



www.MaterialJuvenil.com

Unlimited

Hope

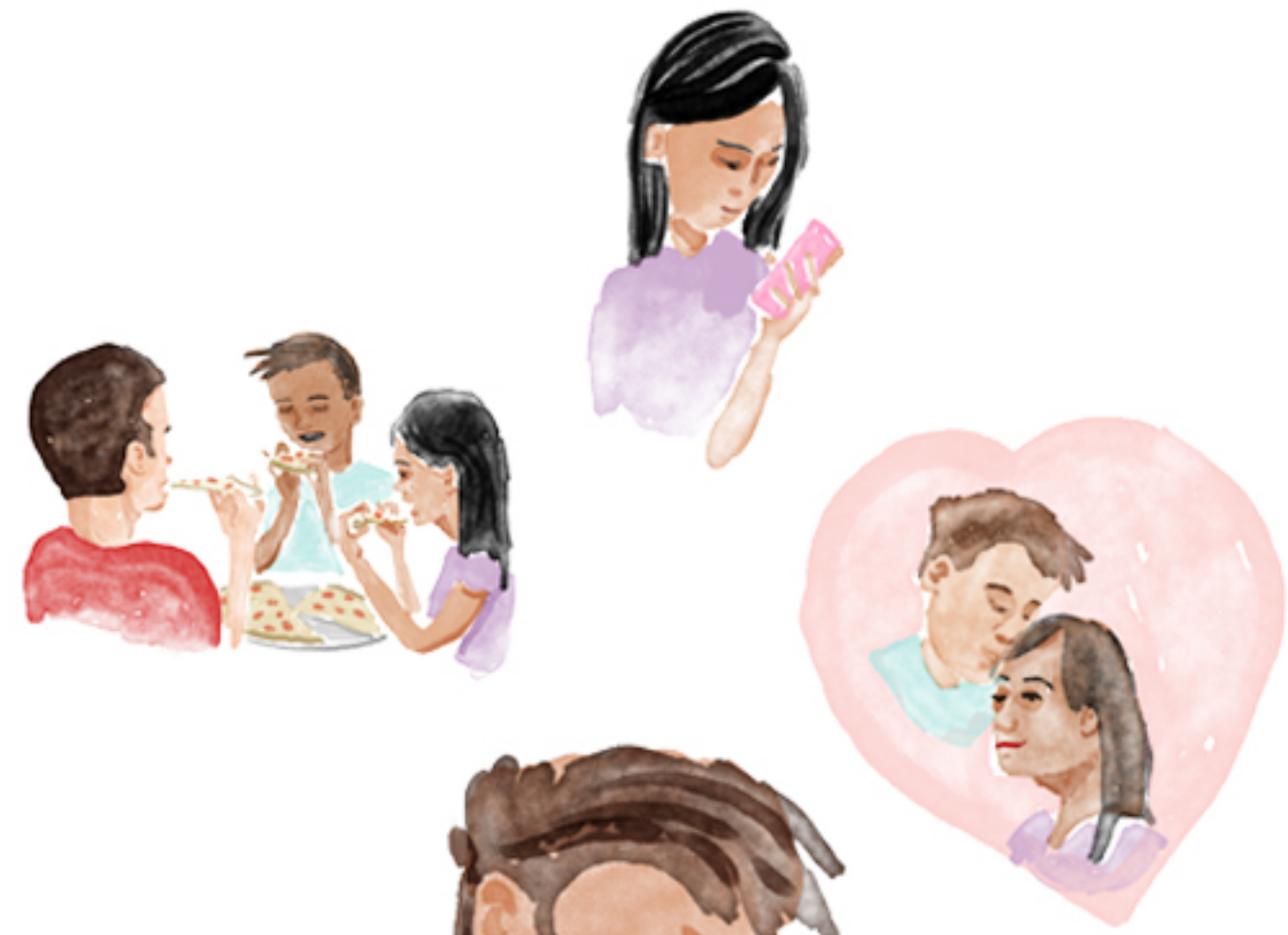
Volume I

Facing Life's
Big Problems

WAKING UP TO REALITY

Lorraine Peterson

Brandon, Tyler, and Chad had been buddies since grade school. Friends called them “the terrific trio”. Although they kept up their grades, were popular in school and were star athletes, they were basically oozing through life, living for the moment. They played to win, crammed for tests, did required homework, partied hard and were always ready for something new and exciting. Brandon had never thought seriously about life’s deep questions. Then it happened.



WAKING UP TO REALITY

continued...

The Saturday night party had been the usual; they had enjoyed the barbecued burgers, flirted with the girls, goofed around and drank a few beers. Realizing that Zane's parents would soon be home, they all helped with the clean up and quickly evacuated. It was 1:38 a.m. and they weren't ready to call it a night. Tyler was driving, Chad sat beside him, and Brandon climbed into the back seat. Then Joe and Steve drove up beside them and challenged them to a race to Shoreview Park. The main street was completely empty so Tyler floored it. Chad and Brandon were cheering him on and they were winning.

However, a drunk man in a black truck without lights had made a wrong turn and was approaching them in their lane. By the time they saw him

Now that he was out of the hospital with his leg in a cast, his parents finally sat down with him to tell him the truth.




it was impossible to avoid a head-on collision. The last thing Brandon remembered was a thundering crash and excruciating pain in his right leg.

