exist are playing mind games. A Satanist who kills a baby is wrong. To say otherwise is insane. Ask a person whether the law of gravity is true. If they say, “No” then ask them if they are willing to jump off the Empire State Building to prove their point.

If we were born with a sense of right and wrong, as I believe we were, it is because God knows right from wrong and created us with such knowledge. In most cases I believe we do *know* right from wrong.—If I had a candy bar and said, “Here, let me divide this with you” and I kept four-fifths for myself, you would probably say, “Hey, that’s not fair.” Automatically you would have appealed to a higher sense of fairness—of right and wrong. I have yet to hear someone say, “You’re correct. There is no such thing as right and wrong. Go ahead and take the bigger piece!”—Intuitively, you and I know better. We are moral and rational beings because a moral and rational God made us. How can we pretend otherwise?

If truth exists, then it means moral rights and wrongs must also exist. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that if standards of right and wrong exist, then we are accountable for whether we follow those standards. It would be easier to play the game of life if we could make up our own rules, but whether we like it or not, God wrote the rules.

Have you noticed how easy it is for us to want others to live by the rules, and yet we want the freedom to live without rules?—Those who deny absolutes are sometimes the first ones to cry “foul” when someone else breaks the rules. Why scream foul at the homophobes if there is no such thing as right or wrong? The reason you believe they are wrong and bigoted is because in your heart you know morals do exist, and you believe they are *wrong*.

One reason I believe so many people want to be moral relativists is because it absolves them of moral responsibility. “Hey, if there is no such thing as right and wrong, I can screw around all I want.” If there are no moral absolutes then it means there is no absolute standard for judging one’s behavior.—On the other hand, if truth exists, because a God of moral holiness exists, then regardless of what society says, in the end we are accountable to God. If God has revealed moral truths [e.g., The Ten Commandments], then it means that on the day of judgment we will be judged by those standards. Can you hear someone telling God, “Oops. I thought those were only

The Ten Suggestions.”

## **TO LOVE AND TO BE LOVED**

Do you know what controls most peoples' behavior? It is something so incredibly strong that many people are willing to give up reason, abandon family, forsake friends, and even deny God.—No, it isn't sex or drugs. It is their deep desire *TO LOVE* and *TO BE LOVED*. When we don't feel loved, and we have no one to love in return, we will do almost anything to satisfy those needs, including substituting unhealthy choices. People with unmet *legitimate needs* may try to get those needs met in *illegitimate ways*—most often through money, sex, drugs, or power.

I will make an educated guess that the underlying reason you are gay or lesbian is because of your need and desire to love and be loved. True? Of course it is. There is nothing wrong with wanting to love and be loved.

One of the sad things about our society is that sex has become a substitute for love. Sex, void of love, is hollow. Love is the only thing that really satisfies, and real love is based on committed relationships. Some of the most unhappy people I know are gays, mainly because they have sex, but not love. Bar hopping and having multiple sex partners cannot bring lasting happiness. Sex is a lousy substitute for love. With love, sex is wonderful. Without love, it is an idol which will break the heart of the worshipper.

When the average homosexual male has hundreds of sex partners in a lifetime, it tells me he is searching for something and is not finding it. Among the lesbians I know, while they tend to have more committed relationships, it seems to me that many of them are walking around with a spiritual void in their lives. I don't know any gays or lesbians that I would truly call happy.—I'm not saying some may not exist. It is just that I have never met any.

My main goal in writing this booklet is to point you to the love of God. God is the only One who can fill those deep inner longings in your heart. Please hear me, I am not trying to rob you of love, but to introduce you to the Source of love. Compared to the love God has for you, all other loves are as nothing. Without God it is impossible to know true lasting love, because God is love. Love without God is like a photograph of a banana split. It may look good, but it won't satisfy your hunger. God's love, on the other hand, is real and it nourishes the soul.

Life is not about whether you are gay or straight, but about whether you know God. If you're missing God, you're missing it all. If you have built your whole life around your sexual orientation and not God, you have built your life on that which will soon wither and die. If your identity comes from the type of sex you prefer, rather than being in relationship with God, then you are missing what life is all about.

Do you know the thing that keeps most people from coming to God? It is their stubbornness and pride. They want life on their terms or not at all. Thus, they never get what they really want. God's love is there for them, but because of their stubbornness and pride, they are unwilling to meet God on His terms. They let such things as sexual orientation, or personal ambition, keep them from the Source of Life. [For those who may be offended by my use of masculine pronouns for God, I apologize. I use the masculine pronouns for God because it is culturally acceptable and because I have to choose some form of pronoun.—Obviously, God supercedes gender distinctions. I believe God contains both masculine and feminine characteristics since God created both *males and females* in His own image.] God's love is as wide and as deep as the ocean, but the entrance to His love is narrow. Only the humble of heart can walk through that door.

Let me tell you a little story about monkeys. Monkeys are stubborn little cusses. When they want something they want it *now*, and they will stubbornly refuse to compromise their position. Those who trap monkeys for a living have devised a simple way to catch them. The trapper will place something the monkey wants, such as a coconut, in a metal box with bars. The monkey can easily stick its hand through the bars and grasp the coconut. However, the coconut will not fit

through the bars. Because monkeys are stubborn little creatures, they won't let go of the coconut. All the hunter has to do is walk up and drop a net over the monkey, and the monkey is his.

I don't care if you are homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or nonsexual. If you are stubbornly holding on to your sexual orientation at the expense of finding God, all Satan (the Devil) has to do is walk up and drop his net over you and you are his.

An idol is anything you cling to or cherish that is more important to you than God. To come to God you must be willing to lay aside your idols and come to God on His terms.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, *"I know no promise that He [God] will accept a deliberate compromise. For He has, in the last resort, nothing to give us but Himself; and He can give that only insofar as our self-affirming will retires and makes room for Him in our souls . . . For He claims all, because He is love and must bless. He cannot bless us unless He has us. When we try to keep within us an area that is our own, we try to keep an area of death. Therefore, in love, He claims all. There's no bargaining with Him . . . 'If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God, it will make in the end no difference what you have chosen instead.' Those are hard words to take. Will it really make no difference whether it was women or patriotism, cocaine or art, whisky or a seat in the Cabinet, money or science? Well, surely no difference that matters. We shall have missed the end for which we are formed and rejected the only thing that satisfies. Does it matter to a man dying in a desert by which choice of route he missed the only well?"*

Whatever you hold as more important than God—sex, fame, wealth, popularity, power, education, even serving others—will rob you of joy and in the end deprive you of life itself.

Someone once said, "Only a fool keeps doing the same thing over and over again, and expects different results."—If you have hit the same old dead end time, after time, after time, maybe it is time to try something different; like God?—God is the only true game in town. Don't be like the monkeys. Be willing to "let go and let God."—To live without God is like trying to live aboard the Titanic. In time you must decide whether to give up your pride and self-will, and get in God's lifeboat, or you can arrogantly go down with the ship singing Frank Sinatra's song, "I did it my way."

When all is said and done, either you will tell God, "Your will be done," or God will tell you, "Your will be done."

## **WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?**

What are the things that may be keeping you from experiencing God's love to the fullest? One of the most common questions I hear has to do with doubt over the very existence of God. As a society we are reaping the harvest of over 100 years of atheistic, evolutionistic teaching. The seeds of doubt have been sown. So, let's start at square one.—Does a personal God of love even exist?

[If you know there is a God, and this a non-issue with you, feel free to skip this section.]

### **ISSUE# 1: Does a God of love exist?**

I won't go into a long explanation, but let me give you some basic facts to consider. Just as no one is ever half-pregnant (either they are pregnant or they're not), in like manner either God exists or God doesn't exist. There is no half-God floating around out there. Take your pick; either we evolved from nothing or an intelligent creator God is behind the universe.

People who begin to grasp the issues of God's existence, and how complex our universe is, will have unanswered questions.—I must confess; as a believer in God, there are days when I am overwhelmed by the whole notion of God. My mind cannot comprehend how awesome and powerful a God it would take to create our universe. My brain short circuits even thinking about it.

On the other hand, true atheists must also have days when they doubt their beliefs—and that is good. It means they are thinking. I cannot imagine how anyone can look at our world and

universe and say all of this just happened by chance—that from non-life came life, that from unthinking matter came thoughts and feelings, and that blind atoms bumping into each other could eventually produce an Einstein, or even a kitten.

And further, how could all of this come from absolutely nothing? Evolution assumes that either energy and/or matter has always existed. In logic terms, this *begs the question*. Evolutionists assume an unproven part of their argument to be true, and then build their whole case upon something unproven.—Where did energy and/or matter come from for evolution to occur? To me it seems there had to be an uncreated *First Cause* (God) to start the whole process.

Let's both acknowledge at the outset: **there are no easy answers. True answers? Possibly. Easy answers? No.**

So, could we have evolved from nothing?—In a word, “No.”

Let me try to illustrate the absurdity of atheistic evolution as I see it. If you choose to believe God is behind evolution, I can live with that, even though that is not my personal belief. Whether it took God 6 days or 6 billion years to create the universe is not the point, it is still a masterpiece of intelligent design. You don't have to be a genius to recognize the difference between something created from that which occurs purely by accident. Whenever we see obvious design we always know there is a designer.

For example, if I looked up in the sky one day and the clouds spelled the words, “Eat at Joe's Pizza.” I wouldn't say, “Wow, what a coincidence.” No, I'd assume that Joe had probably hired a pilot to do some sky-writing.—When I go to an art gallery and look at a portrait or landscape painting I don't wonder if the painting happened as the result of an explosion in a paint factory. Although I may have never seen the artist, not once have I questioned the artist's existence.—Why not? Things like that just don't happen, at least not by random chance.—As stated, whenever we see obvious design we know there is a designer. When I see an obvious work of art I instinctively know there is an artist. When I see creation, I know there is a Creator.

One night a woman brought her husband into the psychiatric hospital where I work. The man was as drunk as drunk could be. I asked him if he went to A.A. [Alcoholics Anonymous]. He said, “No, I don't believe in all that God stuff.” His wife said, “You should!” He responded, “I don't believe there is a God.”—At that point I couldn't resist, so I said, “I think there is an easy way to prove to you there is a God.” He took the bait, so I said, “See that picture behind you? . . . Would you believe me if I said there was an explosion at a paint factory and it blew paint everywhere and just by chance made that painting?” He said, “No.” I asked, “Why not?” He said, “It couldn't happen.”—“So, whenever you see design, there is usually a designer, or when you see art, there is usually an artist, right?” He said, “Yes.” Then I said, “When you look at Cindy Crawford, the super-model, or an Arabian stallion, a rose, or a New England Fall, do they look like something the universe puked out by accident, or does it look like there's design?” He said, “Design.”—I said, “Then there must be a Designer, and that is God.” He said, “###\*##, you got me!”

There are signs of intelligent, beautiful design all around us. What are atheists pretending not to know or not to see?

Evolutionists use the concepts of probability and chance to argue their case for evolution. [Probability and chance are what a guy uses when he is thinking about asking someone for a date.—What are the odds that the person will say, “Yes”?] Considering the age of our universe and the age of our planet it sounds reasonable to think there might be enough time for almost anything to occur by chance. Using statistics, the mathematical science of probability and chance [which Pascal discovered], is this within the realm of possibility? Could a universe such as ours have happened by blind chance? I believe the answer is an overwhelming “No.” In fact, it is absolutely, totally impossible.—Let me explain.

If you had four numbered ping pong balls in a basket, the odds of you reaching your hand in the basket and drawing all four balls out in order, would, on average, occur one in every 256 tries (4 X 4 X 4 X 4=256). Right?

Now, instead of four balls, let's pretend you have 300 balls and they too are numbered consecutively from 1 to 300.—Think of it like a giant lottery.—All you have to do is pull all 300 balls out in sequence while blindfolded and you could win the wealth of the entire world. You can try as often and as long as you wish.—What are the odds that you could reach your hand in a basket and draw all 300 balls out in the right order? The odds of drawing the number one ball would be 1 in 300. The odds of getting all 300 balls in order would be 300 X 300 X 300 . . . (multiplied 300 times). That equals a number with 130 zeros tacked on the end of it.

Now, let's put that number in perspective. Do you know that the estimated number of atoms in our entire universe is a number with only 80 zeros at the end of it? **As incredible as it seems, you would stand a far better chance of picking one tiny atom hidden somewhere within billions upon billions of universes the size of our universe than you would to draw out 300 balls in the right order.**—Let me tell you, you would NEVER do it.

Before we move on, I want to underscore this last point by putting in layman's terms just how big our universe is, how tiny atoms are, and how impossible it would be for all this to occur by chance.

\* There are probably more atoms in just one cell of your body than there are people who have ever lived on the face of planet earth. It takes roughly 20 billion atoms just to make up the DNA [genetic blueprint] in each cell of your body, and the DNA is only a tiny part of each cell.

\* To give you an idea of how big our universe is, and how many atoms it would take to fill such a universe, if you were to drive at 55 miles per hour it would take you 52 million years to drive from earth to the nearest star, Alpha Centauri. Now, imagine a one inch square with 200 microscopic dots inside of it. Pretend that those dots represent stars. [Remember, it might take you 52 million years to drive from one star to another, from one dot to another dot.]—Do you realize it would take 160 acres of those one inch squares just to equal the size of our Milky Way Galaxy, of which our sun is but one tiny star [dot]. And, our Milky Way is only one-trillionth of the known universe.

