

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Activated Basic Course 1 • Discovering Faith

## THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Finding life's purpose

### A Personal God

Relationship with our  
Creator

### Who Is Jesus?

Meet the Man

### What Heaven Is Like

What happens when  
we die





## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

What is life all about? What am I here for? Is there a purpose, a plan for me? And if so, what is it? Questions such as these have stirred the soul and imagination of humankind throughout the ages. Regardless of our nationality, social status, ethnicity, or creed, people the world over seek the same things—truth, meaning, love, happiness, and peace of mind.

In today's ever-changing and increasingly complex and fast-paced interconnected world, more and more people find themselves caught up in the frenzied rush to become successful or make ends meet financially. They often have little time to ponder seemingly abstract matters such as the meaning of life or the eternal destiny of their own souls.

But as the years pass, people often find that the pressures of life and trying to meet all their commitments have filled them with stress and anxiety, not peace or satisfaction. This world and all its material goods and fleeting pleasures can never answer the big questions of life. Material things may satisfy temporarily, but they can never satisfy the eternal longing of the soul for truth, purpose, and meaning.

When a personal crisis or tragedy strikes—an unexpected accident or critical illness, a death in the family, a great personal loss of any kind—all the achievements and goods of this world can do little to bring or restore hope. It is during such times that people frequently realize that the true values of life—love, purpose, and eternal destiny—are what ultimately matter.

The Bible tells us that God is a loving Father who loves each human being uniquely and created this beautiful world. As the divine Creator, God is the only one who can give meaning to the universe, purpose to the planets, love to our hearts, peace to our minds, rest to our spirits, and joy to our souls. Through belief in Jesus Christ, we become God's children. He communes with us, abides in us, and loves us.

We encourage you to learn more about God, His love for humanity, and His plan for your life in this series of Activated magazines. This series will cover core topics foundational to growing your faith, forging a relationship with God, studying His Word in the Bible, and sharing your faith with others. We pray that this Activated Basic Course will be a blessing to you in your faith journey!

For more information on *Activated*, visit our website or write to us.

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# A PERSONAL GOD

**SOME OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR RELIGIONS DO NOT BELIEVE IN OR WORSHIP A PERSONAL GOD.** Instead, He is viewed as a sort of supreme reality or ultimate principle underlying the universe. In this concept of God, He is usually perceived as a being who remains rather distant and aloof from human needs and circumstances. However, the Bible tells us that God is very personally concerned about each one of us, and that as a father shows compassion on his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who love Him (Psalm 103:13).

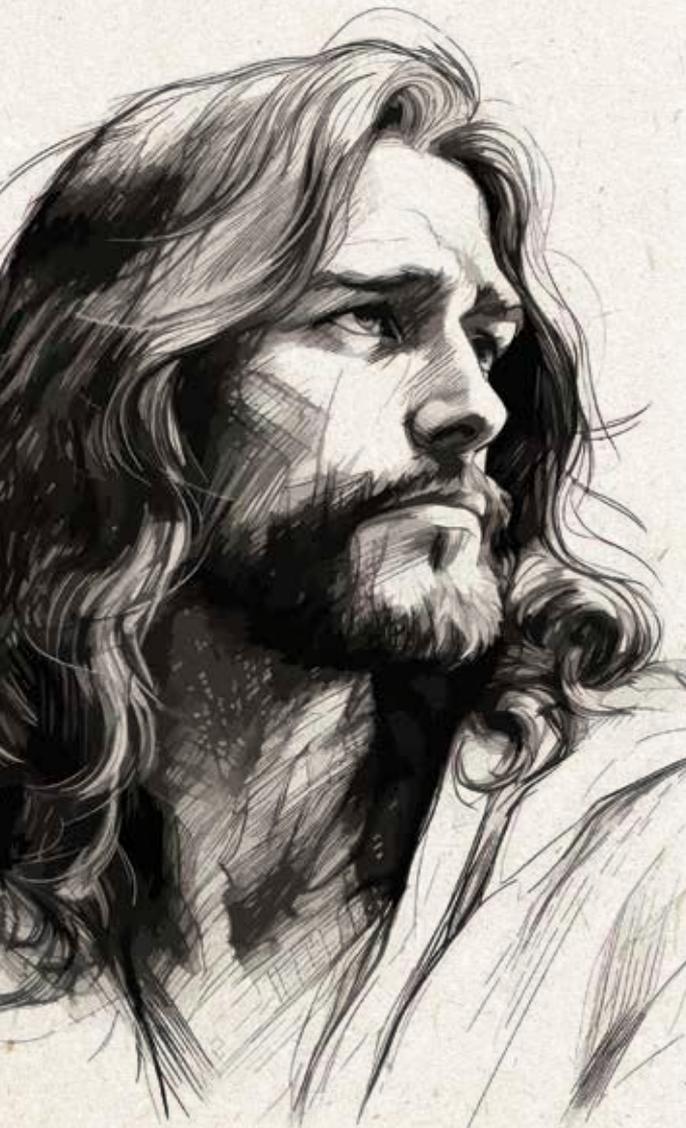
Other religions, recognizing the marvelous wonder and balance of nature, have concluded that the physical creation itself must be God, and that everything we see is a manifestation or part of God. Because He is the great power who has created all things, in a sense God is a part of all things and all things are a part of Him, from the vast galaxies of the heavens to the cohesive power of the tiniest atom. But the Bible tells us that we can worship and personally know the Creator and have a living relationship with God Himself.