Now that he was out of the hospital with his leg in a cast, his parents finally sat down with him to tell him the truth. Tyler was dead and the doctor doubted that Chad would ever walk again.

WAKING UP TO REALITY

continued...

At first Brandon was too stunned to react. When the enormity of the tragedy sunk in, he cried and cried. A sense of depression and despair overwhelmed him. He tried to put on a good front when he and his parents visited Chad in the hospital but he wasn't prepared for what he found. Chad was in a body cast, connected to machines and still needed oxygen to breathe.

When he got home, Brandon really started thinking. Where would he be if he had died in the crash? What was his reason for living? What was really right and what was really wrong? Could he find meaning in life? How should he live his life? He needed some answers. 



HOW DID THE UNIVERSE BEGIN?

LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I DIE?

WHAT'S THE REASON FOR LIVING?

WHAT'S RIGHT AND WHAT'S WRONG?

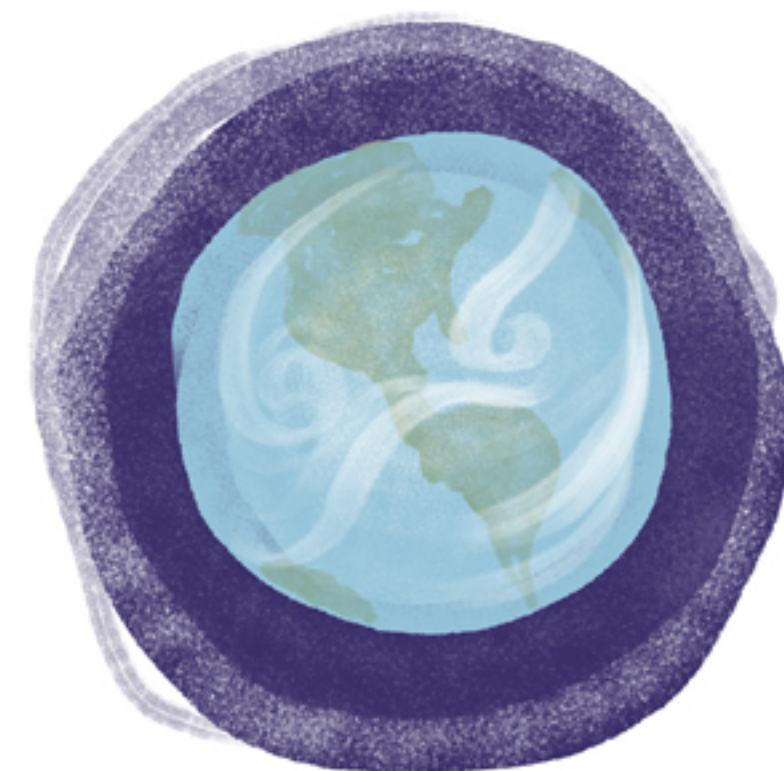
ARE YOU CONFUSED?

ACTUALLY, THERE ARE ONLY A FEW POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO LIFE'S BIGGEST QUESTIONS.

FIND OUT WHAT THEY ARE.