So, what does that have to do with God?—A lot.

Let's apply what I've just said to real life. Could a simple one-celled organism have evolved by chance? The odds of the minimum number of DNA molecules, in the simplest cell that is able to reproduce itself, occurring by chance, in the right order, is not a number with a 130 zeros after it, but 160,000 zeros at the end of it.—Before you read further, take a minute and *think* about what I just said. And remember, each time you add one zero to a number the number gets ten times bigger. Add a mere 5 zeros to 1,000 and suddenly you have one hundred million. Add 160,000 zeros to a number and you are talking of a number so large you could never fathom it, even in your wildest dreams.

I have no problem believing some of what evolution teaches. I know that mutations occur within species and that natural selection occurs. However, let's be honest. There would have to be "a whole lot of mutating going on" for a single-cell microscopic organism to eventually mutate into a 100 trillion celled human with a complete respiratory system, vascular system, brain, digestive system, a set of seeing eyes, etc.

As good as the argument for evolution sounds, one cannot just assume the first cell came into existence by chance and then proceed with the theory of evolution. **Without the first cell, there is no theory of evolution.**

For sake of argument, let's just pretend for a moment that some DNA (the genetic blueprint for life) did occur by chance. Do you realize that there still would be no living cell. All you would have would be the "engine," but no body.

For life to occur there would also have to be (hang on to your hat): ". . . *carbohydrates, lipids, high energy phosphates, hormones, carotenoids, alkaloids, RNA, the correct pH, a lipid cell membrane with pores just the right diameter to allow the passage of substances in and out, an endoplasmic reticulum for protein synthesis and intracellular transportation, transfer RNA, ribosomal RNA, messenger RNA, Golgi sacs for the synthesis and packaging of glycoproteins,*

*hundreds of mitochondria to supply the energy needs of the cell, lysosomes for housing digestive enzymes, ribosomes by the thousands for protein production, centrioles to aid cellular division, a nuclear membrane to house the chromosomes and nucleoli for producing RNA-protein complexes.*" (L. Margulus: "Microbial Evolution On The Early Earth," in *Chemical Evolution* [Ref. 6], P. 481).

And, even if all of these components were present, it would still not guarantee life. All of these parts would have to come together in just the right way, in just the right proportions, at just the right time, in just the right climate (not too hot, not too cold, and not too many ultraviolet rays from the sun). And, of course, without food the cell would die.—"Oops. Go back to square one. Better luck next time."

To me, there has to be a God. It takes infinitely more faith to believe in atheistic evolution than to believe in an intelligent Creator God, no matter how mind boggling it is to conceive of such a God.—*I don't have enough faith to be an atheist.*

**How do I know God must be loving?** Very simply.—Could a God without intelligence create a race of people with intelligence? Could a God without feelings create people with feelings? Could a God without love create a species with love?—No, that doesn't make sense. [*Something* never comes from *nothing*.] Common sense tells us that God must be personal with deep feelings of love. God is more than some "Force."

There are some who think life on earth began by some extraterrestrial beings (E.T.'s) from other worlds. If that were so, which I personally don't believe, who created those life forms? All that people do who believe in "E.T.'s" is to shift the question of God's existence to another planet. The odds against chance evolution occurring there would probably be the same as here on our earth.

You may ask, "Tell me then, who made God?"—Obviously, I can't answer that question, but let me share some thoughts on the matter.

I believe that God has revealed (more on this later) certain truths about Himself, one of which is that He has always existed, and that He is without beginning or end. How can God be eternal? Ironically, it was Albert Einstein's theory of relativity which has given us a possible answer.

If you have watched some of the popular science fiction movies or television shows [e.g., *Star Trek*], you are probably familiar with the term "time warp," where people are able to go forward or backward in time. (As far as we know, though time is relative, it is always forward. You can never go back in time.)

According to Einstein's theory, as an object approaches the speed of light, time slows down. Supposedly, if an object or being could equal or exceed the speed of light, time as we know it would cease. If there were a Being (God), who lived in the realm of light, He would not exist within time. Time would exist within Him. Scientifically, an eternal God could exist.

Further, if we cannot understand God's creation, all the way from the tiny atom to a universe estimated to be 14-16 billion light years deep, how would we be able to comprehend the God who created it? Believing in infinity and thinking about such unanswerable questions as, "Where does the universe end?" or "What is beyond our universe?" is not much different than thinking about an infinite, eternal God. They are all beyond human understanding.

The real answers to these questions would probably make about as much sense to us as astrophysics makes to a baby. If computers could actually think, they wouldn't have to understand man in order to believe in man. The same is true with us and God. The fact that we exist should be reason enough. We don't have to understand something in order to believe in it and enjoy it. Like it or not, there has to be a God of intelligence behind our universe.

## **ISSUE #2: Is the Christian faith true? Is Jesus Christ who He claims to be?**

One of the things I have struggled with is how to share my faith in Christ with my homosexual and lesbian friends without coming through judgmental or sounding like some sort of fanatic. If I don't share, I am not telling about the one thing in life which, if true, matters more than all else—

*knowing* God.—So, as friend to friend, I'd like to explain why I am a Christian. I know I run the risk of offending, or being misunderstood, although I hope not. I'd like you to consider afresh the claims of Jesus Christ.—Do not judge Him by the religion some people have made through the use or misuse of His name. Christianity stands or falls on the person of Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Some think of Christianity as “escapism” or as “pie in the sky.” The real issue, of course, is whether it is *true*. Is there really “pie in the sky?” To say, “There is a tunnel under this prison” may be an escapist idea, but it may also be *true*. So how can you know whether Christianity is *true*?

Let me share my conclusions after much reading and questioning.

There are many people and religious groups saying what God is or is not like, and whether or not He even exists. The *only* One who can say for sure whether God exists and what He is like is God Himself. As simple as this is, it is an important point to grasp. Only God can give the final word on Himself.

Suppose one day a man [Jesus] walked this earth claiming to be God, saying that he was “THE way . . . THE truth . . . THE life” [John 14:6, emphasis mine]. What if he claimed to be the incarnation of Yahweh [John 8:58]. Now this would be something you could easily investigate.—Any person claiming to be God would either be psychotic with delusions of grandeur [crazy], a deceiver out to pull off one of the greatest scams of all time, or, this person might actually be the incarnation of God.—Possibly God had chosen to write Himself into His own story and become a man, just as He did with Abraham in Genesis 18, 19.

In essence, this is what the Bible teaches concerning Jesus. In the New Testament Jesus is called almost every major name used to describe God in the Old Testament: “God,” “Yahweh,” “Lord,” “Creator,” “Savior,” “King of kings,” “the Alpha and the Omega,” “One,” etc. Even though Jesus taught that God is the only one worthy of worship [Matthew 4:10] He, nevertheless, received worship [Matthew 28:9,17]. It even says the angels of God are to worship Him [Hebrews 1:6]. If Jesus were not God, He had no right being called God or allowing others to treat Him as God. It would be the ultimate in blasphemy and arrogance. Jesus, a Jew, would have known that.

To believe that Jesus was *just* a good teacher [assuming He really claimed to be God] would be out of the question. He would either be much more than a *good teacher* [i.e., God], or much less [i.e., a liar or lunatic]. Think of the hundreds of thousands who have died martyr's deaths because of His claims. If He is not God, these people died for a lie, for a false idol.

C.S. Lewis—author, professor, and Christian intellectual wrote, “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

There can be no middle ground. Just as no one is ever half pregnant [one is either pregnant or not pregnant], in like manner, Jesus is either God or he isn't.—Lunatic, liar or Lord, you choose.

If you really want to know the truth about God, it is not intellectually wise to ignore the life and teachings of the only major religious leader in all of history, and a Jew at that, who actually claimed to be God: Jesus. He is too important of a figure to pass over lightly. He did live, and He stands alone in the claims He made.

Christ produced anger, hatred, or worship from the people of His day. To take a middle-of-the-road position concerning Him is to totally fail to grasp the claims He made. The enemies of Jesus clearly understood His claim to divinity. They tried to kill Him for blasphemy because He claimed *equality* and *oneness* with God [e.g., John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:33, Mark 14:61-64, etc.].

All of the main writers of the New Testament, such as Rabbi Saul [Paul] and the apostle John, clearly taught the deity of Jesus [e.g., Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:6,7; Romans 9:5; John 1:1,14; Hebrews 1:1, etc.].

This is even more staggering when we realize that those saying these things were monotheistic Jews. [They believed in “one God.”] They were not talking about Jesus being a *god* in some polytheistic [many gods], Hindu sort of way. No, they worshiped Jesus as the incarnation of the One Almighty God [e.g., Matthew 28:9, John 20:28, Hebrews 1:6, Revelation 5:8-14, Philippians 2:10,11].

Reason with me. For sake of argument, if Jesus is God, then He could state the truth about God [i.e., Himself]. He could explain how to have a right relationship with God, because He is God. Correct?—What He says goes. What He says is right is right, and what He says is wrong is wrong. Like it or not, if He was/is God then He could make such statements. If He wasn't/Isn't God, then He was either crazy or a deceiver. Christianity would be false, and you should search elsewhere for God.

That is why Christianity is such an exclusive religion, and why Christians sometimes seem so narrow-minded. If Christ's claims are true, then there is no other choice but to proclaim Him as God incarnation

Jesus taught that He was the *only* way to God [e.g., John 8:24, 14:6; see also, Acts 4:12]. Christianity is not a matter of likes or dislikes, but an issue of whether Jesus was telling the truth. Because Christ claims to be God, His teachings are to be regarded more highly than any other religion or other religious leader in the world. It does not mean we are to be disrespectful of other religions, or that 100% of what they teach is wrong, but Christians have an obligation to tell the world about Jesus and His astounding claims [see Matthew 28:19-20].

Rather than questioning the severity and harshness of God in making the way to Himself so seemingly narrow, teaching that Jesus is the *only* way, maybe we should look at the severity of sin and the harshness of the human condition which would make it necessary for a holy God to go to such extremes to win mankind back to Himself. According to scripture God entered this world for the express purpose of dying for the sins of the world [Isaiah 53; John 3:16; Acts 2:23].

Before we travel any further, let me summarize some of the major evidences, as I see them, that Jesus was telling the truth. Again, you be the judge.

**1.** The first is Jesus' character. From the beginning of time, no other person has so powerfully affected life upon this earth as Jesus of Nazareth. His teachings are profound. [If you have never read the New Testament account for yourself, a good place to begin would be with the *Gospel of John* or the *Gospel of Luke*]. It is hard to read the account of Jesus' life and teachings and maintain that He was either a liar or a lunatic [the only other two alternatives]. Either we believe His seemingly unbelievable claims [to be God] or we disbelieve His believable character.

**2.** The second is the historical evidence for His rising from the dead. This is crucial. Disprove the resurrection and you disprove Christianity. However, to do so, you would have to explain what happened to Jesus's mutilated body. For example, why didn't the enemies of Jesus just produce the body if He never arose? How did the tomb, which was guarded by Roman soldiers, become empty? Does it make sense that Jesus' disciples would steal the body of Jesus, when every Roman soldier knew that if a prisoner [in this case a corpse] escaped while under his watch it would be his life for the prisoners? Why wasn't there a fight, and why weren't there killed disciples around the tomb? If the soldiers were asleep [which was also a crime], how could the disciples have rolled away a stone weighing over one ton without waking the soldiers?

Another theory says that Jesus, having been crucified by the Romans, swooned in a state of near death, suddenly revived, rolled away a stone weighing 1-2 tons, scared away the Roman soldiers, and told His disciples, “Hey guys. Look, it's me. I've conquered death!” [No way. It takes more faith to believe some of the theories which try to explain away the resurrection, than to believe that Jesus did arise from the dead as He foretold.] And what about the disciples, and over 500 other people who claimed to have seen Him physically alive following His crucifixion?

What about Thomas who was told to put his finger into the nail prints in Jesus's hands? What made the disciples, who were cowards before His death, suddenly change and begin preaching a message under the threat of death which eventually turned the whole Roman world upside down?— For further reading I highly recommend Josh McDowell's book *The Resurrection Factor*.

**3.** The third major piece of evidence is the documented accounts of Jesus's miracles from both Christian and non-Christian sources. If Jesus is God, then for Him to heal someone, or calm a stormy sea, would be no big deal, but merely a small repeat of what He did when He created the world. The New Testament clearly teaches that Christ, as God, is creator [John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:1-2]. One reason Christianity spread so rapidly was because of the miracles Jesus and His followers performed. If you were born blind, and you could suddenly see because Jesus touched you, you would probably believe too. [Read the Gospel of John, chapter 9.]

**4.** Fourth is the trustworthiness of the eyewitnesses themselves. If you can't trust them, you might as well throw out the first three pieces of evidence. Of the original twelve disciples, not counting Judas who betrayed Christ [as foretold in Psalm 41:9], tradition tells us that all but John were killed for their belief and bold profession that Jesus had conquered death, that they had seen Him alive after the crucifixion, and that He was the one hope for mankind.

