

Chapter Two

The Journey

I was born in Wilmington Delaware in 1967. I was raised as an only child in a nice family, but in the absence of God. My parents had religious backgrounds, but chose to let me decide for myself later in life. There were several reasons for this but they are not important to the story. Modern aspects of religion had turned them off. I grew up not even thinking about or really hearing of God or a “god”. We did not attend church, discuss the Bible, or talk about God. God was abstract, distant, unknowable, and irrelevant to everyday life. The world around me testified to this in everyday.

My maternal grandmother was my only occasional experience with God, but this was extraneous and without real meaning to me. This was not her fault since I simply did not understand. She would pray before holiday meals to “Heavenly Father”, but that was the extent of it. I do recall a Bible being in the house and even paging through it, but I really didn’t know what it was about. She would talk now and again about the Lord, but I did not understand. When I was bad she told me “The good Lord will punish you.” I cannot recall ever going to church. In fact I considered it normal not to go since this was all I knew. She went all of the time though leaving us at home on Sunday mornings.

As the years passed by I had a great childhood with many friends, a nice house, great parents and *The American Dream*. God was not on the scene in anything I heard, saw, or learned from the world. I graduated high school in 1985 some eighteen years later. In my senior year I went on *The Ski Trip* with a friend. It was with a Christian group, but I didn’t know it. I thought I was going skiing. Everything seemed normal until the first night when we got to the ski lodge. My friend and I were separated, and I was suddenly surrounded by about six people. They descended upon me in a very uncomfortable way. At first I didn’t know what was happening. It was really weird. They were asking me about my religious beliefs, but I really didn’t have any.

We ended up debating Genesis. I fought it tooth and nail. I knew I was right since I had been taught evolution in school for years, and I was going to have a biology major in college. I had even written a term paper on evolution: *Lucy The Missing Link* between man and ape. If man had been created and not evolved then I would have been taught this in school. If there was even a controversy then both theories would have been presented. When we studied evolution in school no one ever mentioned creation. There was never any talk from a single student that there was another theory or that they objected. This was also the case later in college.

The sudden poof-poof creation of Adam and Eve was ridiculous anyway. The trip ended with me thinking these people were a bunch of kooks, and I was glad I was not religious. I would now stay away from these people in the future. I went home and told my parents who confirmed that some people were religious fanatics and a little crazy and aggressive. I then dismissed it and went on with my life. God was not even on the radar screen.

I can truly say I never thought about Him. My best friends were Jewish and we did not discuss religion at all. I don’t think religion or “God” ever came up in my school years except for that one

episode. We were all too busy studying, having fun, and living our lives. God was clearly portrayed as irrelevant in school since He was never mentioned. Silence is not neutrality. I never saw anyone reading or talking about the Bible either. "God" might be mentioned but never Jesus Christ.

I knew people who went to church, but there was no mention of Jesus Christ or the Bible. I never saw a single person in school ever reading or possessing a Bible. If Jesus was a part of their lives then He was never mentioned or discussed in any public situations. People went to church. It was all about going to church. This included people who went to Christian schools. The connection between church and daily life was never manifested to me in their lives. The things that went on were far from Christian.

I attended many summers at a Christian summer camp, but there was no religion or mention of God there either. On Sunday there was a generic worship service that the campers suffered through. Once again the things that went on there were far from Christian. The Bible and Jesus Christ were never mentioned.

I then went to college at Penn State University. I transferred in one year to the University of Delaware to be closer to home after a *Heart Attack*. God was still not someone who entered my mind. I was a biology major planning on medical school. I do specifically recall one specific event when I did think about God. I have never forgotten this event even though it was only a blip in my life. I was in a cellular molecular biology class studying a simple form of regulation for turning on and off a gene in the DNA that made a simple protein. The design of how this worked even on a simple organism was awesome. For at least two to three days I thought it must be an intelligent design. The process was too calculated and engineered to be explained by evolution or chance.