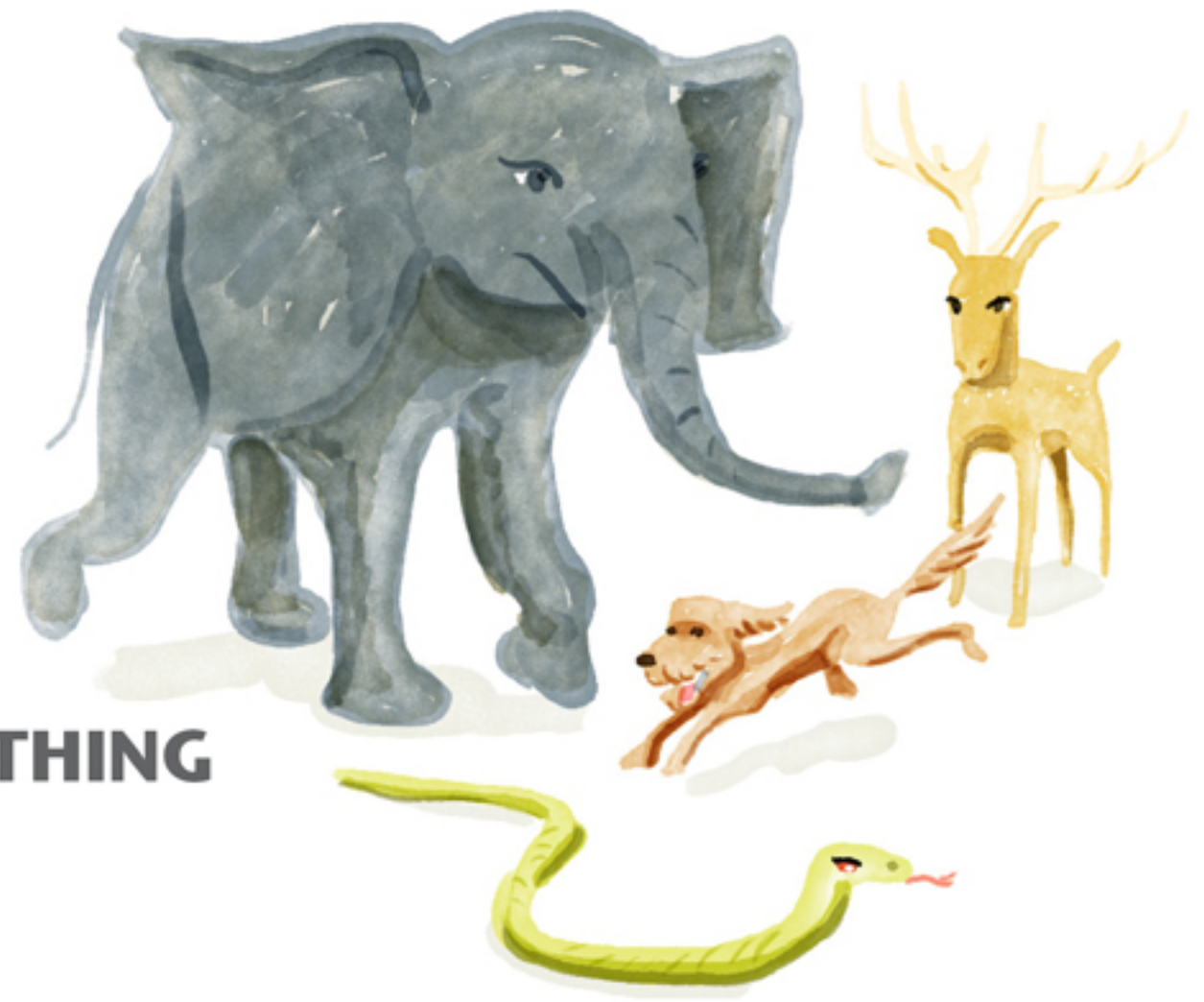


ORIGIN



ARE YOU CONFUSED?

continued...



- 1 EITHER:**
NOTHING + TIME + CHANCE = EVERYTHING
- OR**
- 2 GOD CREATED EVERYTHING**

THERE IS NO VIDEO TO SHOW US HOW THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING IN IT CAME INTO EXISTENCE.

OPTION ONE:

Matter, which has always existed, plus chance plus time produced everything.

BUT:

1. Who or what created matter?
2. Could something inanimate like energy really create humans with intelligence, personality, creativity, emotions and ability to communicate in words?
3. Considering the fact that every organism reproduces exactly according to its DNA blueprint, what mechanism exists to turn a fish into a reptile that transforms into a bird and finally a monkey that becomes a man? If a new creature miraculously appeared, where would it find a mate to continue the species?
4. Considering that mutations are 1000 times more likely to be disadvantageous than advantageous for survival, is it logical to attribute onward and upward evolution to mutations? Besides no mutation can add anything to the DNA of a creature and that would be necessary to create the new organs needed for transformation into a new species.
5. Although it is possible to observe changes within species – and if the DNA is extremely flexible, as in the case of dogs – many breeds can emerge but the core characteristics don't change. If one creature could transform into another, where are the thousands of missing

ARE YOU CONFUSED?

continued...

link fossils that should exist if reptiles changed into birds and monkeys became humans? (One bone or two doesn't make the case.)

6. Is it logical to believe that chance, if given enough time, possesses the intelligence necessary to invent gravity, which keeps the galaxies with their stars and planets in place, electromagnetic force which holds molecules (and the groups of molecules which form liquids and solids) together and nuclear force which holds atoms together?
7. Is it possible that chance designed the balance of nature with its specific ecosystems that are so complex and delicate?
8. Is it logical to believe that in the past organisms were able to adapt to new environments, engender new organs if necessary, and even transform into a different species while today they're rapidly becoming extinct.


OPTION TWO:

God Created Everything

BUT:

1. Who created God? (If you can tell me who created the matter that you say always existed, I'll tell you who created God.) It doesn't matter what theory you embrace about the origin of the universe, it's necessary to admit that an unexplainable cause that no one created lies behind the universe and everything in it.



2. Do you really believe in the story of Adam and Eve and the snake? (Wait a minute!) Do you believe the myth that chance created everything? Sir Frederick Hoyle, the renowned mathematician, scientist, and astronomer, calculated the probability that all the proteins (assuming they already existed) would gather together and arrange themselves correctly to form ONE living cell and discovered the chances would be one in 10 to the 40th. (That means that choosing one particular snowflake out of all the snowflakes that have fallen since the earth began, on the first try, would be a lot easier!) Remember that each human body has at least ten trillion cells. It takes more faith to believe that chance-evolution created humans than to believe that God created Adam and Eve. If the first man miraculously evolved, who would he marry? Cain could marry his sister, his niece or another relative. (Because the gene pool was still unpolluted, there couldn't have been adverse effects.) 

MEANING AND PURPOSE

GOALS IN LIFE

You Can Live to:

1. **Earn a lot of money and accumulate a lot of stuff, BUT,** you might still feel empty. Besides, robbery, an economic crisis, a natural disaster or a terrorist attack could wipe you out.



2. **Be noticed and maybe even become famous, BUT,** fame never lasts. After a little bit, other people will become the center of attention.



3. **Be happy and enjoy life, BUT,** circumstances outside your control, sad events, and even

tragedy will make your life difficult. The excesses of pleasure bring negative consequences like drug addiction, alcoholism, car accidents and a void that never gets permanently filled. Those who frequent wild parties have to deal with bad grades, sexually transmitted diseases, and family problems.