Would these men have willingly died for something they knew to be a lie?—Would you die for a lie, especially if it involved saying that some man had risen from the dead, when you really knew his body was decomposing somewhere? I think not.

Further, they passed on to the world its highest moral and ethical teachings. Would these teachings have knowingly been founded on a lie? No. The only logical explanation is that they saw Jesus alive three days after His crucifixion, death and burial. This is the central theme of Christianity. [See I Corinthians 15:3-8.]

In the gospel accounts, the disciples didn't falsely cast themselves in a favorable light, as one would expect if they were making up the story. They recorded their own bickerings, Peter's denial, their cowardice, etc. Yet, these Jewish followers of Jesus, who only believe in one God [the one religion in all the world least likely to entertain such beliefs about God becoming man], spoke of the glory and sinlessness of Jesus, and called Him "Lord" and "God" [e.g., John 1:1,14; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; etc.]. And, as mentioned earlier, they even went so far as to worship Him [Matthew 28:9,17], an act reserved only for God in Jewish teaching as you know [Deuteronomy 6:13-15; Matthew 4:10].

And remember, these followers of Christ had lived with him day in and day out for three years, and yet they were willing to die for their belief that He was sinless and "God."—Could anyone live with you for even one week and think that of you?

**5.** Fifth is the reliability of the Bible as a historical document. [See Appendices:Question 5]

**6.** Sixth is the testimony of believers. Whatever one says, there are many people, like myself, of every age, nationality, social class, or century, who say they have experienced the living Christ. The accounts of restored lives, answers to prayer, healed bodies, and other evidences are hard, if not impossible, to explain unless Christ is alive. The New Testament bears witness to a living, resurrected Lord who is alive and well, and able to change lives.

**7.** The last major piece of evidence is prophecy. There are at least 48 specific prophecies in the Bible foretelling Messiah's [Christ's] coming, including where He was to be born [Bethlehem; Micah 5:2], and that He would suffer and die having his hands and feet pierced [Psalm 22:16; cf., Isaiah 53; Zechariah 12:10].

Did you know that Daniel the prophet prophesied the exact week in history that Christ would be killed [Daniel 9:24-27]? Put in layman's terms, this passage says that from the command to "restore and rebuild Jerusalem," which we can easily date in 445 B.C. by King Artaxerxes, until Messiah would "atone" for sin and be "cut off" [die], would be a total of 62 + 7 weeks = 69 "weeks" [= 7 years], or in other words 69 X 7 =483 years.

Using a Jewish calendar, with operated on 360 days per year, starting at the time Artaxerxes

issued his decree, going forward 483 years, it comes out exactly to the week Jesus was crucified [April 6th, 32 A.D.].

Also, the Messiah had to be “cut off” [killed] before the destruction of the temple, which we know occurred in 70 A.D. when Titus and his soldiers destroyed Jerusalem, and burned the temple. [If you really want to understand this prophecy, please get a copy of the small book *Daniel’s Prophecy Of The Seventy Weeks* by McClain and read it.]

What famous Jewish religious figure, claiming to be the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem, died having his hands and feet pierced, on a Day of Atonement, exactly 483 years from when Artaxerxes gave his decree, and before Titus destroyed the sanctuary in 70 A.D.?—There was only one person.—Jesus.

Further, the Bible also predicted that Jesus would conquer death by being resurrected [Psalm 16:10; cf., Acts 2:22-27]. How could the Bible predict such astounding things hundreds of years in advance if the Bible weren’t true and Christ weren’t who He claimed to be? The odds are astronomical that any one man could fulfill these exact prophecies made by many prophets over a span of several hundred years.—It was God’s way to be sure we wouldn’t mistake His coming.

Would you care to make a prediction that 600 years from now a great religious world leader will be born in a certain small town with a population of probably less than 1,000 people? And, could you predict 600 years in advance the exact year and week this person would die? The Bible did.

Some scholars used to say that the Bible writers had taken events from the past, and written about them in such a way as to make it sound like they were yet to happen. However, with the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, we can now prove that the prophecies were written before the actual events, especially the prophecies about Jesus. In Jerusalem, at a museum called the Shrine of the Book, there is a complete copy of the book of Isaiah, with the passage in chapter 53 about the Messiah [Christ] being the suffering servant and dying for the sins of the world. There are also eight copies of the book of Daniel among the *Dead Sea Scroll* parchments.

In a booklet this size I cannot go into detail, but I recommend Josh McDowell’s book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict Volume I*, for more on this subject.

## STEPS TO KNOWING GOD

Most who call themselves Christians, I think, will agree with what I am about to say. This section is extremely important. I don’t ask that you automatically believe the facts I present. If you are serious about God, then do your homework. Take the time to look up the Bible verses I cite. Ask God to confirm in your heart whether what I say is true. Seek God as if your soul depended on it; it just might.

I intentionally list references from the Old Testament [Hebrew Bible], because I want you to see that the same New Testament truths were clearly taught or prophesied in the Old Testament. The Bible is a unified whole, with Jesus being the unifying theme which ties it all together.

The following four spiritual laws are clearly taught in the New Testament.

**Spiritual Law #1:** God is a God of love. He loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life [John 4:16; John 3:16; 10:10, Ephesians 2:10]. What God wants for your life is awesome beyond belief [Ephesians 3:14-21].

**Spiritual Law #2:** So, what went wrong? Why aren’t more people experiencing what God intended? It is because our sin separates us from a holy God [Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23]. Sin is active or passive rebellion against God. It is not listening to God, but “*doing our own thing*.” Because God is “holy,” totally without sin or wrongdoing, we cannot just bop into God’s presence [Isaiah 6:1-5, I John 1:5]. Just as you wouldn’t be allowed to walk on someone’s expensive white carpet if you had oily, muddy shoes, neither will God tolerate sin in Heaven. If we went to Heaven without a basic change in who we are, we would corrupt and pollute Heaven, just as we have the earth.

We all fall short of God's standard of perfection. If we lined up in front of the Grand Canyon, and tried to jump across it, some might jump further than others; but the point is, we would all fall short. [Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23]. Because Adam and Eve chose to sin, the Bible teaches that this sin nature got passed on to all mankind; the same way a leopard inherits its spots from its parents [Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12-21].

According to the Bible, sin is more than murder, stealing, or adultery. From God's perspective sin is such things as boasting in our own achievements. Sex outside of marriage is sin. Lying, gossip, slander, cheating, cowardice, yielding to fear, not trusting God, coveting what others possess, not acting in faith, being disrespectful, putting worldly success or money before God, unforgiveness, lack of prayer, not keeping our promises, looking lustfully at someone, swearing, not acting in love, and a bunch of other things, are sin [Exodus 20; James 4:16; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8; Romans 1:18-32; 14:23; Matthew 5,6; etc.].

According to the Bible, we all stand guilty before God, no matter whether we have sinned a little or a lot [James 2:10].—It is like the man who said, "*But, Judge, look at all the people I didn't kill.*"—The point? None of us deserves to go to Heaven. We have all sinned against an eternal God and committed eternal sins.—Stating it bluntly, unless God forgives us, by God's standard we're deserving of Hell. As a just and righteous judge, God cannot just sweep our sins under the carpet.

**Spiritual Law #3:** Christ is the only way to God. He died to pay the penalty for our sin. By his death, Jesus bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful man. Either we go to God by way of Jesus, or we do not get to God [II Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:16; Romans 5:8, Acts 20:28; I Timothy 2:5].

The story is told of a young woman who received a phone call from the emergency room of a hospital stating that her dad was deathly ill, that he may have only hours to live. Because she lived a couple hundred miles away, she got in her car and began frantically driving to see her father. As she was going through a small southern town, she looked in her rear view mirror, and there was a police car chasing her. Because she was going so fast, the officer didn't merely give her a ticket, he arrested her. The next day she appeared before the local county judge who told her that for going 50 miles per hour above the speed limit, her fine would be \$300 or three days in jail.

She pleaded with the judge. "*Your honor, you don't understand. I don't have \$300 with me, and I can't spend three days in jail. I must go to see my father who is dying.*" The judge said, "*I'm sorry, young lady, but the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail.*"

She began to weep, and the old judge was moved with compassion. To the surprise of everyone in the court, he stood up, stepped down from the bench, walked over, took off his robe, put on his sports coat, walked around in front of the bench, pulled out his checkbook, wrote a check for \$300, and laid it on the bench. Then he walked back around, took off his sports coat, put back on his robe, and resumed his seat. He said, "*Young lady, the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail, but I see someone has paid the fine for you. Case dismissed!*"

In essence, that is what God did for us. The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death [Romans 6:23]. When we stood condemned, without hope, God took off his robe of deity, put on a robe of humanity, became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, and died for us. God did for us what we could never do for ourselves [Romans 5:6]. According to scripture, Jesus is both God and man. He has two natures: one human, the other divine [Philippians 2:6,7 and Romans 1:3,4]. If we accept his offer of forgiveness, when we stand before God as Judge, we will be standing before the One who loved us and paid the fine for us: "Case dismissed!"

**Spiritual Law #4:** Knowing the first three laws is not enough. It takes a response on our part. While we cannot earn salvation, it is nonetheless a *gift* which must be received [Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:8-9]. John 1:12 says, "*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*"—How do we *receive* the gift of salvation?

First, we are asked to *believe* several wonderful truths: (1) that Jesus loves us, (2) that he died

for our sins [past, present and future], and (3) that he arose from the dead [John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 10:9; I Corinthians 15:3-5].

Since it is our sins which have been keeping us from God, we must be willing to turn from our sin [Mark 1:14,15]. The Bible calls this *repentance*, which simply means to *turn around*.—For example, if you are on the wrong bus heading away from God, you need to change buses, and get on board with Christ. Or, putting it another way, if you have been driving your own bus, it means being willing to get out of the driver's seat, and inviting Jesus to take over as your bus driver. He can turn your life around, and get you going in the right direction.

The tale is told of a man who tightrope walked across Niagara Falls with a 200 pound sack of sand on his back. Upon successfully completing his feat he turned to a spectator and asked, "*Do you believe I could do that again?*" The person said "*Sure!*" The tightrope walker tossed down the sand and said, "*Then climb on my back.*"—Real believing is more than giving mental assent to the claims of Christ. God asks you to "climb on board," and commit yourself to him. It is more than believing something to be true in your head. It is a commitment of the heart.

If you confess your sins to God, and ask him to forgive you, the Bible promises you will be forgiven. No matter how big, or how awful, your sins are, God is more than willing to forgive you [Isaiah 1:18; I John 1:9]. And, more incredible still is the fact that these sins will *never* be held against you [Romans 4:7,8; 8:1].

Because we are weak and rather powerless when it comes to sin, God places his Holy Spirit in each person who receives Christ in order to help them keep from sinning. In other words, if you allow him, the Holy Spirit will power your bus [Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:7-14, Galatians 2:20; I Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13]. With God's Spirit living in and through you, you can also begin to experience God's peace and joy [John 14:27; Galatians 2:20, 5:22; Romans 7:14-8:11].

And last, but not least, if you receive Christ into your life, you become a child of God, part of God's family.—Let me share a simple illustration. Would you go to a stranger's funeral and ask the family of the deceased for a share of the inheritance? You could tell them, "I'm a *good person*, and I do nice things for others."—Would that impress them? No. They'd say, "I'm sorry, but the inheritance is for family members only. We don't even know you."

Well, the same is true with God. You must be born into God's family if you expect to *inherit* what is God's. His inheritance is for his children, for those who *know* him. That is why Jesus said unless a person is *born again*, he or she will never see the Kingdom of Heaven [John 3:3-18]. The moment you *believe* in Christ, you are legally adopted into God's family. You inherit eternal life, and glory beyond your wildest imagination awaits you [I Corinthians 2:9; 3:21-23; Ephesians 1:3; Romans 8:31,32; John 14:1,2; Revelation 21:1-4].

When you die, how can you be sure you will go to Heaven to be with God? The Bible says, "*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may KNOW you have eternal life.*" [I John 5:11-13, emphasis mine]—How can you *know* you have eternal life? Does it depend on how you feel, or upon circumstances? No. It depends on God's promise. God promises that if you *believe* in Christ, and commit your life to him, you can *know* you have eternal life.

Scripture also says that if you ask *anything* according to God's will, God will hear and answer you [I John 5:14].—So, is it God's will that you *believe* in Jesus and *receive* him? Yes [II Peter 3:9]. Therefore, if you sincerely pray to God, and invite Jesus into your heart, you can do so with confidence *knowing* that God will hear and answer your prayer. This is where *faith* comes in: believing that what God tells you is true.

I entered into a relationship with Jesus when I was 14 years old. At a youth meeting I invited Jesus Christ to come into my life and forgive me of my sins.—And he did. To my amazement, it worked. God's peace flooded through me. Old feelings of guilt were gone. As I read the Bible, it finally began to make sense. God became very real to me. I also began seeing God answer specific prayers, which surprised and delighted me no end. While being a Christian has been hard

at times, I wouldn't trade the joy of knowing Christ for anything in the world.

## A TIME OF DECISION

Christianity isn't merely a religion; it is a love-relationship with God. God is the lover of your soul, and he has proposed to you. Will you say, "I do."

If you have felt the Spirit of God speaking to you, and you have become convinced in your heart and mind that what I have written is true, then you must decide what you will do with Jesus.