If you would have asked me about God before or after this event then I would have had the same response. God was someone I thought existed in an abstract way. It made sense that He existed somewhere and likely had a hand at least starting life and then evolution took over under His guidance. There was nothing more tangible or concrete about Him. God was not knowable or active in our world. In a sense He was not real. If He was then I would have heard about it. If the answer to God had been discovered then the news, school, or someone would have made it known to me. Instead it was all religion with many groups fighting and believing different things so that everyone lost and no one was right. I never saw or heard of personal relationships with Jesus being except on *The Ski Trip*, but they were kooks.

During my college years I did attend church two or three times with a girlfriend and her family when I visited. We went to church, and I felt very out of place. I didn't know how everyone knew what to chant or say at the same time. I really didn't even know what was going on beyond praying to God. I just went with them and got through the service. It was the proper thing to do, and I had great respect for her father and family. I did notice most of the kids just went through the motions.

I remember once a disheveled bearded man with a giant cross on campus. He was yelling and screaming at the students as they walked to class. He said we were all going to hell unless we let Jesus Christ save us. No one listened. He was a kook. I think campus police took him away.

In my senior year of college I took some drama classes. I had a theater minor which I enjoyed greatly. I went to see the play *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. I went alone. For some reason I cried during the

play and part of the way home. I did not know why at the time. I thought I was weird and didn't tell anyone.

Two of my roommates in college went to church regularly, but we did not discuss the details of their faith. They were sincere and reverent, but I simply blocked it out. God was important to them, but I did not understand this. They never pressured me either which I liked. I didn't really think about their church attendance since most people were recovering from hangovers on Sunday. I just didn't think of the world related to God in anyway, shape, or form. I was living my life, having a great time, and preparing for medical school. There was rarely a sense from anyone I encountered that was religious that God was real and alive. It was just a belief system that they chose to follow and this made sense.

College had also clearly taught me that God was abstract and unknowable. No single religion could be called correct. The answer was unknowable, and thus we should respect what everyone else believes. I agreed with this philosophy, and even took a course on philosophies of religion. There were too many religions in the world for there to be an answer. If God was real and tangible then man would have figured it out over the centuries instead of dividing himself with many different theories.

My summers during college were spent at the beach. I was a life guard and disc jockey. I still never thought about God. He did not exist in my world, since I was busy living life. This consisted of going to the beach, partying, drinking, chasing women, and working. It was all about me. I did very well in college and graduated Magna Cum Laude. I entered medical school in 1993.

My four years in medical school were pretty much the same except the beach, drinking, partying, and women were gone for the first three. I was in a book twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. I did very well in medical school. I had a great memory and was able to read very quickly with great retention. I graduated first in my class. I remember being disliked for my success in medical school. This was foreign to me since I never experienced this in college.

I was learning about how the human body worked. It was awesome and absolutely amazing, but it did not trigger thoughts about God in any concrete way since I believed in evolution. Evolution does not bring to mind any connection between man and God. Medical school is all about the human body, but there was no mention of God or creation in anything I was ever taught or read. If God had any role in the human body then He was left out of the one place you might expect Him to come up. He was irrelevant in medical school. Silence is not neutrality. I didn't realize how much of an impact so much silence was really having for all those years as *Engravings On The Heart*.

My thoughts were natural because any connection was an abstract, distant, or unknowable God. I was too busy studying all the time to become a doctor, and I lost my college girlfriend I mentioned earlier to these studies. My life was consumed with medical school. God was the last thing on my mind. If you would have told me I needed Him I would have laughed and told you to take a hike. There was nothing I had seen or experienced in twenty four years that made God necessary or desirable. Everything that the world had taught me from the schools to the mass media had etched this into my view of the world.

I did have a few friends who went to church, but I also knew them well enough to know what really goes on and is important. There was never any mention of the Bible or a relationship with Jesus. Church did not impact daily life or behavior behind closed doors.

I met my wife in the third year, and was married a little over one year later. We got married in a church. We met with the pastor twice for “marriage lessons”. The pastor was a very nice man. Church to me at this point was a place to learn some lessons about life but nothing more. Again there was never any indication of a reality to it all. The pastor was not concerned about my relationship with God or lack thereof which reinforced His unimportance. If Jesus was alive and knowable why wouldn’t he tell me when he knew I didn’t believe?