4. **Power, prestige, and high position, BUT,** it's necessary to constantly struggle to maintain your influence against those who wish to take your place and sooner or later you'll be knocked off your pedestal – sometimes by those who are unfair and dishonest.

5. **Be independent and do whatever you wish without having to report to anyone, BUT,** rejecting wise advice brings painful consequences. Why should you repeat the mistakes others have made?

6. **Live for the moment, BUT,** not planning for the future can cause long-range problems. The two stories I'm going to tell you really happened.

- A high school boy who wasn't used to drinking attended a party and had a few beers. When a new girl asked for a ride home, he was glad to be of help. Not realizing no one was home, he accepted her invitation to come in and watch TV. She seduced him and became the mother of his baby girl.



- A fourteen-year-old boy just couldn't wait to get behind the wheel. Without permission, he grabbed his father's truck to take a drive around the block resulting in an accident that killed his neighbor and put him in the hospital.

It's dangerous to live for the moment without considering possible future consequences.

MEANING AND PURPOSE

continued...

MANY THINK THERE ARE NO OTHER OPTIONS

IF WE'RE ONLY MOLECULES, ACCIDENTS ON THE WAY TO EXTINCTION, IT'S NECESSARY FOR EVERY PERSON TO INVENT HIS OR HER REASON FOR LIVING

If your ideas about life after death are undefined but you've accepted that tradition or the greater good of society has great value, there are other possibilities.

You can live to:

1. **Please the people around you and fit in with society, BUT,** you might encounter people who try to control you for their own purposes. Going with the flow, following the crowd and doing what others expect of you could get you into a lot of trouble.
2. **Be popular, part of the "in crowd", accepted by the movers and shakers,** by always dressing in style, using politically correct speech sprinkled with the most current expressions and adopting the living style of the idols of society always appearing sharp and on top of everything, BUT, after all that effort and expense, you may discover that you've only been attempting to impress people who really don't care about you and can't be counted on when you need them.
3. **Change society for the better, BUT,** evil really



exists and infiltrates every movement with good intentions.

4. **Complete your obligation as a family member, as a part of society or as a good citizen**



of your country; that means your life as an individual is unimportant – you're only someone capable of prolonging the traditional system.

BUT, even a family member can betray you, possibly the social structure exists only to promote the wealthy and the influential or your country has a cruel and dictatorial leader who only wants to use citizens as cogs in his or her machine.


THANK GOD THERE'S A WONDERFUL ALTERNATIVE

It's possible to repent of your sin and give your whole life to Jesus permitting the Holy Spirit to fill your life, giving you guidance, joy and meaning in this life and hope for eternity. This new life in Christ fulfills the requirements necessary for a life with meaning and purpose.

1. In Jesus there is always a sense of wonder and hope because God has all power to answer prayer, change situations as well as people and give His followers the right perspective on life. His miracles will banish boredom.

MEANING AND PURPOSE

continued...

2. In Jesus there is knowledge of truth which gets rid of confusion and fear giving us a solid basis for evaluating and acting in the various situations in which we find ourselves.
3. In Jesus we can experience unending, unconditional love and as a result we can love God and all the people we encounter.
4. In Jesus there is the security that He'll never leave us or let us down. There is no fear of death because we know we'll go to heaven where we'll be happy and secure forever. 

OPTIONS FOR DETERMINING MORALITY

?
What is right?

? **WHAT IS PROPER BEHAVIOR?** ?

What is wrong?

YOU'LL NOTICE THAT THERE AREN'T THAT MANY.

1. You decide for yourself how you will act.
2. You just follow the people around you.
3. The society decides the rules by majority opinion.
4. You follow the tradition of your culture passed on by past generations.
5. A religious leader or a dictator gives you the rules.
6. God has revealed His commandments in the Bible and has sent His Son to live on earth giving us the perfect example of human behavior and teaching us right principles.

By permitting the Holy Spirit to illuminate us as we read the Bible, and relying on the Holy Spirit to obey what it teaches, we'll not only discover the right way to live but we'll have the power to act correctly.

OPTIONS FOR DETERMINING MORALITY

continued...

ACCEPTING THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE, OBEYING ITS TEACHINGS AND FOLLOWING JESUS HAVE MADE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE, JUST KEEP READING.

THE BIBLE: A BOOK THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

During a public debate with a renowned atheist, the Christian asked the following question: "If your car stalled at midnight in the most dangerous section of your city and you saw ten burly guys who had just left the nearby apartment building walking toward you, would you feel relieved to learn that they had just come from a Bible study? The atheist had to answer "yes". The Bible is the only book in history which has changed many lives for the better throughout the centuries; people from a wide variety of occupations, cultures, ethnicities, economic levels and educational backgrounds.

LETS LOOK AT SOME OF THESE PEOPLE

It was a hot, sultry afternoon in Rome. The year was 386 A.D. A pagan philosopher who was a womanizer caught up in a very sinful lifestyle peered at the open Bible that just happened to be on a bench in the garden in which he found himself. His eyes fell on Romans 13: 13 and 14; "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about

how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." The impact was so great that he totally surrendered his life to Christ and the change was so astounding that he became known as Saint Augustine.