No matter how much evidence I give, the final step is still one of faith, even though there is solid evidence upon which to base that faith. For example, I can't *prove* that George Washington lived, but I can show overwhelming evidence that he did. By *faith*, I believe George Washington lived, and by *faith*, I believe Christianity is true, based on evidence, and the fact that it works. Jesus Christ has changed my life. I am not the person I used to be.

A simple way for you to test the truthfulness of what I've said is for you to actively, honestly, seek God on His terms [as best you understand], with a willingness to follow the truth, whatever that is. Not to honestly seek God with all of your heart, is to gamble with your soul. Choosing not to decide is a decision. To do nothing is the same as saying "No."

To start with, you may want to pray something like this: "*Dear Lord God, if you're there, and what this booklet says is true about Jesus, then I want to know. Please show me the truth.*"—Praying this prayer will not make you a Christian, but it is an honest first step in turning to God.

Secondly, read.—Read the Bible. Don't just rely on what you have heard. Study it for yourself. Look up the Bible verses I've shown you. *Think* with your mind; *listen* with your heart. Allow God to speak to you.—Read some of the books I have made reference to in this booklet. There are well thought-out answers to virtually any question you can ask.

Some day you will stand before God, either forgiven or unforgiven. Hell is one of those horrible doctrines most Christians, myself included, don't like to discuss. However, Jesus talked about Hell more than all the other Bible writers put together. Not to choose God, and accept his offer of forgiveness, is to choose a life of eternal separation from Him [Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 13:40-43]. God is serious when it comes to sin. God hates and judges sin. If you refuse his forgiveness, and you hang on to your sin, you will die with your sin, like a person refusing to get off the Titanic. If there were any other way, Jesus would not have had to die. There is no other payment for sin acceptable to God other than the death of Jesus on the cross. Scripture says, "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*" [Acts 4:12].

This may be a hard decision for you. Much is at stake. If you receive Jesus as Lord, it will cost you. It has cost me. You may be misunderstood. Friends and family members may reject you.—Welcome to the club. Jesus was also misunderstood and rejected. He was willing to die for you. Are you willing to live for him?

No one has a deciding vote in this decision but you. God votes for you. Satan, who is also very real, votes against you. I pray that you will cast your deciding vote before it is too late. As I understand scripture, there are no second chances in another life [Hebrews 9:27]. Jesus stands at the door of your heart knocking. Will you open the door and let him in [Revelation 3:20]?

If you become convinced that what I have said is true, and if you are ready to open the door of your heart to him, then find a quiet place and invite him in. Don't procrastinate. What greater joy could you have than to know your sins are forgiven, that you have been given eternal life, and that you are prepared to meet your Lord. I believe his return is very soon [Zechariah 14:1-9; I John 3:1-3].

When you are ready, may I suggest the following prayer, or one like it: "*Dear Jesus, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for the ways that I have sinned against you. I believe you died on the cross for my sin. As best as I know how, right now, I invite you to come into my life. Please forgive me, and cleanse me from all my sin. Make me the person you want me to be. I need you. I*

*willingly yield my life to you. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.”*

These words are not magical. The important thing is that you mean them. Once you have invited Jesus Christ to be a part of your life, I encourage you to find a loving church where the Bible is both honored and taught. Make public your commitment to Christ by getting baptized [Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 10:47, 48a]. Visit several churches before you pick a church. Pray about it, and listen to your heart. God can lead you. It is sort of like trying on a new pair of shoes. You don't necessarily want to buy the first pair you try on.

Continue to pray, read scripture, and allow God to speak to you. If you're a student in high school, check out such groups as Campus Life, Young Life, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, K-Life, etc. If you are in college, there are some wonderful college ministries such as Campus Crusade For Christ, the Navigators, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, etc. Groups such as these are a great way to begin to grow and to find support throughout the week. Even if you are not a student, call one of these groups and ask them to suggest some good churches in your area.

The story is told of a native witch doctor who had done much evil in his life, causing much needless suffering through his witchcraft. As a result of the love and work of some Christian missionaries, he yielded his heart to Christ. Later, he called a tribal meeting to share with his village the transformation that had occurred in his life. He said that before he came to know Christ, it was as though there was an evil dog in him that made him do cruel, hateful things. When he repented, and asked Christ into his life, he said it was as though a powerful dog of love and peace came to live in him.

As he spoke, a small lad sitting at his feet grew more and more absorbed with what he was saying. When the lad couldn't take the suspense any longer, he blurted out, *'Did the bad dog leave?'* The former witch doctor paused and said, *'No, son, he still hangs around.'* The boy asked *'How do the two dogs get along?'* The old man replied, *'They fight all the time.'* The little boy, with great concern in his voice said, *'Well, which one wins?'* The old man, with a smile and a twinkle in his eyes said, *'The one I feed the most!'*—How true.

There are spiritual battles that will go on in your life. Just as God and angels are real, Satan and his demons are also real. The New Testament has much to say about them. Beside the books I've mentioned thus far, there are two books I highly recommend to help you understand, gain, and maintain spiritual victory in your walk with Christ. The two books are: *Victory Over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker* by Dr. Neil Anderson.

Another book I highly recommend, which will help you learn of the awesome love God has for you, is *Search For Significance* by Robert McGee.

If possible, I urge you to read such authors as Charles Swindoll, Josh McDowell, and Max Lucado. If you like somewhat heavier philosophical reading, try C.S. Lewis [e.g., *Mere Christianity*, *The Weight Of Glory*, *The Screwtape Letters*], or Peter Kreeft [e.g., *Making Sense Out Of Suffering*, *Heaven The Heart's Deepest Longing*, etc.].

To grow as a new believer, I suggest you contact any of the following Christian organizations for their assistance and literature. You can most likely get their addresses from a library, a Christian bookstore, or you may access them over the internet:

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc.:** <http://www.graham-assn.org>

**Campus Crusade For Christ:** <http://www.ccci.org>

**Fellowship Of Christian Athletes:** <http://www.gospelcom.net/fca/>

**Freedom In Christ Ministries:** <http://www.ficm.org>

**Great Commission Ministries:** <http://www.greatcommission.org>

**Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship:** <http://www.ivpress.com>

**Josh McDowell Ministries:** <http://www.ccci.org/josh/>

**The Navigators :** <http://www.gospelcom.net/navs/>

**Youth For Christ:** <http://www.gospelcom.net/yfc/>

Log onto <http://www.gospelcom.net> for addresses of other Christian organizations and resources.—Keep feeding the good side.

C.S. Lewis once remarked, *"Joy is the serious business of Heaven."* If Heaven is true, as Jesus taught it is, then no sacrifice or cost is too great to please the *One* who loves you. Set your heart and your mind on the reality of Heaven [Colossians 3:1,2; Matthew 6:19-21]. Let it motivate you

all the days of your life.

May His grace and peace be yours.

## APPENDICES: SIXTOUGH QUESTIONS

Because some of you reading this may have AIDS I have chosen to address some AIDS related questions, as well as some questions about homosexuality. I don't ask that you agree with me, only that you honestly weigh what I have to say. Here are the questions I will be discussing:

- 1. Is AIDS A Form Of God's Judgment?**
- 2. Can You Pray And Expect To Be Healed Of AIDS?**
- 3. If God Doesn't Heal Me, Does It Mean I Am Not Forgiven?**
- 4. How Can God Be Good And Still Allow Me To Have AIDS?**
- 5. Is The Bible Inspired, And Are Its Teachings About Sex Correct?**
- 6. How Am I To View Sex Now That I Am A Christian?**

By far the hardest part of writing this booklet has been trying to answer these questions in a sensitive, yet forthright manner. I make no pretense of having God's final word on these matters. My prayer is that God will give you common sense and discernment, to sort out truth from error. I also want you to take what I say in a spirit of love. In no way do I feel judgmental as I address these questions. My heart goes out to you if you are wrestling with these issues. As I said earlier, my goal is to make you *think*, not necessarily to make you agree with me.

I urge you to study the Bible for answers, as well as read other books on these topics (e.g., *Making Sense Out Of Suffering* by Peter Kreeft).

### **QUESTION #1: "Is my illness a form of God's judgment?"**

My first response is that, in many ways, the question of whether cancer and other terminal illnesses, such as AIDS, are forms of judgment is irrelevant. Everyone on the face of this planet stands under judgment for his/her sins until they are forgiven. Once we are forgiven we are no longer under condemnation. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (That can be you.) Romans 4:7-8 says, "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."—Now that is good news.

Having said all this, let me try to answer the broader question of whether sickness is a form of God's judgment. Obviously, we all recognize the fact that we bring on many of our own illnesses by smoking, not exercising, worrying, etc.—Is God to blame for this?—"No." If we are honest we would have to say, as President Truman used to say, "The buck stops here."—With us, not God. It always amazes me how people can defend their right to smoke or be promiscuous, and then blame God when they get lung cancer or catch a sexually transmitted disease. If you bang your head against the wall, don't blame God for the headache.

God allows sickness and suffering. That is obvious. The question is, "Why?" First, we know, based on God's character, that God is holy, loving and good. God can do no wrong. So, if you and I had the mind of God, if you and I could see as God sees, and know as God knows, we would do absolutely no differently than God is already doing. You can't improve upon perfection.

Therefore, whatever the reasons for allowing suffering and evil, however harsh, they come from a heart of love and goodness. For example, I have a very good friend who is a neurosurgeon. Recently he took the whole top of a lady's skull off following a car accident. Her brain needed room to swell after being badly bruised. Did he cause her physical pain and also the embarrassment by having her head shaved? "Yes, he did."—But he also saved her life.

In like manner, we must not hastily criticize God for what He allows or does not allow. According to the creation account in Genesis: sin, sickness and pain were not part of God's original plan. They came as the result of man's sin and rebellion. They were a combination of God's just punishment, a reminder to us of the seriousness of sin, as well as the logical

consequence of our behavior.

Read the Old Testament and you will see God's just punishment. Though severe, it was meant to bring the nation of Israel back to God. The book of Hosea is a classic. More than any other Old Testament book it catalogs the sins of Israel, and yet it most clearly shows God's love for His people. God hated executing judgment on Israel. It broke His heart [Hosea 11:8, 9].

Is pain still useful? "Yes."

C.S. Lewis said that pain is like a megaphone [amplifier] that God uses to awaken a deafened world.—And it works! Pain does get our attention; like the story of the Missouri farmer who hit his mule between the eyes with a two-by-four just to get its attention.

Did you know that in studies with lepers, the only thing that prevents them from hurting themselves is pain?

Leprosy is a disease of the nerves. The reason people's hands seem to rot is because they lose feeling and can't tell when they are hurting themselves. Then cuts and burns get infected, and so the disease progresses.

Some doctors, in trying to help leprosy patients, hooked up some artificial warning devices to let lepers know they were hurting themselves. They devised bells and buzzers and flashing lights, and do you know what? The lepers would turn them off and do whatever they were going to do anyway. Why? Because it didn't hurt. Pain [an electrical shock] was the only thing doctors found that kept them from hurting themselves.

Without pain we'd be like those lepers, both physically and spiritually. It's a sad fact, but true. We need pain. [I don't like it any better than you.]

I am told that shepherds who tend sheep may intentionally break the leg of a sheep which keeps wandering from the flock and is in risk of being killed by wolves. The shepherd will then carry that sheep on its shoulder until the leg is mended. After that, the sheep will never leave the shepherd. The Lord is our shepherd [Psalm 23:1].

Our bodies are temporal. Compared to eternity, we live but a split second. Our spirits, however, are eternal. What is hardest for the body is sometimes best for the spirit. Time and again as a chaplain I have seen people come to faith in God because of their illness/pain. It is like the shot across the bow of a ship that alerts them to danger unless they change course. In Romans 8:18-28 Paul said one reason God allows pain is to produce *hope*. Read this passage and you will see that Paul uses a whole bunch of "feeling" words to convey how unpleasant life can be sometimes. But then he declares that it is all for a purpose, to develop *hope*. (For example, who feels the greatest hope of heaven: a person suffering, or some guy living in fat city enjoying the "good life"?)

God doesn't want us to get confused with where our real home is. Our home is in heaven. Pain brings that lesson home loud and clear. Without the pain and hard times, some of us would not come to faith in God. Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near."—God is often nearest to us in our pain.

### **QUESTION #2: "Can you pray and expect to be healed?"**

I wish I could tell you that in every case this would happen, but I can't. The only one qualified to make that decision is God.

The main thing to remember is that you are truly loved by God and if you have received Jesus Christ's forgiveness then you are truly forgiven.—Obviously, it is within God's power to heal you physically. And, in some cases He may.

I encourage you to humbly pray about it with a willingness to yield yourself to God, whether His answer is: "Yes," or "No." Pray that God will do that which most glorifies Him. Sometimes God will take us out of the storm. Other times He takes the storm away from us. But more often than not God walks *through* the storm with us.

Let me also encourage you not to equate being healed with how well you are doing spiritually.

Scripturally speaking, God is far more concerned about your spiritual well-being than your body (although both are important). What is most important to God are things such as faith, walking in love, etc. If our hearts are right with God, all is well.