God is not some faraway uninterested being. He is a God who is personal, who desires to have a relationship with each of us, His creation. He has made Himself known to us through His Word in the Bible. He is our heavenly Father, who loves us and is interested in us as individuals.

God doesn't want us to suffer separation from Him. Our hearts can never be truly satisfied without knowing God and His love, for God is love (1 John 4:8). To help us to know Him and to bring us His everlasting life and salvation, He sent His own Son, Jesus, to earth over 2,000 years ago. Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Spirit of God and became a living representation of God, so that we could see what the great invisible Creator is like. And that picture is of a God of love, for Jesus went everywhere doing good, helping others, and teaching about God's great love for us all.

Once Jesus had completed His task of proclaiming the good news of salvation to the world, He gave His life on the cross for the sins of all humankind. Three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in the grave, Jesus arose from the dead, conquering death and hell forever. "For God so loved the world (*you and me*) that He gave His only Son (*Jesus*), that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). ■

# WHO IS JESUS?



**JESUS CAME TO EARTH AS A HELPLESS BABY**, born to a humble young woman who miraculously conceived the child, having never been with any man! In fact, the news of her pregnancy was so shocking that when the man to whom she was engaged to be married learned about it, he promptly decided to break the engagement.—Until a powerful angel intervened and instructed him to stay with her and protect and care for this special child that she was carrying.

Although ordained and predestined to be the King of kings, Jesus was not born in a palace with the honor and praise of the establishment. Instead, He was born on the dirty floor of a barn amidst the cattle and the donkeys, wrapped in rags, and laid to rest in the animals' feed-trough.

Though His birth brought no great fanfare or recognition from the institutions of men, that night on a nearby hillside, some poor shepherds were awestruck as a brilliant light shone in the starry sky and a host of heavenly angels filled the night with their joyful declaration: “Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth to men of good will! For unto you this day is born a Savior, Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11–14 KJV).

His earthly father was a carpenter, a humble hewer of wood. Jesus conformed to our human ways of life, customs, and language so that He might understand and communicate with us within our limited human understanding. He saw people's suffering and had great compassion for them.

When He began His life's work, He went about everywhere doing good. He not only preached His message of



love and truth, but He lived it. He not only ministered to people's spiritual needs, but He cared for their physical and material needs, miraculously healing people when they were sick, feeding them when they were hungry, and sharing His life and His love with them. Throughout His ministry He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead.

He made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7, NKJV), and was accused of being a companion of drunks, prostitutes, and sinners, the outcasts and downtrodden of society. He even said that those people would enter the kingdom of heaven before the religious leaders who rejected Him and His message of truth and love.

As His message of love spread and His followers multiplied, the leaders of the established religion realized what a threat Jesus had become to them. They finally had Him arrested and brought to trial on false charges of sedition and subversion. Although the Roman governor found Jesus to be innocent, he was pressured and persuaded by these religionists to execute Him.