A young man, full of fear and superstition was caught in a horrific thunderstorm. Terrified, he vowed to become a monk if he survived and so entered a monastery. Although he was continually confessing his sins and doing works of penance, he couldn't get rid of his feelings of guilt. But then the words of Romans 1: 17, "The righteous will live by faith" made him realize that salvation was by grace alone and faith alone. Freed from trying to work his way to heaven, Martin Luther was transformed into a person who at the risk of his life dared to defend the truth of the Bible.

A captain on board a ship bringing slaves from Africa to England feared they wouldn't survive the fierce storm. Afraid he was so sinful God wouldn't save him, he remembered a phrase of a Bible verse he'd heard as a child; God saying, "I stretched out my hand". He cried out to God for mercy and the Lord so transformed John Newton's life that he became a great preacher and hymn writer.

Tatiana Goricheva, a brilliant philosophy student in communist Russia during the 1970's first read something from the Bible, the Lord's prayer, in her

OPTIONS FOR DETERMINING MORALITY

continued...

yoga book. After reading it six times, she realized that a personal God existed and that she could have an intimate relationship with Him. She stuck by her new faith even though the risks were great.

Ravi Zacharias came from an influential family in India. As a 17-year-old he attempted suicide. Someone brought a Bible to the hospital instructing his mother to read him John chapter 14. Hearing the message, "Because I live, you also will live" for the first time, Ravi gave his life to Jesus and now travels the world sharing the gospel of new life in Christ.

This is the testimony of a Muslim who can't give his name for fear of reprisal. After he heard the truth about Jesus Christ, he wrote to ask for a Gospel of Luke. Reading it, he learned about Christ's crucifixion – This is denied in the Quran, the holy book of Islam – His great love and His willingness to pardon sin. In 1992, he prayed to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He says; "My goal in life is to consecrate myself totally to Christ who died for me."

Niki Cruz, a gang member who lived to fight and whose prison psychiatrist declared him to be a hopeless case was transformed by the message of the Bible and became a well-known preacher.

A popular singer, living a sinful life was changed by the power of Jesus into a man who spreads the gospel. The Word of God does the same kind of miracles today in the lives of those who take it seriously as it has done in the past.

THE BIBLE: THE BOOK THAT CHANGES SOCIETIES



More than a hundred years ago there were people in England who declared that "savages" were happy with their way of life and that it was ridiculous to send Christian missionaries to try to change them. However, a skeptic came to the defense of Christianity, writing, "Every person who has traveled to areas inhabited by 'savages' knows that the only places where their lives are safe are those where the missionaries have taught them the Scriptures." That man who had traveled the world was Charles Darwin.

OPTIONS FOR DETERMINING MORALITY

continued...

In the book *Peace Child*, by Don Richardson, you can read a fascinating true story. In 1962 the Sawi of Indonesia were both headhunters and cannibals. Because of continual fighting among themselves, they were on the verge of extinction. They most admired the person who could carry out the most clever betrayal by faking friendship before suddenly killing the unsuspecting victim.

Escaping the constantly flying arrows, Don and his wife managed to learn enough of the language to tell them the story of Jesus. Imagine their horror to discover that for the Sawi people Judas Iscariot was the great hero! However, the Richardsons didn't give up and after some time and a lot of patience, a few of the tribe's people accepted Christ. The long-term result was that two-thirds of the Sawi became Christ-followers; now there are no more murders, ex-enemies have become friends, and the population of the Sawi is increasing.

Another example, among many, of the power of the message of the Bible to change entire groups of people is the story of the Waorani of Ecuador. Even in 1950 the Waorani were so fierce that no one could contact them. However, five missionaries decided to attempt to evangelize them.

Nate Saint flew his airplane over their territory dropping gifts. His sister, Rachael, was learning the Waorani language from a girl who had fled from the tribe and was teaching the five-some words and basic phrases. Finally, in 1956, they decided to make personal contact. These five missionaries were killed by the Waorani, and although they

killed the missionaries, the widow of one of the men, along with Rachael, entered the tribe to learn the language and present the gospel to them.

After a time, some members of the group who murdered the missionaries gave their lives to Christ. Today the tribe lives in peace and many are Christians, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit to such an extent that they have risked their lives in order to share the message of the Bible with their enemies further back in the jungle. Without learning from the Scriptures, they never would have had the opportunity to change their culture.

And the Bible can also change groups of people in industrialized countries as we learn from the book *Through the Valley of the Kwai*, written by the Englishman, Ernest Gordon. He relates what happened when he, along with many of his fellow soldiers, was a Japanese prisoner of war during World War II. Sequestered in an Asian jungle, they were forced to build a railroad. Because they were forced to complete nearly impossible tasks under cruel supervisors without being given sufficient food, sickness and death were common occurrences. The anger and depression this provoked resulted in a complete breakdown of moral values. In the fight for survival, men were stealing food from their comrades and refusing to help the sick and dying.

But even in this uncaring environment, two men who obviously got their inspiration from their faith in God helped Ernest Gordon when he was in a desperate situation and saved him from cer-

OPTIONS FOR DETERMINING MORALITY

continued...


tain death. One day a desperate soldier asked him to lead a group that wanted to learn more about Christianity. Frankly admitting that he wasn't a believer, he promised to try.