We were married in 1993, and I began my internship in Internal Medicine. I was basically annihilated for one solid year with nothing but work, work, work. There was no time to think about God. I never even considered Him and He never came up in the hospital. Even though people were dying no thought or discussion of God or an afterlife ever took place among doctors or nurses that I witnessed. God for all intents and purposes did not exist. In the hospital dead was dead.

Why would I have thought about God at this point in my life anyway? My only two experiences were negative and even a pastor failed to witness to me. I was doing well and on my way to a successful career. I was married and had a great wife with a great family. My parents were proud of me and life was going great! Society certainly did not embrace God or send the message that He was real and alive. College taught me there is no absolute truth. Truth was relative to your belief system and society was absolute.

In 1994 I became a resident in Dermatology at Duke University Medical Center. I worked very hard for three years fully consumed by learning Dermatology and being married. Once again things were going as planned. My life was consumed by marriage and residency training. God had no place, time, or thoughts with me. The modern paradigm of life was to be successful and do as well as you could.

Now my wife was raised Christian, but she had not been going to church either. She was busy with a pharmaceutical job. She tried to get me to go a few times, but I refused. Why should I go? What did I need? Church was something that they wanted me to do, but the ultimate truth behind it was absent. I wouldn’t have believed them anyway about “being saved”, but it’s an important point that even my own family and wife never brought it up. It all revolved around getting me to go to church. Church was the focus with its religion. It was clear to me that man was just being religious and it served no purpose for me. I could do something much more useful on my Sundays like sleep in, recover from a hangover, play golf, or mountain bike.

We moved to Apex, North Carolina in 1995 and bought a house during my residency. My wife tried a church one day. The next week she got a call from a woman she met. The women wanted to meet with her. They went on a walk in the woods and the woman tried to corner her about her beliefs and Jesus Christ. My wife thought it was really weird and got out of there. “I told you they are a bunch of kooks.” I said. This turned her off as well. God was still not even on the radar. He was further away if anything.

I graduated from Duke in 1997 and joined the faculty as a skin cancer surgeon and fellow. In 1998 we took a trip to visit my wife’s father in *Marco Island*, Florida. We had our first son. Her family was concerned about the child, and we had questions about the baby being baptized. It was our understanding that a child should be baptized or it might go to hell if it died. Baptism could “save” a child by this ritual.

We met with the minister of her parent's church who told us it wasn't necessary and did not save the child anyway. He said this idea of salvation from baptism was completely unbiblical, but a common misconception. If it is performed at all it should be an outward sign of a commitment to raise the child Christian. I recall very specifically asking him his opinion on the millions of people in the world that do not believe in Jesus Christ. Did he feel they were wrong and he was right? I had a real problem with these questions. I was convinced that no "loving God" would condemn these people. I thought maybe everyone was right and we all believed in the same God in different ways. This is what society had taught me in the age of tolerance. He was very clear that they are lost. He explained that is why there are thousands of missionaries all over the world, but I didn't buy it. This reinforced my viewpoint that religion was foolish man made nonsense.

My wife's father had two members from his church come to talk with us that night. I knew they were coming. I will never forget the knock on the door. I didn't at the time understand, but when I heard the knock and saw the door open I had an intense feeling that God was knocking and coming to see me. I didn't know why I felt this way, but it was real. When the door opened it was like something entered the room. It was very strange but real. For about two days I thought that maybe this was a sign. I had no reason to feel this but whatever happened made me agree to buy a Bible and start reading it when we got home. My wife bought an "NIV Study Bible". We were supposed to read together every night.

It started off strong three nights in a row, but then it faded, at least the together part. I did, however, keep reading at night while she slept. Something was drawing me to it, but I quickly hit a road block with the creation story of Adam and Eve. I didn't believe it for a second. It must be a parable, a made up story meant to teach about how life in general formed. I was a doctor, a scientist, and I knew the laws of nature. There was no way anybody could ever convince me that this was true.