If physical well-being were a sign of spiritual maturity, then anyone with physical ailments or handicaps would be second-class Christians. That is simply not what scripture teaches. Some of God's greatest saints have had handicaps. Fanny Crosby, whose hymns have touched millions, was blind. She was the one who wrote that classic hymn of the faith, *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*. She was once asked by Dwight Moody, the great American evangelist, "If you could have one wish on this earth what would it be?"—Everyone expected her to say, "I'd like to receive my sight." Instead she said, "I'd like to remain blind the rest of my life so that the first face I see will be the face of my Lord."

The apostle Paul most likely had severe eye problems (II Corinthians 12:1-10; Galatians 6:11). Not all illness is linked to sin or unforgiveness (e.g., II Corinthians 12:7-10; John 9:2-3; I Timothy 5:23; I Timothy 4:20). While physical illness *can* be a sign of spiritual problems (e.g., I Corinthians 11:30), that is not always the case. Sometimes illness has nothing to do with sin (John 9:1-3).

While I do not know whether God will heal you or not, I want to re-emphasize the fact that God will do what is right for you.

Think with me. Do you believe God loves you unconditionally?—The answer is, "Yes." God loves us with a perfect love. [The Greek word is *agape* love.] Secondly, is God all powerful? "Yes." [If you doubt that look at the universe He created.]—Now, put these two concepts together. God unconditionally loves us and He is all powerful. What this means is that all of the love, and all of the power behind the whole universe, is focused on loving us to the degree that we are able to receive it.—Don't pass over this lightly. Think about it. This thought can revolutionize the way you think about God. If God's love does not seem to be getting through to you, guess where the problem is? [Hint: the problem is not with God!]

If you have given God control of your life, then your life and your body are no longer your own, but His [Romans 12:1,2; I Corinthians 6:20]. You are in good hands. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21-22, "so . . . now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."—For the believer, death is not a thing to dread, but is rather our ticket home, into the arms of the One who loves us and died for us (Acts 7:55-59).

We need not grieve as those who have no hope. (See I Thessalonians 4:13-18.)

### **QUESTION #3: "If God doesn't heal me, does it mean I am not forgiven?"**

In a word, "No."—If you have received Jesus, you are forgiven. See I John 1:9 [not to be confused with the Gospel of John].

### **QUESTION #4: "Is God fair in allowing me to suffer and eventually die?"**

This raises the old question, "If God is all good and all powerful, why does God allow suffering and evil?—If He is all good, does it mean He is not all powerful, for why doesn't He stop it? Or, if He is all powerful, does it mean He is not all good for allowing evil to exist?"

First, God is not aloof or unconcerned with what you are experiencing. He is not too busy or too great to care about you. He is with you. He knows firsthand what you are suffering.

When Jesus was on this earth, He died the innocent victim of an agonizing Roman cross, with nails through His hands and feet. Every valued relationship was severed. His disciples fled from Him; His enemies prevailed. Rejected, humiliated, exposed, hated, betrayed, scorned, tortured, cast out, cast off, He watched Himself slowly die. He was alone for a time, cut off from even the Father. Then, He died in darkness on that lonely Passover day. —He knows what it is to suffer.

Several years ago a very dear friend of mine had a mental breakdown brought on by childhood

trauma. She said it was as if she was in a deep, dark, slimy pit. Around the perimeter of the pit were well-intentioned Christians throwing paper airplanes down to her with Bible verses attached, but no one was willing to get down in the pit with her. She cried out to God and told Him that He could “go to hell,” unless He was able to meet her where she was.

Then, she said, everything went black and she had the sense that she was in the tomb with Jesus. All of a sudden the rock sealing the tomb where Jesus was buried exploded out and away from the tomb, and light came pouring in. Then she saw the silhouette of Jesus walking out of the tomb.

She heard the Father speak to Jesus. He said, “*Son, I hated to do it to you, but it was the only way Susie [not her real name] could have life.*”—From then on she knew God was with her in her pain.

Are you wrestling emotionally with what others think? He knows. The cross carried a social stigma. Scripture says Jesus “scorned its shame”(Hebrews 12:2). Jesus hated the physical and emotional pain.

Is your body hurting more than you think you can bear? He understands. Person after person through the centuries have told of encountering the crucified Christ in their pain, of feeling a wounded hand take their hand, of seeing a bloody footprint next to theirs, of hearing, “. . . surely, I am with you always.” (Matthew 28:20b). They tell of how Jesus shared His strength with them, giving them power to persevere, even with joy.

He is there for you too, if you are willing to reach out and take His hand. If you unreservedly turn your life over to Him, you can rest assured that He will be with you.

Secondly, back to the discussion of why God allows evil: God takes our choices seriously. When God created man He gave mankind the awesome privilege and responsibility of choice, to exercise free will. Man could choose to do good or evil, to love or not love, to obey God or not obey Him.

Thirdly, all the sin and suffering in our world has come as the result of Adam and Eve’s choice to sin and disobey God. That sin nature got passed on to the rest of humanity. Sadly, the innocent do suffer. Is that God’s will? No, but the overriding will of God is that man should have free will.

Let me give an example. If God is all wise and all good, as I think God is, He knows all things, including how things would be if they weren’t good. True?—For example, I have never murdered anyone, but that does not mean that I lack the understanding of what murder is.

That God should allow evil, as He obviously does, does not mean that He is evil. His allowing the possibility of evil is, I believe, the highest good. God created us as choice-makers with free wills so that we would not be robots.

To illustrate this, what if I told you, “I’ll take you out for lunch, and you can have whatever you want. You can have pizza, pizza, or pizza. What do you want?”—That is no choice. God, in like manner, could have said, “You have a choice. You can love Me, or you can love Me, or you can love Me.”—Again, that is no choice. For real love and goodness to exist, without us merely being robots, there had to be an alternative, a *real* choice—the possibility of evil. It is necessary if we are to have real free will.

God gave mankind free will, with the ability to freely love or rebel, to do good or evil, with accompanying consequences. Sadly, mankind blew it, and our earth bears the marks of our collective choices. Even AIDS, and I don’t say this to condemn, would probably not be a problem if sex were practiced the way God said it was to be practiced; between two virgins committed to one another for life. AIDS is more reflective of our choices than of God’s punishment.

The good news is that God can redeem and bring good out of our messes, even when the innocent suffer. [None of us are ever truly “innocent.”]

Several years ago some good friends of mine, who live in Lincoln, Nebraska, came for a visit. They have several kids. One of their boys is named Josh. He was one of the cutest kids I’d ever seen. He had bright blue eyes and a smile that lit up the room. He looked like he should have been on the cover of a kid’s magazine.

A year or two later Josh became very ill with a temperature of 105 degrees. His parents took him to see a doctor. Whether the doctor was drunk, or on drugs, or just having a bad day, I don't know. The doctor was very rude and told the parents to take Josh home and give him some aspirin and if he wasn't better to bring him back tomorrow. Rather than question the doctor, they did as they were told.

As it turned out, Josh had spinal meningitis, and because the doctor didn't catch it soon enough, Josh is 100% deaf today.—My heart broke when I heard the news. I don't cry easily, but I cried.

As I was riding to work the next day I was questioning God, "Why, God? It's so unfair! In this lifetime Josh will never hear his parents say 'I love you.' He will never again hear the sounds of music or birds singing in the spring. It's not right!"

As I rode along, I told God, "Lord, even if you give Josh another whole life, it couldn't pay back all that Josh has lost!"—Then, it was one of those rare times in my life where I had a very real sense of God actually speaking to me. It was as if he said, "Bart, I have all eternity to pay Josh back for his losses!"

Wow! What a beautiful thought. What a comforting thought.—The same is true for you.

Question: "If, in your heart of hearts, you really believe God loves you and that He desires to work everything for the good, even your illness and life-choices, how would you feel?" "If you could lay aside all of the bitterness, the anger, the disappointment, feeling like a victim, feeling that people don't understand, how would your life change?"

I'm writing to tell you it can change, because God is alive and He is pulling for you. Romans 8:31b says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Fourth, God uses the pain in our world as a reminder of the effects of sin. (See Romans 8:18-28). It is called consequences.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll says, "Every act of sin is forgivable, but the effects of some sins are not erasable."—If I shoot someone, God can forgive me, but I cannot bring that person back to life.

Can you be forgiven? "Yes." Will the consequences of your past choices be erased? "Maybe; maybe not." Whether we have to live with the consequences or not, God is more than merciful when He forgives us our sins. —It is like the girl who came home with her school pictures. She told her brother, "These pictures just don't do me justice." He replied, "You don't want justice. You want mercy."

Fifth, God redeems injustice and suffering. God can bring good from even bad things (II Corinthians 1:3-5; James 1:2-4; Psalm 119:67,71). As one man said, "God can still draw a straight line using a crooked stick."

Sixth, [and this is really good news] God is very clear; sin, suffering and evil are temporal. He will not let them go on forever. There is a day when, as C.S.Lewis says, "when . . . the Author walks onto the stage and the play is over." Christ will one day come back to earth to establish His kingdom. Evil will be judged (Matthew 25). Righteousness and peace will prevail.

Of that coming day, scripture says, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."(Revelation 21:3-4).

Scripture also says, ". . . our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."(Romans 8:18).

Earth's final drama is about to unfold. I personally believe Christ's return could be very near. God will one day create a "new heaven and a new earth." (II Peter 3:12-13). The pain and heartache of this present world will not last forever. [It just feels that way sometimes.]

As Peter Kreeft pointed out, ". . . the worst the devil can do is contribute unwillingly to the best that God does."<sup>3</sup> In the end, God will win.

God loves you. You as an individual do matter, and you do have choices. You can have lasting

hope as you turn your life over to God. All eternity is before you. While your earthly life may have limited choices, your eternal choices are limitless and thrilling beyond description.

I Corinthians 2:9 says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:1-3)

But, for today, the cross comes before the crown, and the darkest hour before the sunrise.

Christ bids you take up your “cross” and follow Him. If you have AIDS, to some degree, your cross has already been given you: your illness. This particular cross is no longer a matter of choice. It has been laid on your back, a burden you must carry unless God should miraculously lift it. Whatever the outcome, Christ can give you the grace and strength for each step along the way.

### **QUESTION 5: “Is the Bible true and should it have authority over my life?”**

[I try to answer this question in depth. Please skip the portions that are of no interest to you.]

Whether you realize it or not, this is one of the most important questions you could ever ask. If God were to speak to you out of Heaven in no uncertain terms—with lightning, an earthquake, and several other unmistakable proofs—would you obey God, whatever He asked of you?—I trust you would.

Now, what if, instead of speaking out loud, God spoke to you in unmistakable ways, except this time it was in written form; would you still obey Him?—This is precisely why you need to determine whether the Bible is the Word of God. If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, as it claims, the implications are far reaching. Either the Bible is a book with divine authority as it claims, or else it is a counterfeit. There is scarcely a topic the Bible does not address with authority. If the Bible is God’s word, then just as the physical laws of the universe are absolute in nature [gravity, inertia, thermodynamics, etc.], God’s spiritual laws are absolutely binding as well.

If you and I decided to jump off a building in defiance of the law of gravity, our rebelling would not alter the law of gravity one bit. We would still hit the ground just as hard. I believe the same is true with God’s spiritual laws. If we disobey them and rebel against them, the consequences are just as certain as if we jumped off a building in defiance of the law of gravity. It has nothing to do with God being mean, but rather it is our stupidity in rebelling against God’s spiritual laws that gets us in trouble. When we rebel there are often physical consequence: ulcers, jail, depression, guilt, disease, etc.

I believe God’s plans and purposes for mankind are clearly revealed in the pages of the Bible. Observe what the Bible has to say about itself.

- II Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness . . .”
- II Peter 1:20, 21 “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
- II Peter 3:16 “He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”
- John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”
- Luke 24:25-27, 44-45 “He [Jesus] said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! . . . And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself . . . This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of

Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

- Matthew 5:17-19 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven . . .”

**Allow me now to explain why I believe the Bible is both inspired and reliable.**

### **1. Is the Bible historically reliable?**

a. There are over 24,600 partial or complete manuscripts of the New Testament in either Greek or Latin. Most ancient documents have fewer than 10 original copies still in existence, yet they are still considered “A-1” historical documents by historians. For example, there are only 7 existing copies of the works of Plato, and 5 of Aristotle’s works.

Even if all of the New Testament manuscripts were destroyed, we could still reconstruct all of the New Testament, with the exception of about eleven verses, from the writings of the early church fathers before the year 325 A.D. By cross comparing all of the different Bible texts and fragments from around the world, by all scientific, archaeological, and historical standards applied to any ancient manuscript, the New Testament we have today is over 99.9 percent reliable. Not one word in 1,000 is in question, and no major doctrine is in doubt.

Concerning the Old Testament, up until 1947, most scholars had been using a Hebrew text dated around 1,000 A.D. In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the caves of Qumran, near the Dead Sea, by a young shepherd boy. They are easily dated around or before the time of Christ (100 B.C.–70 A.D.). They were virtually identical to those the scholars had been using dated 1,000 years later.

I was at a conference where one of the translators of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible spoke. After completing his translation of the book of Isaiah from Hebrew into English, he cross-checked his work against the Dead Sea Scrolls. He said he added 8 footnotes where there were tiny differences. He said if he had it to do over, he wouldn’t have included any of the footnotes, as they were so insignificant. [So much for the argument that time always corrupts any text.]