Fortunately, the only information available was from a Bible someone loaned him. Earnest Gordon began to study the life of Jesus from the gospels and to teach what he was learning. More and more soldiers began attending the group. Even hardened military men began putting their faith in Jesus and their lives began to change. It was contagious and transformed the camp. They gathered the available Bibles in order to organize a system allowing a person to borrow a Bible for one hour before returning it to give the next person an opportunity. Many soldiers began to study the Scriptures.

The whole atmosphere of the camp changed. Men began to share what they had learned from the Bible with their comrades, to care for the sick and

even to make artificial limbs for amputees. Now there was something to say to dying men; words that came from the Bible.

Above all, now, there was hope. The open-air church they started was filled for nightly prayer meetings and other services. They even learned to forgive their enemies. For the first time in what seemed like forever, it was possible to hear singing and even laughter in the camp. The food was still terrible, the treatment inhumane and death a common event but in one year, the camp had been totally transformed by one book, the Holy Bible.

Mass conversions to Christ haven't only transformed the Sawi, the Waorani, the English prisoners of war and the people of Wales (to the extent that in 1904 all the taverns and liquor stores in Wales were closed), but there are historians who believe that the biblical preaching of John Wesley saved England from a bloody revolution, similar to the one in France. 



Destiny

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE?

ONE OF THE REASONS THE BIBLE TRANSFORMS LIVES,
IF ITS MESSAGE IS ACCEPTED, IS THAT IT ANSWERS THIS GREAT DILEMMA:

Is This Life All There Is?!



Again, there are only a few possibilities.

1. **Extinction, BUT,** Why is there a desire in every human to live forever? Why is there a deep desire in the human heart that nothing and no person is able to fill? Could it be that we were made for another world?
2. **Reincarnation, BUT,**
 - A. Is it fair to be punished for something you supposedly did in another life that you can't remember and can in no way undo?
 - B. If death really means that your soul enters another body, wouldn't it be necessary to maintain a number of bodies equal to the souls in existence? If, indeed, some souls are reaching Nirvana, wouldn't the number of bodies have to decrease? In view of this, how do you explain the population explosion?
 - C. Where can you find the exact requirements to fulfill to make sure you reach Nirvana and who decides when people are allowed to enter?
 - D. Is it really worth going through all those stages just to reach an inanimate state?
3. **It is impossible to know what happens after death, so, we should just live as though this life is all there is, BUT,** the fear of an insecure future makes it difficult to enjoy life.
4. **If you live a good life doing the best you can, there is a paradise, a better place or some reward, BUT,**

DESTINY

continued...


- A. How can you know when you're good enough or when you have done enough good deeds?
- B. What will you use as the guideline for your thoughts and behavior?
- C. What evidence do you have that this is true?
-a pic/photo that looks like the "heavenly city"...
5. **The Bible is true and you'll live forever in either heaven or hell.** Those who have confessed and renounced their sin and have surrendered their lives totally to Christ, the only way to heaven, will go to heaven, **BUT**,
- A. How can God send anyone to hell?
- *The person who ignores or rejects God will go to a place where the things which characterize God will be absent – light, love, joy, truth, abundant life – just for starters.*
 - *Because God knows everything (even though there's not a Bible verse which specifically states this), it's possible that He has arranged that every person willing to accept Christ will have the opportunity to do so.*
 - *There are many present-day testimonies – especially in the Islamic world – of people receiving dreams and visions of Jesus and giving their lives to Him without any Christian present. Certainly this kind of thing could have happened in many places throughout history.*
 - *God is just. Heaven has to be sinless. No one is able to say that he or she has always*
- lived up to the highest standard known for correct behavior. Nobody can declare; "I deserve to go to heaven because I've lived a perfect life."*
- *God is just because He has given Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice for our sins so we can be cleansed from our sin and made able to go to heaven. We only need to take advantage of this provision.*
- B. **How can I be sure of this?**
- *Jesus Christ not only died (an event which history confirms), but He rose from the dead and appeared to his followers confirming that what he had taught about heaven was true and that some day we'll have bodies like His resurrected one and can live in heaven with Him.*

PROOF FOR THE RESURRECTION

1. The empty tomb – the body was never found although both the Jews and the Jewish leaders wanted to find it to put a stop to Christianity.
2. Explanations for the empty tomb made no sense. "The disciples stole the body while the guards slept", although the guards (16 of them) could be executed if they were caught sleeping on duty, and all the disciples would have had to risk their lives for a lie of saying "Jesus rose from the dead." Or, the women went to the wrong tomb – in a high profile case in a very small Old Jerusalem and no one bothered to check out the story of the women.

DESTINY

continued...

3. The Roman soldiers mistakenly thought He was dead but in spite of His horrific wounds, He revived in the cold tomb – without food, water, or medical aid, and pushed away the two-ton stone and ran around saying he rose from the dead!
4. The fact is that the disciples, a real motley crew from the most despised province in the Roman Empire, preached (and died for) a message that changed the Roman Empire. Even unbelieving historians say that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus rose from the dead. And an alive Jesus still changes lives today.
5. Early Jewish Christians changed their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday in honor of the resurrection. 

WHAT IS THE GREAT MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE THAT CHANGES INDIVIDUALS AND NATIONS?