Just prior to His arrest, Jesus had said, "They couldn't even touch Me without My Father's permission. If I would but raise My little finger, He would send legions of angels to rescue Me!" (Matthew 26:53). Instead, He chose to die, to save you and me. Nobody took His life from Him. He laid it down; He gave His life of His own free will and accord.

But even His death did not satisfy His enemies. To ensure that His followers couldn't steal His body and claim He had come back to life, they placed a huge stone over the door of His tomb and posted a

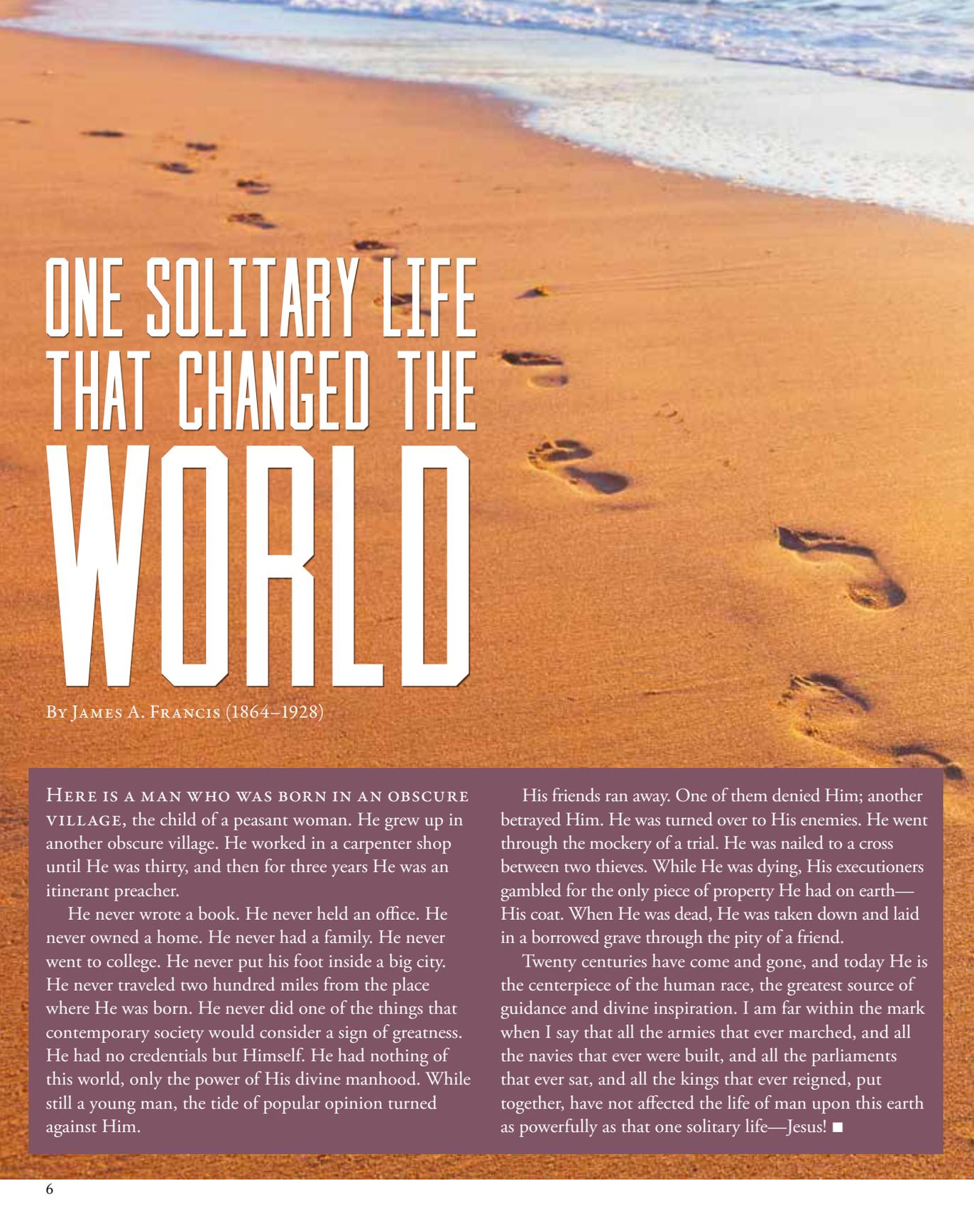
detachment of Roman soldiers there to guard it.—A scheme that proved futile, as these same guards became eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle of all, as three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in that cold tomb, Jesus rose from the dead, the victor over death and hell forever!