Add to this the reverence and painstaking methods that Jewish scribes used to copy, check and double check their handwritten copies of the Old Testament, and you see why the entire Bible is the most well-preserved piece of literature from ancient times. Jewish scribes would not merely copy the Hebrew text word for word, but letter for letter. The name of God was considered so holy that they would often bathe and change clothes before writing the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, the proper name for God.

In the last 100 years archaeology has authenticated the Bible time and time again. Years ago, in the 1800’s, some scholars came up with a list of contradictions which they said disproved the Bible’s claim to be without error. Now, over 100 years later, every one of their contradictions has been satisfactorily explained as a result of more recent archaeological discoveries.

Reason alone should tell us that the Bible is most likely an accurate record of the original manuscripts. If I were in charge of copying the Bible, and I believed it was inspired, I’d hate to be the one to screw things up by miscopying it. Wouldn’t you? Further, would you feel free to take liberties with the text; adding or deleting things you did or did not like? No, you wouldn’t; not if you believed the letters were inspired, had apostolic authority, and were foundational for your faith. That is why virtually all of the differences between ancient manuscripts are minor, and are obvious copying errors.

Further, as you read the New Testament, it does not read as though it has been doctored up to make it more believable. Quite the opposite. It speaks of the disciples’ fighting, Peter being rebuked by Paul, Peter’s denial of Christ, the cowardice of the disciples before the crucifixion,

etc.—Had I been one of the writers of the New Testament, and were making it up, I'd have made it more flattering. I certainly would not have included some of the texts which I find in the New Testament. It is actually this dirt-under-the-fingernails type of honesty, that makes the Bible so believable.

The Bible as a whole is a miraculous piece of literature. Its 66 books were written over a period of approximately 1,600 years, by 40 authors, on three different continents (Asia, Europe and Africa), in three different languages (Hebrew, Chaldean and Greek), with many literary styles (poetry, historical narrative, parables, proverbs, allegory), under all types of conditions (on the battlefield, in times of peace, in prosperity, in poverty, in captivity, at sea, in palaces, in the desert), by all sorts of people (fishermen, shepherds, kings, a physician, a rabbi, a tax collector, scribes, priests), on about every topic imaginable (God, salvation, sex, money, marriage, family, war, politics, religion, relationships, leadership, business, etc.), and yet the Bible reads, not as a fragmented mess, but as a unified whole.

It is virtually impossible to get five scholars from the same cultural background and language, who are all alive, to agree on even one controversial topic, yet the Bible speaks with one voice on hundreds of topics.

If you question the evidence I have just presented, check out the facts. As a starter, I recommend Dr. F.F. Bruce's book, *"The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?"* or Josh McDowell's two books, *"Evidence That Demands A Verdict, Vol. I & II."* The evidence is quite overwhelming.

In summary, anyone can disagree with the teachings of the Bible. They cannot legitimately say the Bible is unreliable as a historical document. There is actually more historical evidence and documentation to support the accuracy of the Bible than the writings of William Shakespeare. There is also far more historical evidence to support the fact that Jesus lived, than there is that Julius Caesar lived.

### **b. "Are modern translations of the Bible accurate translations of the originals?"**

There are many different Bible translations which is often confusing. Some mistakenly assume that because there are many different Bible translations they must be saying contradictory things. Except for one or two Bible translations by cult groups [e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses], where they have intentionally altered key verses to fit their theology, this is not true. For example, most Bible translations are translated into English from one of two basic New Testament Greek texts (considered to be most reliable by Biblical scholars) and one basic Old Testament Hebrew text.

Thus, while translations vary in style, they are all saying the same basic thing. There are several ways to say the same thing. For example, "You are all invited," "Ya'll come," or "You are cordially invited," are accurate ways of saying the same thing. The content is the same, but the wording varies. The same principle is true of the different Bible translations. Some translations are written at a fifth-grade reading level, some use down-home wording, and some are very scholarly, but they all say the same basic thing.

It is my personal belief that the original writings were "inspired," perfect in every way (II Timothy 3:16-17). Modern translations are *not* inspired, but most are accurate translations of those which were inspired. If God is able to create this universe, and sustain life, don't you think God is big enough to preserve His word? I certainly do.

### **2. Were Jesus and the writers of the New Testament stupid?**

I have trouble with those who take the words of Jesus and the disciples, as clearly recorded in scripture, and then change the obvious meaning of what they said. If Jesus said hell exists, for example, what gives some scholars the right to say Jesus was wrong or didn't mean it? That's like saying, "Jesus, I know what you were trying to say, but you were a lousy teacher because your disciples didn't quite get it. They obviously though you meant what you said. How dumb of

them! However, we 2,000 years later, living in a totally different culture with a different language, have through our technology and our modern methods of determining truth, figured out what you really meant to say.”—To me that is crazy thinking, not to mention arrogant.

There is a second reason why some reject the clear teaching of the Bible and that has to do with their limiting beliefs. I believe the German theologians who gave us liberal theology and higher criticism were wrong because their *presuppositions (starting beliefs) were wrong*. If their starting beliefs were, “*miracles can’t happen,*” or “*it is impossible to foretell the future,*” then of course they would have to spiritualize or rationalize the scriptures which deal with miracles or prophecy in order to fit their beliefs. Their starting beliefs, not the facts, determine what they are willing to believe. They began with narrow beliefs. A miracle could have hit them in the face and they would have explained it away.

The story is told of George, a man in a mental institution who believed he was dead. No matter what anyone would say or do they could not convince him he was alive. One day a young mental caseworker had an idea. He said, “Tell me, George, do dead men bleed?” George thought for a minute and said, “No, dead men don’t bleed.” The caseworker took a needle, pricked George’s finger, and squeezed. A small drop of blood appeared. George’s eyes grew big as he saw the blood and he said, “Well, what do you know. Dead men do bleed!”

We’re all a bit like George. It is hard to convince us of anything if we don’t want to believe it.—It’s like the guy who said, “Don’t confuse me with the facts. I already have my mind made up!”

They denied most of the supernatural stuff of the Bible because in their scientific way of thinking “miracles can’t happen.” The open-minded person is the one who is open to all facts. If the facts warrant belief in miracles, then so be it. Liberals who are often thought to be the most open-minded are actually the most closed-minded when it comes to the miraculous.

Are they right? Is the Bible nothing but a bunch of moral myths, make-believe stories with spiritual significance? When you read the Bible, how are you to read it: literally or as make-believe? Personally, I am a literalist when it comes to reading the Bible, even though I try to apply good common sense as I read the Bible. For example, when Jesus called Himself the *door*, I don’t look for a doorknob. Parables are interpreted one way, metaphors in another way, but straight-forward narrative I take very literally.

Reason with me. Are thoughts generally communicated through words?—Of course they are. In fact, as you have been reading this booklet, haven’t you been applying a literal method of interpretation? In other words, you *know* what I have been saying, whether you agree with my ideas or not. You haven’t been looking for some deeper hidden message. You haven’t treated my words as myth. You’re letting my words speak for themselves.—Why treat scripture any differently?

Liberalism sometimes teaches that the ideas of the Bible are inspired, but that the words cannot always be trusted and that the Bible probably contains falsehoods, especially when it comes to anything having to do with miracles.—My response is this, “If you can’t trust the Bible in that which you can test and check out, then why should you believe that which you can’t see?” For example, if the accounts of Jesus really performing miracles are false and He was nothing more than a magician, or his followers were liars and made these stories up, why should I trust either Him or His disciples when they tell me of spiritual truths.—If you knew someone was a con artist and a liar, would you buy a used car from that person? Well, the same principal applies to Jesus’ disciples. If they were a bunch of liars embellishing the story and the facts about Jesus, would you want to base your life on their teachings?—Me neither!

The Bible presents miracles and prophecy [God foretelling future events] as fact. The resurrection is presented as historically true: empty tomb, touching the resurrected Jesus, etc. As Paul would later say in I Corinthians 15:14, 15a, “. . . if *Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God . . .*”—If Jesus’ bones are buried in Israel somewhere then Christianity is a false religion founded

on a lie. If prophecies were written after the event happened to make them look like God foretold the events, then the Bible cannot be trusted about anything it says. Thankfully, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we can now prove that the prophecies regarding the coming of Christ predated His birth. The Old Testament scriptures had not been tampered with as some have speculated.

Jesus rebuked the Sadducees [the liberals of his day] because they didn't interpret the Old Testament scriptures literally. He also rebuked the Pharisees [the conservatives] because of their hypocrisy and their hardness of heart. Seemingly Jesus agreed with their literal interpretation of the Bible. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 23:3, ". . . therefore all that they [the Pharisees] tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them . . ."—Jesus accepted their literal interpretation, but rejected their hypocrisy. They talked the talk, but didn't walk the walk.

I find it interesting that virtually every controversial Old Testament passage cited by liberals as *not* being true, Jesus affirmed *as true*. [E.g., Adam and Eve—Matthew 19:4-6; Noah and the Flood—Matthew 24:37; Jonah and the great fish—Matthew 16:4, Sodom and Gomorrah—Luke 10:12; Hell—over 30 times in the New Testament, etc.]. Who's wrong? Jesus or the liberals? If Jesus is God-become-man, don't you think He would have the inside track on what is actually true? I'm sorry, but Jesus gets my vote.

I apologize for going the long way around the barn. What am I getting at? People who minimize the literal teaching of the Bible are putting themselves in a dangerous position [e.g., Revelation 22:18,19]. God doesn't take lightly to people messing with His word. His word is a like a light to the soul. You and I are not at liberty to change the teachings of the Bible just because we may not happen to like some teaching(s).

I once heard an old preacher tell of when he was a child. Every morning, an hour or so before dawn, his dad would wake him and he'd have to take the old kerosene lantern and go down to the barn to milk the cows. Each day he said the same thing would happen. The birds in the loft would begin to sing and the rats would run. He observed that the light didn't make the birds birds, or the rats rats, but it sure showed what they were.—My question is, "Are you going to run to the light or run away from the light of God's word?"—Are you trying to make scripture fit what you want it to say or are you humbly yielding to what it teaches?

Mark Twain once commented that it wasn't the parts of the Bible he didn't understand which scared him, it was the parts of the Bible he did understand which scared him. I think that is probably true for all of us.

When people have a conflict between what they *believe* and how they *behave*, over time they will either change their *behavior* to match their *beliefs*, or else they will change their *beliefs* to match their *behavior*.—If you find someone who believes one thing and acts a different way, you are looking at someone with a lot of guilt and depression. Most people cannot live in that situation for long.

Let me be very specific. When people believe homosexuality is wrong, based on what the Bible teaches, and yet they continue to be practicing homosexuals, you are looking at some unhappy people who struggle with guilt. What usually happens over time is that they will either change their practices to match their beliefs [e.g. give up their homosexuality], or they will give up their belief in the Bible so as to justify their behavior.—Let's admit it. None of us likes to be wrong, and we don't like having people mad at us, especially God. So how do most solve the problem? If they don't like the way the game is being played they simply *change the rules*; make the Bible say what they want it to say.

Unfortunately it doesn't work that way. The Bible is not some smorgasbord where we can pick and choose what we want. Once we clearly establish that what the Bible says is historically accurate [as I have tried to show] then we can't use the excuse that some parts of the Bible can be ignored. If Jesus spoke as God, and His followers spoke with the authority given them by Christ, then we must accept *all* He taught, or else admit to having rebellious hearts.

There is a powerful passage in Isaiah 30:7-11 addressing this very tendency of ours to avoid God. We don't like to admit that we are sinners. God says, "Therefore I call her . . . the Do-Nothing . . . a rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to instruction . . . They say to the seers [prophets], ' . . . Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. . . and stop confronting us with the Holy One [God] of Israel.'"—They were rebellious, they wanted God on their terms, and they did not want to be confronted with some holy God. They preferred a sort of convenience store, mini-mart God, who would quickly deliver the goods for the least price.

#### **QUESTION6: "How am I to view sex now that I am a Christian?"**

Having established that we should believe the Bible [my opinion], let me share my understanding of what the Bible has to say about sex, and especially about homosexuality. For your own protection, check out what I have to say. Read the verses for yourself and come to your own conclusions. As a favor, would you please withhold your judgments until after you have read what I have to say. I find myself in an awkward position. I disagree with the attitudes of those who are homophobes, and I also disagree with the arrogance and *attitude* of many in the gay community who casually dismiss what the Bible has to say. I believe the road of truth has ditches of error on either side.—Lies usually come in pairs. As a person reacts to one extreme, it is easy to drive into the opposite ditch. Could it be that homosexuality and homophobia are actually opposite ditches along the same road?

According to the Bible, God created sex and it was good. His original intent was that sexual union be between males and females in the bonds of marriage. As a result of sin, total sexual intimacy between the first couple was broken. The first thing Adam and Eve did after they sinned was make clothes of skin to hide their nakedness. Prior to their sin they were naked and unashamed.—God made sex to be beautiful and uninhibited! Through choosing sin, innocence was lost. Trust was broken, and sorrow rolled in like a low-lying fog.