The same thoughts occurred when I got to Noah's Ark and the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus. These were just ridiculous fairy tales invented by simple people thousands of years ago who were ignorant and didn't know any better. The intelligent man of 1998 knew for certain that such things were impossible. I would have debated this with anyone to the death. I had all the proof, and they had nothing except their belief that it was true. No proof at all. Fools!!! I had science on my side and they had nothing but faith.

That same Sunday we tried a nearby church. People were singing and holding their hands up in the air. This was weird. I was out of that church, and the whole thing ended right there in 1998. I was now certain I had made the right decision. I had found more weirdoes, foolish fairy tales about miracles, and people appearing from nothing by some God. I was done with it for good. I knew I was right. I was a doctor, number one in my class, a scientist, a scholar, and I knew better than these fools. I wouldn't sit in church to appear good or follow society's definition of righteousness. I refused to do it just to meet people or make business contacts even though *many* people encouraged me for this exact reason. They were giving me the honest off the record "side benefits" of church.

It's important to note I still knew nothing about Jesus or the New Testament. My wife agreed the church was a bit strange and so we were happily in agreement. After all, we were successful, making good money, had a nice house, a son, and great jobs. We had no need for church or religion especially since all of our experiences were weird. Religion had been tested out and it failed for us. We had some friends that had found "more normal" churches that delivered a "low key" message, but we

were not interested in any of it at this point. We were good people in a nice neighborhood, and I was then very busy starting a new private practice. It was all quickly forgotten.

Our newborn son had very bad colic, and it consumed us for nine months. My new job was very busy, and all of our time everyday was completely filled. There was no time or reason to think about God or life's purpose. We were just living one day at a time, and life was great. Our neighbors and friends were outstanding, and our life was on the right track. Religion never really came up again even with our neighbors or friends. Some of them went to church but so what.

Once again many things that went on were a far cry from Christian and make you wonder. You see the outsider sees no signs of any meaning to church in daily life. When you really get to know someone then you can see if their beliefs impact their life. Is it carried out into the world as a guide for daily living? It's easy to appear holy with a suit in church, but another thing to actually live it out.

In 1999 we moved into a much larger house. Money was not an issue, and life was without stress except for our kids. By this time we now had a second son, and our life was busy managing two young children. My goal was to work hard and save as much as I could for retirement and my family. Money could buy security and some degree of control over life. I had achieved what our society taught was the goal for life. I had obtained *The American Dream*.

The neighborhood we moved into was different though. In my old neighborhood everyone was friendly and nice. They were always outside, talking, and interacting like one big family. This was not the case here. When taking a walk some people would ignore you or barely give an acknowledgeable hello. I was in a neighbor's driveway once chatting when a woman came up I had never seen before. She completely pretended I wasn't there. I later found out she was a Christian. I had known it all along hadn't I?! Another one. I was offended at first but really didn't care. Friends had told me that the more expensive the neighborhood the less friendly it was. They were right.

At work there was little talk about Jesus either. Our society had also invented privatization, where you were not supposed to talk about it in public. There was one very nice woman who was a great employee and I liked her a lot. She was labeled "very religious" by another employee and I. We even mocked her reading the Bible every morning at work. "What nonsense" we said. There was one time she went on a retreat of some kind, and that was also mocked. It was a waste of vacation time in our minds. She should have done something fun.

She was the only person I had ever met who outwardly showed her faith. She read the Bible everyday and talked about it. She mentioned "The Lord" and talked about a relationship with Him. It wasn't simply about church but Jesus in her life. She quoted Scripture and talked about how the Bible and Jesus guide her life. Her light was out on a lampstand and everyone could see it even if you didn't believe it. Of course there are many people who simply choose to keep God private, but I can only tell you what I observed in life. If God is real and personal why hide it? Hidden and secret comes across as non-genuine or ashamed. This woman had something different than I had ever observed before even though it did seem weird.

Time marched on until the spring of 2003. I became aware of what I viewed as hypocritical behavior by some Christians. If love is the goal then it was nowhere to be found. The details are not important. When you interpret something in a particular way it's real to you even if you are wrong. I then heard that a child told another child that she was not a "real Christian". Now this bothered me.