The Bible isn't simply miraculous, in that it satisfactorily answers the big questions of life in a consistent way that squares with reality, changing the lives of individuals and structures of societies and nations that really believe its message; but it's supernatural in that it really is a collection of 66 books, written by more than 40 authors over a period of 1500 years, and they all contribute to the same basic message. It's possible to capture the central theme of the Bible in one verse; John 3: 16 – *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*



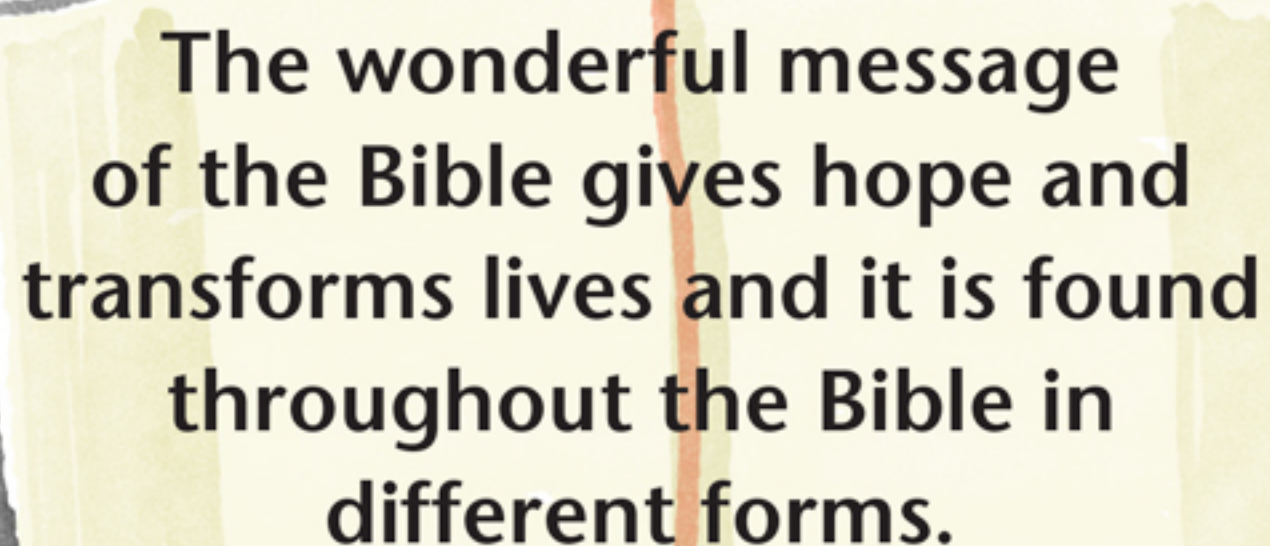
THE GREAT MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE...

continued...

THE BIBLE IS A COLLECTION OF 66 BOOKS THAT ALL HAVE THE SAME MESSAGE

The Scriptures speak of creation – explaining the nature of the universe and humans, who are all loved by God; the Fall –the entrance of sin with its consequences and punishments that stand in opposition to God’s righteousness; and salvation – the Lord, offering salvation by sending Jesus to pay the price so sinners could be free and blessed through faith in the willingness and ability of God to pardon sin, first by means of the sacrifice of animals to cover sin and then by the final sacrifice of Jesus to eradicate sin once and for all for those who accept His mercy and grace, not only for life here but for a fantastic forever with Him.

When a multitude of people asked Jesus the big question; “What must we do to do the works that God requires?” Jesus answered; “The work of God is this; to believe in the one whom He has sent.” (John 6: 29) There is a phrase repeated four times in the Bible; “The righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1: 17, Galatians 3: 11, Hebrews 10: 38 and Habakkuk 2: 4) It must be important.



**The wonderful message
of the Bible gives hope and
transforms lives and it is found
throughout the Bible in
different forms.**

THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE

1. Just consequences for sin, which is really rebellion against God.
2. A Savior, symbolized, promised, present and now in heaven.
3. Salvation by faith in the provision of a just and loving God.

NOAH AND THE ARK

He (God) did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others. (2 Peter 2: 5)

1. Judgment of a sinful world – only after the opportunity to repent was given through Noah’s preaching; Everybody knew about the ark and the reason it was being built.
2. The ark at that time was God’s provision of salvation – it was possible to believe God and enter the ark.
3. God provided salvation for Noah and his family because they believed and obeyed God.

THE GREAT MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE...

continued...

THE BLOOD ON THE DOOR

Each man is to take a lamb for his family... They are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lamb... I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn... The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. (Exodus 12: 3, 7, 12, 13)

1. Judgment on the Egyptians, who after all the miraculous plagues, still rejected God.
2. The blood of the lamb on the door (which symbolized the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, on the cross) was the only way to be saved from the last plague.
3. Only those who believed and took advantage of God's provision by putting the blood on the door were saved.

RAHAB BELIEVES IN GOD

1. Joshua 2; Rahab, of Jericho, believed that God would give the land to the Israelites, so she hid the spies of Israel in her house on the city wall and let them down by a rope through a window. They promised her that if she didn't report them to the authorities, and put a red cord in her window, she and her family would be saved when Jericho was destroyed by God.

2. The red cord was a symbol for the blood of Jesus, God's only provision for salvation.
3. By FAITH Rahab put the red cord in her window and she and her family were saved.