#### **Let me talk briefly about sin and our responses to it.**

- 1.) Scripture teaches that we are to hate all sin, and yet we are to love the sinner.
- 2.) Being tempted to sin is not the same as sin. Even Jesus was tempted [Hebrews 2:18]. Temptation becomes sin when we yield to it, either in thought or in deed. Therefore, to be tempted to sin heterosexually or homosexually is not sin. Former homosexuals and lesbians struggle with lust for those of the same sex, just as heterosexuals battle lust with members of the opposite sex. I battle lust like anyone else. It just so happens I battle lustful heterosexual thoughts instead of homosexual thoughts.
- 3.) God hates all sin, but He maintains love for the one trapped in sin. That is why Christ came to die. He died for "sinners" [Romans 5:8]. A major concept in scripture is the notion of *grace*. Grace means receiving something we don't deserve. We deserve hell, yet it is the grace of God which offers us forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

The thing that bothers me about *homophobes* is their lack of love and lack of understanding. Homosexuals, on the other hand [my opinion] can be just as judgmental and just as unloving as the homophobes. Two wrongs don't make a right.

Now, let me try to put things in perspective by trying to take a balanced view of **what the Bible says about homosexuality.**

\* How often did Jesus directly speak out against homosexuality?—Answer: "Never." However, Jesus does mention God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah at least three different times [Matthew 10:15; 11:23,24; and Luke 17:29]. In each instance He clearly affirmed God's judgment as being righteous and that those towns deserved to be destroyed. Sodom, as you probably know, is where we get the term *sodomy*. As the story goes, the men of Sodom wanted to rape/sodomize two angels of God who had appeared in human form. Sodom was a town obsessed with homosexual sex.—God rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom, as well as three other

neighboring towns, where sin was rampant [Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim]. God totally destroyed these towns and the people who lived there, except for Abraham's nephew Lot and his family. Read the story for yourself. It is found in Genesis, chapters 18 and 19.

\* By contrast, how often are heterosexual sins such as adultery, fornication, and lust addressed?—Answer: “several hundred times.” The Bible forbids sex outside of the male-female marriage bond [Exodus 20:14,17; Leviticus 18:22-23; Romans 1:24-27; Ephesians 4:17-19, etc.], whether heterosexual or homosexual [adultery, fornication, homosexuality, incest, etc.].

\* How often did Jesus speak out against religious pride?—Answer: “Many, many times.” [E.g., read, Matthew, chapter 23.]—Jesus seemed far more upset over spiritual pride than He did over the sins of the flesh, although both are serious.

\* How many times is homosexuality clearly addressed in scripture?—Answer: “Less than ten times.” [E.g., Genesis 18, 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19:22-20:48; Romans 1:18-31; I Corinthians 6:9-10; I Timothy 1:9-10; Jude 7-8—Look them up for yourself]. In each case the sin of homosexuality is presented as something God hates. It is presented as a sign of a societies' moral decay or God giving up on a nation. It often precedes national judgment. The incident of Sodom is mentioned over twenty times throughout the Bible, almost always as an example of God's righteous judgment of sin.

I want to speak as compassionately and as honestly as I can about homosexuality. I am not trying to be judgmental, but explain what I understand to be scripture's position. The reason homosexuality is presented as sin, I believe, is because it falls short of God's best and in the long run it is hurtful to society.

Here are some facts.

\* Gays make up approximately 2% of the United State's population, yet they account for almost 50% of the major life-threatening sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, not to mention a high incidence of hepatitis, tuberculosis, etc.

\* The average male homosexual may have upwards of 500 sex partners during his lifetime.

\* The suicide rate and homicide rate among homosexuals is much higher than the general population.

Plus, if being able to have children is one of the primary reasons God created sex, and since homosexual couples do not have children, it is fair to say that homosexuality robs heaven of souls. Sex of almost any kind can gratify one's sexual wants, but does it satisfy and bring joy to the heart of God? That is the issue.

### **What Are Some Of The Root Causes Of Homosexuality?**

1.) What I am about to share is controversial, but I think it is crucial that you consider the possibility that, just maybe, demonic energy could be behind some homosexuality. In today's society we are hearing much about demons as they relate to witchcraft, Satanism, and the like. Much of Jesus' ministry in the New Testament was praying and casting out demons. Satan and his associates are presented as real adversaries with psychic and physical abilities that those weak in faith may not be able to withstand apart from the grace of God.

I have personally worked with well over one hundred Satanists, and, whether you believe me or not, on more than one occasion I have heard demons speak through people. I have also heard many first-hand stories from Satanists about all sorts of demonic activity; the kind of stories that can make the hair stand up on the back of your neck.—In short, I *know* demons exist. People sometimes ask me, “Does that stuff really work?” I usually respond, “Yes it does, but putting a loaded gun to your head and pulling the trigger will also work. The question is not whether it works, but where will it get you.”

Once a young man came to my wife and me. He said that he had become a Christian, but felt there were still demons in his life as a result of his past involvement as a Neo-Nazi, dabbling with drugs, having a “spirit guide,” pornography, etc. He asked if I would be willing to pray with him.

Up until then I had very little direct involvement with the demonic, but I agreed to meet with him.—To be honest, I wasn't expecting much to happen.

My wife and I met with him. We claimed the Lord's protection, based on the fact that, as children of God, we outrank and have authority over demons. After praying I began to address any demon(s) present in his life. I said, "Demon(s) if you are present I know you can hear me, I outrank you, I have authority over you, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command you to tell me your name."

All of a sudden the man began to convulse, the blood vessels on his neck stood out, his face turned red, and the muscles in his face began to constrict, his fingers curled up like claws and he began to hiss at me and make deep growling sounds. Eventually a demon spoke through him. As I recall, the first demon to identify itself called itself "Rage." [And yes, it was scary. I just about went through the back of my chair. Thankfully, I discovered that the demons would obey me as I used the Bible and the name of Jesus. Eventually my fear subsided and my faith grew stronger.] One by one, as I addressed the demons, they revealed their true identity, and one by one, as the man renounced the sins associated with each demon, we commanded them to leave, and they did.

In every case the reason the demons had remained in his life was that he had sins which he had not totally forsaken. For example, a demon of pornography identified itself. I asked the demon of pornography if it had a legal right to remain in his life. It said, "Yes." When I asked the man if he had any idea what the demon was talking about, he confessed that he had some pornography magazines hidden at home. Once he renounced the sin and promised to destroy his magazines, and then asked God to forgive him, we were able to get rid of that demon.

While I was addressing one particular demon, the man looked up at me and said, "The demon wants to hurt you." I commanded the demon, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to tell him why he couldn't hurt me. The man's arms, controlled by the demon, immediately pointed to the left, and the demon said, "Because of him!"—I looked and there was no one there. I said, "Who?" and the demon responded, "There is an angel standing there!"

Another time I was asked to do a consultation with two teenage Satanists at a psychiatric hospital. One of the boy's father was a Satanic warlock, and the other boy's grandmother was a high priestess in Satanism. They were both generational Satanists. Since Satanism is a religion, it is hard to address Satanists' destructive behaviors without addressing the beliefs behind those behaviors. As I met with both of them, I raised the idea of a God and began questioning their belief system. Almost immediately a demon took over in one of the boys. His eyes turned glassy, his voice changed, and a demon spoke through him and said, "Leave him alone! He's mine! You can't have him."

Since demons respond to the name of Christ, I simply said, "In the name of Jesus, be quiet and go back down!"—Immediately it did, and the Satanist came back to full consciousness. Both guys were totally shocked to discover that what I believed in had power over what they believed in. From then on I had their full attention.

Why do I share this? The only time I have ever prayed with someone and was unable to get a demon to come out was when a friend and I met to pray with a young man who was bisexual. As my friend commanded the demon to reveal its name, the man's eyes rolled back up in his head and the demon responded, "Homosexuality."—After repeated attempts to get it to leave, it consistently defied us. As we talked with the young man we discovered why we couldn't get it to leave.—He didn't want it to leave. He was unwilling to give up the sin which gave the demon legal access into his life.

Do all homosexuals have demons?—I have no idea, but I do know there can be a spiritual power behind homosexuality that is evil and not of God. I know it is popular to say that homosexuality is genetic. I'm not qualified medically to state whether it may be genetic, but I do believe homosexuality can be ancestrally linked with demons, which would make it appear genetic. On numerous occasions when demons have been asked, "When did you enter (person's name)?", the demons will respond, "in the womb," or "as a child." Some demons admit to

entering when a person is being sexual abused, or during consensual intercourse [e.g., a person having sex with a Satanist or sex outside marriage]. This explains why scripture teaches that the sins of the fathers get passed on to the children.

How do I view homosexuality?—I believe it falls short of God’s best and that it is Satan’s attempt to destroy and distort that which is good. Generally speaking, evil is a perversion of the good. Rarely is it diametrically opposed to the good. Satan comes dressed as an angel of light [he looks cool]. He doesn’t come dressed in red with horns on his head carrying a pitchfork. Once the spark of sin is ignited, if one doesn’t put it out, Satan soon comes along with his gas can and the rest is history.

Satan counterfeits love. In place of a love that satisfies, he substitutes sex. In place of committed relationships he substitutes gay bars and noise. Sex without God’s blessing becomes like a bottomless pit. In the long run I believe those who practice the gay lifestyle hurt themselves and society. Sadly, I think history bears this out.—Do I hate homosexuals? Not at all. Do I feel “holier than thou?” No, I feel compassion, not condemnation. Where I feel anger is toward Satan and the lies he propagates. Were Jesus here today I believe homosexuals would be one of His main target groups to love and minister among.

I will be the first to admit that there are hateful homophobes out there who wear the label “Christian.” To show how diametrically opposed Jesus’ attitude differed from that of today’s homophobes, read the first few verses of John’s gospel, chapter 8, where Jesus treats the woman caught in adultery with tenderness and compassion. Did He hate her and treat her as an outcast? No. Did He condone her behavior? No. He loved her and called her to a life of moral purity. There was grace and mercy extended toward her.

The same love and mercy are extended to you. In God’s eyes sin is sin, although some sins have far greater consequences than others [e.g., murder has greater consequences than shoplifting]. We all sin and need *forgiveness*. I also believe we are all sinned against and need *healing*. The root of our sin, in other words, is often woundedness, not rebellion. We need both healing and forgiveness—healing for being sinned against, and forgiveness for our sinful responses to other’s sin.

A good doctor looks at more than symptoms. The doc tries to determine the *cause* of the illness. In like manner, rather than focusing on the outward symptoms of homosexuality, I would like to know what caused the person to become homosexual. In my experience, people don’t wake up one morning and suddenly determine, “I think I’ll be gay.”—No, there is almost always a history of events leading up to that decision: abuse, neglect, deprivation, victimization, peer pressure, unmet needs, pornography, rape, fear of the opposite sex, hatred of the opposite sex, a crisis in one’s sexual identity, etc. In other words, homosexuality does not occur in a vacuum.—In a perfect world I don’t believe it would occur at all.

Case in point, when we are deprived of legitimate love and our basic needs, it is all too easy for us to seek fulfillment in illegitimate ways. As teens, if we didn’t get the love we needed at home, maybe we tried to find it in the back seat of a car. Whenever our self-esteem has been crushed, we tend to seek quick fixes, things which bring immediate relief. In our society most seek it through drugs, food, sex, or through being busy.—Are such responses often sin? Yes, but there may be reasons behind the sin, such as hunger being behind a man stealing food. While stealing is wrong, it is at least understandable. Healing comes as we not only repent of our sin, but as we seek healing for the unmet needs which led us into the sin.

Many of the male homosexual friends I’ve known had over-bearing, controlling mothers and absentee fathers whom they longed to be close to but were held at arm’s length. Because of their strong dislike of their mothers, which they projected onto other women, and their intense need to be loved by a man, it was natural for them to turn to other men for love.

One of the best books I’ve ever read on homosexuality is *‘Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic,’* by Dr. Elizabeth Moberly. She acknowledges that there is deep woundedness among gays and lesbians, but states that healing does not come by engaging in the homosexual acts. She

states: “An attachment to the same sex is not wrong, indeed it is precisely the right thing for the meeting same-sex deficits . . . The solution to the problem of the homosexual condition is not sexual activity. . . there are certain legitimate psychological needs involved, which ought not to be left unmet. One should neither ignore unmet needs (the conservative mistake), nor eroticise them (the liberal mistake).” [James Clarke & Co., P.O. Box 60, Cambridge CB1 2NT, England. Page 20,21]—Before reading on, reread this quote several times and ponder the implications. It is truly profound.

It is very possible for homosexuals to have a deep seated fear and/or hatred of their earthly fathers, which often spills over into how they view God the Heavenly Father. [*“If God is like my dad, no thanks.”*] Not only did their earthly fathers rob them of a healthy view of men, but they were also robbed of a clear vision of God. Their own self-image and their image of God were both broken. They stand in need of healing. Still other homosexuals I’ve known had older brothers who sexually exploited them. They came to believe that they must be homosexual, especially because some of the sexual stimulation they felt was arousing.

In a book called *“The Transformation Of The Inner Man,”* [John and Paula Sanford, Victory Press, 1982] the authors state, *“In all of our years of counseling, we have never found a homosexual or lesbian who had or related well to a strong, gentle, loving father.”*

I’m not saying these scenarios are true of all homosexuals, but they are often the case. Of the lesbian friends I have [and yes they are friends.] most have had so many bad experiences with men [rape, incest, being treated as “meat-on-the-hoof”]. It has been natural for them to shy away from men and turn to other women to fulfill their unmet needs for love, respect, understanding, and someone who can meet them emotionally.