Since that miraculous day over 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ has done more to change history and the course of civilization and the condition of humankind than any other leader, group, government, or empire. He has saved billions from the fear and uncertainty of a hopeless death and has given eternal life and the love of God to all who call upon His name.

Jesus Christ is not a mere philosopher, teacher, rabbi or guru, or even a prophet. He is the Son of God. God, the great Creator, is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere and in everything—far beyond our limited human comprehension. The Bible tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8), and because He so loved the world, He sent His Son Jesus, in the form of a man, to show us what He Himself is like and to bring us to Himself.

Jesus is the only one who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. He's the only Savior. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

How can you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ really is the Son of God, the way to salvation? Sincerely ask Him to reveal Himself to you. He's real and He loves you—so much so that He died for you and suffered for your sins, so that you would not have to, if you'll receive Him and His free gift of eternal life. ■



# ONE SOLITARY LIFE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

BY JAMES A. FRANCIS (1864–1928)

HERE IS A MAN WHO WAS BORN IN AN OBSCURE VILLAGE, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that contemporary society would consider a sign of greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing of this world, only the power of His divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him.

His friends ran away. One of them denied Him; another betrayed Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth—His coat. When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race, the greatest source of guidance and divine inspiration. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as that one solitary life—Jesus! ■



## WHY DID JESUS DIE?

Why would the Lord of the universe, God in the flesh, allow Himself to be captured, falsely accused, tried and condemned, whipped, stripped, and nailed to a cross like a common criminal? The answer is simple: Because He loved you and me!

All of us at times have done wrong and been unloving and unkind to others. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The worst thing about our sins is that they separate us from God, who is absolutely sinless and perfect. In order to bring us to God, Jesus, the sinless Son of God, took the sins of all mankind upon Himself. He took the punishment for our sins and suffered the horrible pain of death by crucifixion. He died the death of a sinner that through His sacrifice, we might find forgiveness and freedom from our sins.

## MEET THE MAN

If you haven't yet met Jesus or received His forgiveness and gift of eternal life, you can personally receive Jesus into your heart and life by sincerely praying this prayer:

*Dear Jesus, please forgive me for all my sins. I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for me, and I ask You to come into my life. I open the door and I invite You into my heart. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and help me to tell others about You so that they may come to know You too. Amen.*

# FINDING MY PURPOSE

BY RUTH DAVIDSON

**WHEN I WAS A SCHOOLGIRL**, I remember hearing a melancholic song that contained the lyrics “Why was I born; why am I living?” At the time, I couldn't imagine why anyone would ask himself that question.

But as the years went by, I started to realize that everyone is looking for an answer, a reason for living. I could see that many people ask themselves questions like *Why was I born?* or *What is my purpose?*

Some people sadly go through their entire lives seeking answers to these questions without ever finding them. But once we look to our Creator and His plan for humankind, we can begin to see what we're here for and what we should do with our lives. It's when we look beyond ourselves to the truth of God's Word in the Bible that we begin to understand what life is all about.

When our time on this earth has ended and God calls us to our eternal home, what will matter is our love for God and for others, manifested through kind and caring words and deeds.

RUTH DAVIDSON (1939–2023) WAS A MISSIONARY TO THE MIDDLE EAST, INDIA, AND SOUTH AMERICA FOR 25 YEARS, AND AN AUTHOR AND CONTRIBUTOR TO THE WEBSITE [THEBIBLEFORYOU.COM](http://THEBIBLEFORYOU.COM). ■

# THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS

**TO HISTORIANS**, the facts regarding Jesus are as definite and evident as those of Julius Caesar. Not only do we find an accurate portrait of Him in the documents of the New Testament, but dozens of ancient non-biblical manuscripts confirm that Jesus was a genuine historical figure who lived in Palestine in the early part of the first century.

If any adjective were to describe Jesus, it would be “unique.” His message was unique. The claims He made regarding Himself were unique. His miracles were unique. And the influence He has had on the world is unsurpassed by any other.