JUDGES THAT FREED THE ISRAELITES

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21: 25) Again and again the people strayed from God, suffered the consequences of sin, and finally cried out to God.

1. Because the Israelites disobeyed God by worshipping idols, the Lord punished them by invasions from foreign armies.
2. God provided godly judges who assumed the role of savior, leading them in defeating their enemies.
3. When the people repented and returned to God, the judge, in the role of savior, led them to freedom.

THE WORST KING REPENTS

"The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God

THE GREAT MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE...

continued...

of his fathers. So when he prayed to him, the Lord ... listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom." (2 Chronicles 33: 10-13)

1. Manasseh was taken prisoner by Assyria, a divine punishment for idolatry and cruelty.
2. Returning to God is always the way to salvation.
3. Manasseh repented and God in His mercy permitted Manasseh to reign in Jerusalem again. He attempted to lead his people back to God.

THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15: 11-24 — a parable

1. An ungrateful and disrespectful son demands his inheritance from his father, goes to a far country, and squanders his money in wild living. He ends up with nothing.
2. He finally recognizes that his father (who represents God in this parable) can be his savior.
3. Ready to repent and face the consequences of his sin, he returns to his father admitting his guilt and willing to be only his servant. But his father receives him with open arms restoring him to his position as son.

THE THIEF WHO REPENTED

"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God?' ... 'We are punished justly, ... but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth; today you will be with me in paradise.'" (Luke 23: 39-43)

1. The thief on the cross next to Jesus came to the point of admitting his sin.
2. He realized that Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior.
3. He put all his FAITH in Christ, asking that Jesus remember him when he entered His Kingdom and he was promised: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

A COMPLETE CHANGE

"Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. ... As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'" (Acts 9: 1, 3-5)


THE GREAT MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE...

continued...

1. A proud and violent man wants to incarcerate and kill Jesus followers.
 2. He has an encounter with Jesus, the Savior.
 3. Saul (later known as Paul) repented, put his faith in Christ as his Savior, surrendering his life to Jesus – and that completely changed history.
2. God resolved this dilemma by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth in human form in order to live the perfect life keeping every commandment God ever gave, and to suffer the punishment of our sin by dying a sacrificial death on the cross so that our salvation would be possible. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5: 21) Christ "himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2: 24)

THE PRINCIPAL MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE

All these accounts of redemption and restoration illustrate the main message of the Bible.

1. Because Love can't exist without free will (can you imagine a guy pointing a gun at his girlfriend saying, "Marry me or I'll shoot you!") God created humans with the possibility of choosing between good and evil. Adam and Eve chose sin, infecting the spiritual DNA of the whole human race. Nobody in his or her own strength can live a perfect life. Everybody has sinned. God is just and sin must be punished. This means we all deserve hell but God "is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3: 9)
3. But God didn't withdraw free will. He will never force anyone to love Him or have faith in Him. But you – and every human – can repent of sin and by faith give your life totally to Him and be saved. "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1: 12) *"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3: 16) 

YOU CAN HAVE UNLIMITED HOPE

Can you imagine having someone on call 24/7 who not only is willing to listen to you and help you, but has the ability to assist you with any problem? Can you fathom a life-coach with perfect information about future events who knows you inside out and plans what happens so that you can receive maximum long-term benefit? Have you ever wished to be assured of a fantastic forever?

This is something available to you and you don't need wealth, talent, right connections, a great quantity of good deeds or the ambition and ability to work hard every day to get it because it's a free gift.

However, you do have to admit that not following God's rules found in the Bible makes every person, including you, a sinner. You do have to give up the right to call your own shots and to center life around your desires and goals. You must trade in getting your own way for following God's way. You need to admit that no self-improvement plan or any effort on your part will make you good enough for heaven.

Before declaring that equal heavenly access is a universal human right, meet Julie, a defiant three-year-old who is elegantly dressed in white to be the flower girl at her uncle's wedding. As her busy mother is getting dressed, she slips outside and plays in the mud that she spreads all over her beautiful dress – even fashioning a "mud hat". Who would accuse her mom of cruelty for giving that little girl the ultimatum: "Either you come in and allow me to clean you up or you stay home from the wedding?"

PHILOSOPHIES

Philosophies that proclaim that people who haven't had their sins eradicated by the blood of Jesus are ready for heaven forget that they would mess up heaven worse than a totally muddy Julie walking down a white wedding aisle. Sin has ruined planet earth and can't be tolerated in heaven.

The wonderful news is that Jesus suffered the just punishment for your sin and rebellion when He died on the cross. The Bible says, "the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" and Jesus rose from the dead so He can cleanse us from all wrongdoing. But it's not automatic. It requires turning away from evil and a realization that salvation cannot be earned because it's by grace, the unmerited favor of God. The human part is putting total faith in Jesus, believing that He paid the price to secure your salvation. Then you just talk to Him through prayer asking Him to save you.

Pray a prayer like this one understanding that your heart attitude, not the words, are what is important:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you so much for dying on the cross for my sin I admit that I'm a sinner and can do nothing to save myself. With your help, I turn from evil and I want to obey You from now on. Please forgive my sin and take over my life to make me into the person you created me to be. Thank you for forgiving me and taking control of the throne of my life. Amen 