When I heard this it was the last straw. I asked the woman at work about it who was very sound in her biblical knowledge. She raised her eyebrows without comment. She didn't have to say anything. I knew what she meant. I announced it to the lab and said if my children and I were going to be judged then I wanted to know on what basis. The important aspect is that this behavior led me to get mad. In my anger I decided to read the Bible seeking ammunition against hypocrisy.

I went out and bought a study Bible right away. I felt like an alien in the Christian bookstore. I even thought about a disguise, but I just got in and out as quickly as I could. I did wear a hat and sunglasses. I knew I would find the ammunition to refute them and prove the hypocrisy of their own faith. I didn't know much, but even I knew "love thy neighbor as thyself."

I will never forget the day I told the woman in the lab I was going to read the Bible. She just looked deep into my eyes. She might have said "good", but I cannot recall. I do remember the look though. I saw a silent excitement in her eyes. It's also critical to understand several things at this point. I had no idea what I would read about except that Jesus, Mary, and the wise men would be in there. I went in with a clean slate and no preconceived ideas about the content. I was on a personal mission. No one else knew except my wife, but even she didn't really know what was going on. I was only in search of ammunition with no interest in Christianity itself. I wanted to read the legal document to find clauses that would support my case.

I also bought a PC Bible of the same version for my computer, because I was embarrassed to be seen with a Bible. I mainly used my PC Bible so no one would know what I was doing. I wouldn't be caught dead with a Bible. I decided to read the New Testament this time, since the Old was a failure. I began to read. This is where it gets interesting.

Chapter Three

The Awakening

I read the first two books of the New Testament (Matthew and Mark) in about four days. I turned back on my old medical school brain that had been inactive for a while. Luckily it was still there. Both books were pretty similar in their story. I didn't get it. Why tell the same story twice? Many of the parables were difficult. I had to slow down and really think about their meaning. I did not believe the miracles. I was captivated by the fact that Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh. I didn't believe it, but it got my attention.

Luke was next and again the same story. Why? Several things caught my eye this time though. He was a physician like me, and was noted to have been an excellent historian. Luke also made a strong statement at the beginning that he really researched the story and made sure he got it right. This gave it more validity to my scientific mind, and now I read a bit more intently. I thought more deeply and read slower.

The next book was John and I was immediately taken in by the strong language. I was drawn into what the words of Jesus were much more this time. In no uncertain terms he was claiming to be God visiting His creation called earth. This was also true in the other three Gospels, but it was more powerful here. This thought was fascinating to me. I never really thought of it that way before. I never considered the possibility that if it were true then it would be the most remarkable event in all of human history. I did not know a lot about religion, but I knew no other religion ever claimed that God Himself came to earth as a savior.

As I read on the words seemed alive. It was more than just reading a story. They seemed to be talking to me directly. I was reading on a plane trip to New Orleans, and I must admit I was holding back tears for some strange reason. Yes I was almost crying reading the Bible. I was glad no one was around. The words had power and did something to me I cannot fully describe. They even made me dwell on them when I was not reading the Bible.

The other thing that grabbed me was the meaning behind the words. It was deep with many layers. The level of understanding of human nature was profound. I kept wondering what human could come up with such words, lessons, or revelation. I had to stop and really think about what was being said.

When Lazarus and the little girl were raised from the dead I was awestruck. I can't say I believed it for certain, but I was captivated. I could not put it down. The real zinger came at the end when John said I was there, this is an eyewitness account. My heart sank. I was really pondering this. The implication was that he was there and witnessed God on the earth. I kept thinking this man walked, ate, and talked with God if it was true. What a fascinating concept. I had no idea the Gospels had this information, because I had absolutely no prior knowledge about Jesus.

I had no idea that two of them were eyewitness accounts. I did not know that the basic concept was God in the flesh on earth to save it. I wasn't sold at all though, but captivated by the concept. I also had the feeling that the writings were genuine. Who would lie about such a thing? I investigated a bit and found out that no one ever claimed any of these events to be lies. This included the Pharisees.