One very outstanding and undeniably unique aspect of Jesus’ life is that literally hundreds of detailed predictions and prophecies were made many centuries before He was born—specific details regarding His birth, life, and death—that no mere mortal man could possibly have fulfilled. In the Old Testament, over 300 such predictions about the “Messiah” or “Savior” can be found, written *centuries before* Jesus was born.

In 750 BC, the prophet Isaiah prophesied that “The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). Seven and a half centuries



later, a young virgin in Israel named Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel, who announced to her that she would bear a son who would be called Emmanuel, which means “God with us.”

The New Testament tells us that “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, seeing I have not lain with any man?’ And the angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’” (Luke 1:34–35).

When Jesus began His life’s work, He went about everywhere doing good, helping people, loving children, healing heartaches, strengthening tired bodies, and bringing God’s love to all whom He could. He not only preached His message, but He lived it as one of us. He not only ministered to people’s spiritual needs, but He spent a great deal of time ministering to their physical and material needs, miraculously healing them, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansing lepers, raising the dead. He fed the crowds when they were hungry and did all He could to share His life and His love.

Just before He was arrested and crucified, knowing that He would soon be reunited with His heavenly Father, Jesus prayed: “Now, Father, glorify Me along with Yourself and restore Me to such majesty and honor in Your presence as I had with You before the world was made” (John 17:5).

The Son of God willingly stripped Himself of His unlimited power and became a tiny helpless infant. He left His throne in heaven where innumerable angels worshipped Him, where all the forces of the universe were

at His command, and He took the place of a servant. He was scoffed at, ridiculed, persecuted, and ultimately killed by the very ones He came to save.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is “a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, for He was in all points tempted the same way we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Imagine! The Son of God literally became a citizen of this world, a member of humanity in order to redeem us with His love, provide a tangible expression of His compassion and concern, and help us to understand His truth.

Deep in their hearts, most people know that something is missing in their lives. Outwardly they may seem to have everything—money, position, family, friends, all the things that are supposed to make them happy—yet they still have an emptiness, a hunger that nothing really satisfies. Jesus said that He is the bread of life who would fulfill our heart’s “hunger and thirst” (John 6:35). The loneliness, emptiness, and dissatisfaction so common to the human experience can be replaced with lasting peace and joy when we come to Him.

Jesus and His life and teachings are universal. God sent His Son to show all men and women, all nations, all people, what He Himself is like, to freely bring us His great love and truth. In Jesus, the one thing necessary for the salvation and redemption of humankind happened in such a way that it never needs to happen again. It is for this reason that we can claim with certainty that for the greatest ailment of humanity, there is only one specific remedy—Jesus.

The historical facts regarding Jesus of Nazareth cannot be denied by anyone who seriously and open-mindedly



## GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

examines them. In particular, there is no reason to doubt that after His death something incredible happened that transformed His tiny band of dejected followers into a company of witnesses that all the persecution of Imperial Rome could not stop. Downhearted and discouraged, their Lord cruelly crucified by His enemies, those disciples thought their hopes had died and their dreams had been shattered. But three days after Jesus' death, their faith was rekindled in such a dramatic manner that no force on earth was able to quench it.

The New Testament tells us that Jesus personally appeared to over 500 eyewitnesses after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6). This was the resounding message that His first disciples boldly proclaimed throughout the world, "God raised Him from the dead!" (Acts 13:30).

And that lowly handful of His original followers went on to tell the entire world the good news that God not only sent His Son into the world to teach us His truth and show us His love, but also that Jesus suffered death for our sake, and then rose from the grave. So we who know and believe in Him never need to fear death again, for we are saved and on our way to heaven, thanks to Jesus. ■

I GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY, but when I was a teenager, feeling overwhelmed over the world's problems caused me to start doubting my faith. When I was 18, though, my boyfriend was a firm believer. We had some discussions on faith, and he was so sincere that I started doubting my doubts.

One day, I took his New Testament, went to a big city park, and sat by a small lake. I started at the beginning, the Gospel of Matthew. When I got to the Sermon on the Mount, I was shocked! Those were the principles I wanted to live by; I just hadn't seen them spelled out so clearly anywhere else.