In each of the cases I’ve just described, it was not because God made them gay or lesbian, but their sexual orientation came about because of a dysfunctional environment. Homophobes overlook the “why’s” behind the behavior, thus they have very little compassion. Sometimes, I believe, they project their own envy and self-hatred onto the homosexual.

I have had homosexuals argue that they can have long-term committed marriages and relationships, the same as a man and woman. I don’t question that. However, I have never in my life known of a single homosexual couple or lesbian couple who got married and entered into the holy estate of marriage as virgins and remained faithful for life, the way God says marriage is to occur. Can you?—Think about it, **“Can you name one gay or lesbian couple where each partner entered into the marriage as virgins and saved the first act of sexual union for their honeymoon?”**—I can’t either. At best, one or both of them has had multiple sex partners and have been guilty of what the Bible calls adultery or fornication. Why is this?—Because the roots and foundation of the gay lifestyle are built upon personal brokenness, unmet needs, and ultimately sin. The solution is not to rationalize or justify the lifestyle, but to begin the process of healing. Otherwise the sickness and the pain will spread from generation to generation. As one author put it, “To conform to a sick society is to be sick.”

Imagine that you got lost in the desert, and you are about to die of thirst, when you stumble upon a little puddle of muddy water with green slime and scum. Will you drink from it? Yes, you will if it is a matter of life or death.—You see, we will drink from whatever source we think will keep us alive. Is this God’s perfect will? No. God would want to lead us to springs of living water. Satan is the one who would have us drink the polluted, stagnated water.—The same is true when it comes to sexual relationships. It is only natural for people to drink from the nearest source, especially if they feel they are about to die inside. Is this God’s best? No, it isn’t, but God has compassion and understands. Does that make it ok? Not in the long run, not when you discover that there is a fresh spring of water just over the next hill.

Just as a person might get sick from drinking polluted water, there are negative results from having multiple sex partners. Anyone who has had multiple sexual relationships will tell you that the memory of those old relationships always get carried into the bedroom in the new relationship. There are always the old flashbacks and trigger memories from previous lovers or

previous abuse. There are feelings of insecurity. “How am I measuring up to other lovers he/she has known?” Like a friend of mine said, “When I have sex, it is like there are too many other people in bed with me.” Such people have been spread so thin, that they cannot totally give themselves to anyone.

That is why the most sensitive sexual organ we have is our brain. It remembers stuff, consciously and subconsciously. The best long-term sex is between two virgins who have only known each other. That is the way God intended it. Sex is like taking two pieces of tape, sticking them together [sticky side to sticky side], and then tearing them apart. After that, neither piece will ever stick as well. That is why almost all gay relationships have at least one strike against them before they even start. They have been stuck, torn apart, and restuck so many times that it is almost impossible to get them to stick permanently, or at best the bond is greatly weakened.

This is one of the tragedies of our society. Of almost any generation in recent history, we are the most sexually oriented, and yet the least sexually fulfilled.

Sure I know some gay couples who seem happier than some heterosexual couples, but they will be the first to admit that they have had to really work at it, and that it has not come easily. I personally know very few long term same-sex marriages that have worked out. [Of course long term heterosexual marriages are becoming fewer and fewer as well.—According to latest statistics, almost one in two marriages will end in divorce, and only one in eight couples who marry in today’s society will be happily married.] We live in a sick society, and when we conform to that society it proves we too are sick.

And let’s be honest, there is a lot of kinky sex out there, whether it be homosexual or heterosexual. Such sex is more like barnyard behavior. There is no commitment and no sacrificial love or giving to the other person. It is almost totally selfish and self-centered. It is far removed from what the Bible describes as healthy sex. Such sex, by almost any standard, is wrong and a violation of sex as God intended. [I won’t go into the gross details, as I don’t want to pollute the minds of those unfamiliar with such practices.]

Having worked in psych hospitals I have seen first-hand some of the physical abuse and threats that go on in the gay community. I have worked with many gays who became suicidal following a break-up, or because they cannot take the abuse from their more dominant partner. There is a lot of mental sickness in the gay community, and I would say, based on my own personal observations, that it is a much higher percentage than the general population.

Am I sympathetic to some gay marriages? Very much so, especially when I see love, happiness, and seeming contentment. I would not dream of trying to take away those couple’s homosexual love, flawed as it may be, unless I could offer something better. I believe homosexual love, while arguably better than nothing in some cases, is not what God intended. If we lived in a perfect world, I don’t believe homosexuality would exist. The fact is, we don’t live in a perfect world, and believe me I have no easy answers.

Speaking frankly, seeing some lesbians together who truly love each other is a challenge to what I believe as a Christian. I’m not trying to be judgmental, and if you are in such a marriage I can only pray God gives you wisdom on what to do. I certainly have no easy answers. Am I condemning you if you are homosexual?—No. A thousand times, no. For the most part, I understand *why* you have made the choices you have made. You were only trying to meet your legitimate needs for love and a sense of belonging.

My primary goal is not to get you to immediately change your sexual orientation. You didn’t become gay or lesbian overnight, and you probably won’t change overnight. What I do pray is that I can help you get on the path you have so desperately longed to find for so many years. The path you have been looking for, whether you realize it or not, is the road leading to God and to inner healing. To unite with another homosexual or lesbian who is also broken will not bring healing. The uniting of two broken parts does not make for one whole.

Only God is big enough to heal those deep hurts you and other gays have, hurts most likely going clear back to childhood. Only God is big enough to fill that bottomless void you feel in

your heart. He longs to fill it with His love.

If at some point you feel God asking you to give up homosexual sex, there are certain things you may want to know. The reason I share these is that I know your emotions may be all over the board. You may feel like you are living in the midst of an emotional earthquake. How are you to handle your sexual feelings which will persist, even after you give up the relationship? What is right and what is wrong?

1.) Scripture teaches that lust is a sin [Matthew 5:27,28]. I do not personally believe that if you see someone who is attractive and admire the beauty of that person that you are lusting, any more than admiring a beautiful sunset would be considered lust. Admiration of the beauty God created in another person is not wrong. It turns to lust when the desire of one's heart would lead you to commit sin if given the opportunity, or when you relish the idea in your mind.

2.) Concerning sexual sins, let me mention that being tempted is not the same as sin. Even Jesus was tempted [Hebrews 2:18]. Temptation becomes sin when we yield to it, either in thought or in deed. Therefore, to be tempted to sin heterosexually or homosexually is not sin. Former homosexuals and lesbians struggle with lust for those of the same sex just as heterosexuals battle lust with members of the opposite sex. As I mentioned earlier, I battle lust like anyone else. It just so happens that my lustful thoughts are heterosexual while yours may be homosexual.

I believe it was Martin Luther who said, "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

As you grow spiritually, I think you will find such temptations becoming less and less appealing because you love God more. For example, when I was 13 years old, before I became a Christian, I had a pretty casual attitude toward rape (although I have never raped anyone). There were times I would naively fantasize about how arousing it would be. Now, many years later, I have seen the emotional devastation caused by rape in the lives of some very dear friends and many patients I've counseled. I no longer take rape lightly. I refuse to fantasize about it and I loathe the idea.

3.) The issue is not sex outside of marriage, but love. For a man and a woman, or even two men or two women, to deeply love and care for one another is not a sin. The Bible merely says not to engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage. God is not anti-love, nor anti-relationships.

Scripture describes many close relationships between members of the same sex [e.g., Jonathan and David, Ruth and Naomi, Paul and Luke, etc.], as well as men who deeply loved women to whom they were not married [e.g., Jesus and Mary Magdalene, Paul and Phoebe, John and the woman to whom he wrote his second epistle, etc.]. These relationships were not wrong and were, in fact, blessed by God.

If you have a gay lover, my prayer for you is that you will both find Jesus, and that the two of you will be able to remain friends for life. I do believe that if you come to know the love and presence of Jesus, out of your love for Him you may have to give up the sexual part of your relationship.

4.) If you feel that Satan has a foothold in your life, then you need to do whatever it takes to get him out of your life. If you take away his gas can, so to speak, you might be surprised how differently you will begin to see life and how quickly you can get the fire under control. A book I would highly recommend is, *The Bondage Breaker* by Dr. Neil Anderson. It will lead you through the steps necessary to get Satan and his associates off your back.

Some habits are so strong that only God can break them, which is what the first three steps of the 12-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous teaches. It doesn't matter whether it is alcohol, drugs, or sex, we need God and are ultimately powerless without the empowerment of a Higher Power [God].

A close friend of mine, who later died of AIDS, used to be a homosexual advocate. He even had a weekly column in our local hometown newspaper where he espoused the virtues of

homosexuality. He later became a Christian. Some Christians prayed for him to be delivered from all demons—and he was. The last year or two of his life, before he died, he discovered that he no longer had his strong homosexual desires. He still remained friends with his homosexual acquaintances, but near the end of his life he found himself being drawn to women. For the first time he began seeing women as the wonderful creatures God had created them to be.

Along this same line, I highly recommend you purchase the book, *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness* by Andrew Comiskey. Andrew was, for years, a homosexual. He is now married and has a wife and family. He runs a retreat center where he helps gay men and women reclaim their manhood and womanhood. His book is compassionate and non-homophobic.—It is must reading.

As you have probably figured out, there are no easy answers.

Am I asking you to give up your homosexuality today? Not really. That is between you and God. My goal has been to get you on the road to God. It is my personal conviction that once you do that, you will find that at some point, your desires and attitudes toward homosexuality will begin to change as you begin to view life through the eyes of God.

Have you ever tried to take away something from a two year old child? The trick is to offer them something in exchange—“Here’s your teddy bear, now would you give mommy the knife because I don’t want you to get hurt.” He can more easily give up the knife in exchange for his teddy bear. The same principle relates to you. I would not think of robbing you of that which has been your emotional support/crutch without first offering you something better. I do have compassion for your position and the unmet needs you have had in your life. It makes perfect sense to me *why* you made the choices you did.

Take it one day at a time, one step at a time, asking God to be your guide. Jesus showed His love for you in dying for you. Jesus is not a homophobe. Just as He reached out to touch the lepers of His day, He reaches out to us today. Whether you are gay or straight, or even have AIDS, He extends His hand to you.

The truth is, God loves us all too much to leave us where we are. He is willing to meet us where we are, but He refuses to leave us there. His plan is to remake us into the image of His Son who died for us.

I suggest that you put your homosexual activity on the shelf and abstain from sexual activity until you sort things out. Just as some people fast and abstain from eating so they can clearly focus on God, I am suggesting that the same principle applies here.—It is sort of like an alcoholic trying to decide whether to give up drinking while he is spending 18 hours a day at a bar with his drinking buddies. He needs to separate himself from the drinking atmosphere so he can think clearly. You too need to get out of your lifestyle long enough to see clearly.

In II Corinthians 3:16-17 Paul mentions that in Christ the spiritual veil of blindness [over our eyes] is lifted. Would you pray that any spiritual blindness you may have will be lifted. Quiet yourself before God and pray from the heart. *“Dear God, I am not sure I want to know the truth. It scares me. However, I want to be willing. Please bind any spirit of fear, and whatever else may be clouding my heart and my mind, and grant me the courage to seek you. Begin the process of healing in my life in order that I may be all you want me to be. I want to be free to know your inner peace and joy. Grant me the strength when the time comes to do whatever you ask of me. I don’t have the strength to do it alone. I need your help. I humbly pray these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who loves me and died for my sins. Amen.”*

Am I asking you to give up being a homosexual or lesbian?—No. That is between you and God. What I am asking you to do is take the first step in getting right with God.—Do it now.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

This booklet is one of several booklets in a series defending the Christian faith, written by myself. You can read or download any of the booklets off the internet at: <http://www.4seekers.com>.

Due to the potential risk to my family by religious groups violently opposed to Christianity, such as some Muslim extremists and Satanists, I have chosen to write all booklets in this series under the pen name, Timothy Cross. I am willing to die for my faith, should it come to that; I just don't want to speed up the process.

Why did I choose the name Timothy Cross? Because it was *Timothy* who was told by the apostle Paul to guard the gospel [II Timothy 1:13,14]. And, what is the central message of the gospel? It is the *cross* of Jesus Christ [ICorinthians 1:18-2:2]. Further, by writing under a pen name, it takes the focus off me and puts it where it should be, upon the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Jesus Christ and him alone. As Titus 2:13 says, Jesus is our glorious "*God and Savior.*"

So you know a little about me, I am an evangelical Christian. I work primarily as a chaplain with a hospice [terminally ill patients], and in a psychiatric hospital. On more than one occasion, I have worked closely with Josh McDowell [Campus Crusade For Christ]. I became a Christian through Youth For Christ [Campus Life] in high school, and was very involved with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship as a student in college. I have always attended churches which are evangelical and interdenominational in flavor [e.g. Evangelical Free Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, Great Commission Ministries, etc.].

I hope this booklet helps you discover and walk in the awesome truth that, not only does God exist, but you are awesomely loved by God.

With deepest respect,  
Timothy Cross

*“ . . . in love he claims all.”*—C.S. Lewis