There was also something much more profound about the apostles. Eleven of them died tortuous and cruel deaths because they believed in Jesus as God and His resurrection. The key fact that haunted me is that they would have known it was a lie if the story wasn't true. This was incredibly compelling to me. Many people die for a lie but they don't know it's not true. The disciples would have known they were dying for a lie they made up. Who would do such a thing?

It was also very interesting that they had to be convinced it was true. They did not believe at first. After Jesus was raised from the dead they were changed and became very courageous. This really spoke to me that they actually saw Jesus alive after his burial. What else would make them change so quickly? Everything they were hoping for died on the cross. A falsified story about a risen carpenter would be absolutely useless to them.

The transformation of Paul also made me very curious because he was persecuting Christians. For a religious Pharisee to suddenly proclaim Jesus as God was suicide in his day. I just couldn't think of any reason other than Paul seeing Jesus resurrected to explain his behavior. These stories also circulated while all of the unbelievers were alive. They were never once challenged or accused of lying. Some of the apostles even appealed to the religious leaders that they themselves had seen these miracles themselves.

The final aspect that caught my attention was that Jesus left no room to call Himself a great moral teacher or a mere wise man. I had heard this before and even believed it myself. There was no room for that now though, since I had read all four Gospels. Even I, the greatest skeptic of all time, could not make such a claim when somewhere deep down inside I wanted to. There was no room for such a theory and I was trapped. He was either God, a liar, or the greatest lunatic of all time. I had to either reject or accept but not yet. By this time the search for ammunition and any thoughts of the neighborhood were gone. I was in search of truth if it existed.

During this period the woman from work said to me one day "I pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal Himself to you." I thought about this comment a lot. What did she mean? Sometimes late at night when I was reading I would look around the room and at the ceiling. I wasn't sure whether something might jump out. I just had no idea what this meant and didn't ask. Once again I had never heard the Holy Spirit ever mentioned before. What Holy Spirit?

I then proceeded to read the rest of the New Testament in about a week. I just wanted to get through it and see its content. By the time I was finished I was impressed but far from believing it all, certainly not all of the miracles. I also thought of a few new difficult questions. How did the writers remember what was said thirty to sixty years later? If the words were not exactly what Jesus spoke then Christianity falls apart. I then decided to examine the historicity of the New Testament. I examined the Bible with a microscope, since I was a scientist and scholar. I would not make a decision without checking out the evidence and answering all of the difficult questions.

I took two to three steps backwards when I first ordered some lectures from two University professors. I figured where better to start than listening to lectures on the New Testament from college professors at major universities. They were heads of their departments with many degrees in their field. I could relate to their academic background, and I was sure anyone with a Ph.D in the New Testament would know and tell the truth.

I started listening to both of these professors, but I quickly found a profound sense that they didn't believe any of the New Testament as true historical events. They did not come out and say it, but I could tell. I was actually disappointed and very troubled since by now I really wanted it to be true. I had a sick feeling inside. They were professors at major universities and must be right. The more I listened the worse I felt.

I had proven to myself it wasn't true by their wisdom and trusting in their education, degree, and stature in society. It was now becoming just a bunch of nice stories people manufactured to promote their cause. Some truth was mixed with fiction and impossible supernatural acts. Sure the authors believed in what they wrote but truth is relative right?

One of the professors presented the characters of the New Testament like they were fictional characters which I thought was odd. The other one was even a bit sarcastic a few times. It was very subtle, but I caught it. This professor even taught that Jesus did not claim to be God. Now I knew something was funny. I was searching with an open heart and mind and clearly understood Jesus was claiming to be God. These clues were critical, since I was close to packing it in. I suspected a motive and decided to look elsewhere for facts.

I was blown away to find out that the New Testament is the most historically attested book of all time. It embarrasses any other piece of ancient literature by leaps and bounds. Not only are there far more manuscripts than other ancient historical writings, but the time gap between the actual events and their writing was far shorter.