I kept reading through the afternoon, passing from Gospel to Gospel. It was like a movie scene, where someone is so focused that everyone and everything else disappears. I was transported to the dusty roads of Galilee, the fishing villages, the temple, and I was one of Jesus' disciples, eager to hear and see what He would say and do next.

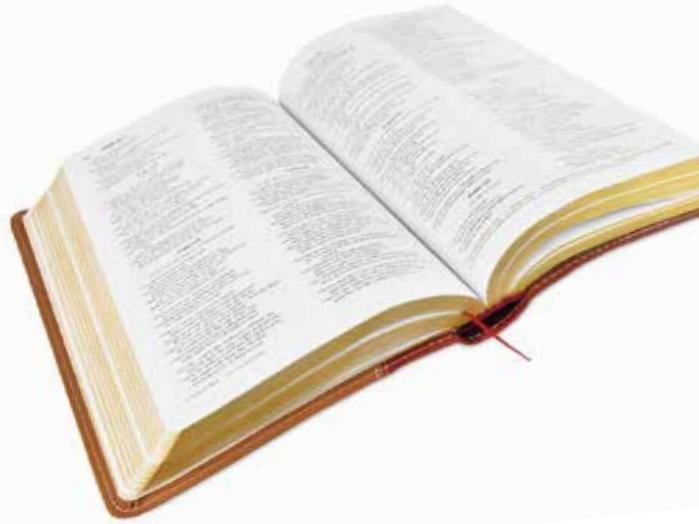
Dusk descended as I read the last chapter of the Gospel of John. I walked home transformed, and all I wanted to do was find out how I could live what Jesus taught. A few months later, He showed me my life's mission, and I have been trying my best to fulfill it since then.

Getting to know Jesus is the most important discovery anyone can make! Someone said that reading the Bible is like reading our own story, because we're also part of that story, as it's being played out in each of our lives. The best bit is that with Jesus in our hearts we know our story has a very happy ending!

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

FEEDING READING

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



## THE FOUR GOSPELS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT—

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—tell the beautiful story of Jesus' life on earth. The fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, contains the most words of Jesus and outlines His loving plan for your life. Following are some of the key passages and verses from the book of John which deserve special attention as you read and study:

### Jesus: The Word of God, the True Light of the World.

Chapter 1, verses 1–18

Key verse • [John 1:12](#): “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

### What does it mean to be “born again”?

Chapter 3, verses 1–21

Key verse • [John 3:3](#): “Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

### The woman at the well: “He told me everything I did.”

Chapter 4, verses 1–30

Key verse • [John 4:24](#): “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

### All you can eat!—Jesus feeds 5,000.

Chapter 6, verses 1–13, 25–40

Key verse • [John 6:35](#): “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

### The Good Shepherd—An all-time favorite chapter.

Chapter 10, verses 1–30

Key verses • [John 10:27–28](#): “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

### Lazarus is raised from the dead.—How did it happen?

Chapter 11, verses 1–46

Key verse • [John 11:25](#): “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.’”

### Jesus, the True Vine.

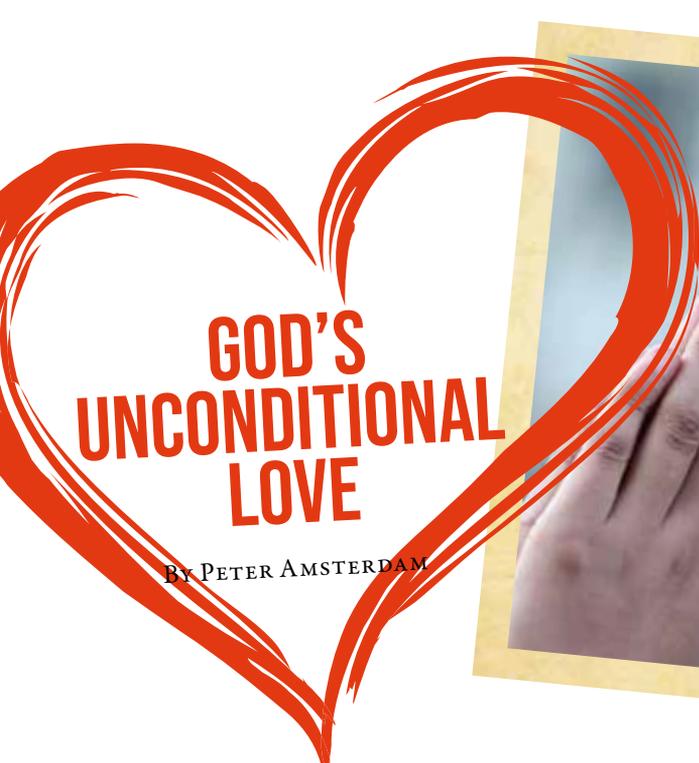
Chapter 15 (all)