I found out there are more than 20,000 copies of New Testament manuscripts compared to 643 for the Iliad. Most other ancient writings that are taken as historical fact today don't even have over a hundred! More than this the dates of the copies are over 1,000 years after the actual historical events took place and were first written compared to less than 60 years for the New Testament.¹ Now I was really suspicious. Why in the world had no one ever told me these facts!?! The data was so profound it almost seemed like an intentional cover up or suppression of evidence.

The icing on the cake was I also discovered for both the Old and the New Testaments that the scriptures were preserved through time with 99.5% accuracy.² None of the "errors" or changes affected the message at all! Jesus was still God dying for the sins of the world from cover to cover. I did not believe it, but I knew the text claimed it and that it was well preserved. I read carefully about things added to the Bible and which books were excluded, but none of them held water. I was absolutely astounded.

I had already found a sound reason to trust the authors' ability and reliability to tell the truth, but now I also found the Bible to be more than historically sound and well preserved. I was excited again, but still not convinced. My next step was to email one of the professors in the New Testament who didn't believe it as historical reality. They were very gracious to answer my questions.

This professor basically claimed that the writers of the Bible were not objective. Their religious beliefs affected their view of historical reality (e.g. because they were a Christian they believe that Jesus rose from the dead). This professor neglected the parallel though that our beliefs about historical reality affect our religious beliefs (e.g. because I believe Jesus rose from the dead I am a Christian). Without historical reality, our religious beliefs are unfounded; thus, our religious beliefs cannot be said to be creating our historical reality. It seemed that that they felt if you were objective you could not believe in anything for certain, agnosticism. Truth was unknowable since supernatural events were invoked.

Here's an example:

How did Julius Caesar die?

- A. He hanged himself
- B. A heart attack in bed
- C. Stabbed to death in the Roman senate
- D. Chariot accident.

C is the correct answer. A,B,D are false. The correct answer excludes the others. We don't as a society say "Well you can't say which is right or it's ok if you believe A and I believe D and another B. It's nice we all have different opinions." Truth is exclusive by nature. I was frustrated with them because I knew this either really occurred or it simply did not. I knew that only one set of historical events has occurred on this earth. Many events from the ancient world were accepted as fact and doctrine on substantially less evidence and documentation. Something was wrong I just didn't know what. Jesus and miracles changed the way history was evaluated and I had no idea why, but I was determined to find out.

I did agree, however, that due to the implications of Jesus as God the Bible deserved the utmost scrutiny. It was clear that I had reliable eyewitness accounts of God on earth as a true historical event. The only question was could I really believe it. I also realized that if I simply couldn't decide I was still rejecting Jesus. I was uncomfortable with this truth because of His claims.

I next read "The Case for Christ" by Lee Strobel. In this book he visits many top notch well respected scholars in all areas. In every area he answered all of my questions. The professors he interviewed were excellent. I sensed no bias even though they were arguing that Jesus is God. I trusted them. I suddenly was really excited. As I read on, all of the most difficult questions had an answer. Sure there could be counter arguments, but the answers were sound. Even the pickiest of detailed questions that I had were somehow in there. I could have escaped by unbelief, but I was in search of truth instead of escaping it. The message of Jesus was all good! I had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Right around this time I had *The Patient* who worked for a church. He was odd in a way I could not put my finger on. Right before he was about to leave he said to me out of the blue "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord & savior?" This was when I was struggling. He took me completely by surprise. I said "Oh yeah yeah" and quickly moved out of the room.

I was now really thinking about "I hope the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to you." I will have a hard time putting this to words but I could feel something in the air especially when I was alone. It was like something was there just like that night in *Marco Island*. It was swirling about me in a strange aurora I could only feel and sense. I didn't tell anyone since I knew they would think I was crazy.

A tug of war then ensued in my mind between the two sides. Two particular verses kept popping into my head:

1. I know very well how foolish the message of the cross sounds to those who are on the road to destruction. But we who are being saved recognize this message as the very power of God. As the Scriptures say,

I will destroy human wisdom and discard their most brilliant ideas. So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made them all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never find him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save all who believe. ¹

2. Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. ²

I was already almost convinced by Lee Strobel and my research on the Bible. Then like a ton of bricks it hit me. I didn't realize that IF the story is true then miracles are nothing and God giving man the words of the Bible thirty years later is easy. If the Bible was true then God made the entire universe. It was illogical to then question miracles and writings. I had taken God out of the equation when evaluating the New Testament when it was all about Him!? It all came down to did it really happen?