Key verses • [John 15:4–5](#): “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me... Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

### Jesus' last prayer, for love and unity.

Chapter 17 (all)

Key verses • [John 17:22–23](#): “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” ■



# GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

BY PETER AMSTERDAM



**GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE HAS NO BOUNDS,** is unchanging and without limitations. It is given freely, no matter what. All of us have sinned, and sin brings separation from God. Nevertheless, God loves us. It doesn't mean He loves all that we do, but He loves us. In fact, He loves humanity so much that He made it possible for the breach caused by our sins and wrongdoing to be bridged through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6–8 NIV).

God loves us not because of who *we* are but because of who *He* is. He loves every single person in the whole world equally and unconditionally. Even if someone has never heard of God, even if someone says they hate Him, He still loves that person unconditionally. God's love is unfathomable. It is perfect.

Every person is precious to God, regardless of age, race, nationality, physical appearance, economic status, religious belief, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. We may not like every person's beliefs, lifestyle, or choices. We may not agree with their political or other opinions. They may live without regard to God's moral standards—but no matter what their state, God loves them.

Jesus said that the two most important commandments are to love God and to love others (Matthew 22:37–40), and we are told to let our light shine, so that others may see our good works and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). This call to action shows that God intends for us to interact with others in a manner that reflects Him, to treat others with love, compassion, and mercy, as He does.

The apostle James wrote that the true practice of faith consists of both outward and inward action. Outward toward others in practical ways, and inward through devotion to God. He said: "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you" (James 1:27 NLT).

Jesus constantly showed love to others. He felt compassion for those in need and was moved to loving action. He was merciful. He showed kindness. He fed the hungry and healed the afflicted. He fought against evil and unrighteousness.

Let's do what we can to be tangible examples of God's love for humanity, by sharing Him and His love with those in need.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■

# The Kaleidoscope of God's Love

## POINTS TO PONDER

THE LOVE OF GOD IS ONE OF THE GREAT REALITIES OF THE UNIVERSE, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.—*A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)*

God loves you with a generous, extravagant love that can never be taken away. It's beyond comprehension. He loves you on your good days and your bad days. He loves you when you sin *and* when you are faithful to him... God created you so he could love you.—*Rick Warren*

God's love reflects His eternal absolutes. God's love is eternal, like He is: more durable than time, wider and deeper than the incalculable

dimensions of the cosmos. As He tells us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3).—*David Jeremiah*

Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God's love encompasses us completely. ... He loves every one of us, even those who are flawed, rejected, awkward, sorrowful, or broken.—*Dieter F. Uchtdorf*

Your Heavenly Father loves you—each of you. That love never changes. It is not influenced by your appearance, by your possessions, or by the amount of money you have in your bank account. It is not changed

by your talents and abilities. It is simply there. It is there for you when you are sad or happy, discouraged or hopeful. God's love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve love. It is simply always there.—*Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018)*

I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Romans 8:38–39 NLT* ■

# WHAT HEAVEN IS LIKE

BY MARIA FONTAINE

HAVE YOU EVER  
WONDERED WHAT HAPPENS  
TO YOU AFTER YOU DIE? What's in store

for you when you get to the “other side”?—If there *is* another side. Is there a heaven? If so, what is it like? Will you be happy there? Will you find your loved ones there? How different will it be from your life on earth?

The Bible tells us a lot about what to expect when we get to heaven—what it will be like, what *we* will be like, what our bodies will be like, and what life will be like. There have also been numerous accounts from people who have had a near-death experience where they have died momentarily, gone to heaven, and returned to tell the tale of what they experienced.

According to the Bible, one of the biggest differences between the earth life and heaven is that heaven is a *perfect* realm, a place filled with God's presence, where we can enjoy all the beauties and wonders that we have here on earth, but without the sorrow, pain, emptiness, loneliness, and fear that so often grip us, and without the selfishness, greed, hate, and destruction that we see in the world around us.

God's kingdom will be filled with love, beauty, peace, comfort, understanding, joy, compassion, and most of all, will be enveloped in the love of the One who loves us more than anyone—God Himself. The Bible tells us that God is a God of love. In fact, He *is* love (1 John 4:8).

Therefore His home, the kingdom of heaven, is a home of love, where there will be no more pain, sorrow, rejection, grief, or loneliness (Revelation 21:4).

We know from the Bible that in the afterlife we're not going to be faceless, disembodied spirits, wisping around with no form whatsoever. We will have bodies, much like we do now, but without the sickness, discomfort, aging, or pain that we experience in our earthly bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). We'll be able to enjoy each other's company and live happily forever in the presence of the One who created us and who loves us.

The good news is that through believing in and receiving Jesus, anybody can enter into the kingdom of heaven and experience the joy, fulfillment, and everlasting love that God wants to give each of us in the life to come.

None of us are good enough to deserve entrance to heaven; none of us deserve to go there through our own merits. That's why God sent His Son, Jesus, to this earth over 2,000 years ago. Jesus paid the price for our salvation by dying for the sins of humankind, and so, through believing in Him as our Savior, we can receive His gift of eternal life. That relieves us of the burden of trying to be good enough to go to heaven, which we couldn't do anyway, because we are all faulty, imperfect human beings.

Jesus opened the door to eternal life in His kingdom for each of us through His death on the cross. You can't earn it, neither can you be too bad for it, because salvation is a gift of God. Jesus *loves* you just the way you are. He knows you. He knows your thoughts and everything you've ever done, even your deepest secrets. He knows it all, but He loves you anyway, because His love is infinite.

His love is so far beyond anything that we can understand or see with our eyes here on earth. His love can fill any emptiness and heal any pain or hurt. His love can bring joy where there was sorrow, laughter where there was pain, and fulfillment where there was a lack of

purpose or meaning. Whenever you need Him, you can call out to Jesus, and His love will be with you and He will help you.

If you open your heart to Jesus and invite Him into your life, He will be with you forever. You can never lose Him! Once you receive Jesus, you've got a permanent reservation in heaven that can never be canceled, and when your life on earth is finished, you will dwell in His presence forever!

Although salvation is a free gift, once you have received Jesus in your heart, He wants you to do what you can to love *others* and tell them about God's heavenly kingdom. Share with others the truth about Jesus and the love He has given you so that they can also experience joy in their lives—both in this life and in the next one!

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



PRAYER FOR THE DAY  
**GOD OF BRILLIANCE**

Heavenly Father,

I praise and honor You and give glory to You, the God of all creation, who has created all things—the beauty of all that I see, the smallest to the greatest wonders. From the atom to the universe, all are created by Your hand, far surpassing what anyone could imagine or understand.

You are the God of brilliance—the God of depths so deep that none can fathom, of heights so high that none can comprehend, of width and breadth so great that none can ever fill them.

I give You all glory, honor, praise and thanksgiving, for You are so great, mighty, and vast, so wise, loving and omnipotent. Yet You stoop to love me, to seek and save me, and to bring me into Your kingdom to live with You forever.

Amen.





FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# I LOVE YOU —JUST YOU

When I say I love you, just you, I am talking to each of My children from every walk of life. I'm talking to those who feel far away and distant from My love. I am talking to those who feel they've failed and there is no forgiveness to be found, or who feel like there is no hope.

I love you just the way you are. My love is reaching out to you right now. My love, My forgiveness, and My mercy are all right there, just for you, if you will just receive them.

I am not stacking up all your faults and failures or mistakes to hold against you. When I look at you, I see the good and the possibilities that others do not see. I see your heart—and I love you.

I see your every tear. I hear your every cry. I feel your every frustration, your every worry, burden, and desire. I know everything about you—all your wants, all your lacks. I see your heart and all that is in it, and I love you.

I am always right there by your side. I have never left you, and I will never, ever forsake you. Come to Me with all your heavy burdens and world-weariness and fix your eyes on life everlasting, where you will live in My love forever, eternally, immortally, without end.