Finally, I thought "Ok, I believe it. I can intellectually accept Christianity. Now I can go to church and my wife will leave me alone." I knew it wouldn't kill me, but I didn't think there was anything else to it. A few days later late in my office one night something strange happened. I started thinking about all of my bad habits, character flaws, and many things that I had done that were wrong. I started remembering things from childhood to adulthood. My heart was sinking as I realized how I had many bad qualities like bitterness, jealousy, hostility, arguing, a short temper, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition and feeling like I was always right. Everything I had ever done was racing through my mind. I hated myself as I reviewed it in my mind. I was crying alone in the office. This now took on a life of its own. The real me that everyone including myself knew would never be doing such a thing. I could not stop it though.

I saw myself dead in my sins before a Holy God. I had broken the Ten Commandments, and knew I was guilty before God's judgment seat. I briefly sensed how fallen man is and felt afraid. I then just let it all out sobbing and crying harder than I ever have in my entire life. I went to the bed and pleaded to God (I had never prayed before and didn't know I was praying). I do not recall the exact words but it was something like: "God please help me. I am sorry. I was so wrong about the world. Please help me. I believe in Jesus Christ your Son as Lord and Savior. I believe He died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me. I don't want to be like this anymore. I want it to all go away. Jesus please help me. Please make me the person you want me to be."

This prayer will become very important later. The words just came out. I really did not know what I was saying or doing. I did not expect God to hear me, but I was on autopilot. I had not planned to have such an emotional episode, and certainly didn't want to as a proud adult male. Something just came over me that made me apologize, surrender, and beg for mercy. I had no concept that I was accomplishing anything other than a private emotional meltdown.

I must have gone on and on like this for at least fifteen minutes. I was crying so hard the words were disjointed. I had surrendered. I had thrown myself at the mercy of God and begged like a timid animal to be forgiven. I could somehow feel His power which made my cry harder. Then I slowly re-gathered

myself. I felt really weird and embarrassed. I got into bed and went to sleep. As I laid there in bed I felt an immense sense of peace. I slept like a baby. I figured I purged many years of guilt through a good cry. I went to bed with no idea what had actually happened to me.

Now let me digress for just a bit. I was never an evil person. I never physically abused anyone or my family. I did have many bad qualities that a lot of people have. I had a short temper with outbursts of anger even over stupid things. I was bitter and resentful at times. I wasn't nearly as loving and caring to my wife as I should have been. I was self centered and wanted it my way now. I thought I was always right. I was jealous, materialistic, and had a competitive pride. I was impatient which really equates to selfishness. I felt better and ahead of others by my achievements and possessions. I enjoyed pushing people's buttons and would dig at what I knew hurt them in a subtle way. It was all about me and what I wanted to do. I was empty, lonely, and completely unsatisfied with life despite having everything the world had to offer.

In the morning when I woke up everything was completely different in every conceivable way. I will never be able to explain what it was like. If you were born blind and lived this way your entire life, and suddenly one day you could see is the closest analogy to capture the magnitude of what I was experiencing. Everything was dramatically different. I first thought I just needed a cup of coffee to wake up. I was very relaxed and peaceful with my normal feeling of stress gone. Over the course of the day I began to realize all of my bad qualities were simply gone. It was like someone had drugged me. It took me about three days to realize I wasn't dreaming. In fact on day three I started waking up scared. I was afraid I would go back to my old self. I kept waiting for it to return, but it never did.

I first thought it was some kind of self induced euphoria, but it was too radical of a change to make sense. I did not know what had happened nor could I understand it. I didn't even consider any relation to my religious studies. Even if God was real and somehow Jesus died for people's sin almost two thousand years ago how could there be any direct relation to me in the year 2003? The mind cannot consider what it does not think is even possible.

I did feel great in an indescribably peaceful way. The only way to describe it is by these nine qualities: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Overnight I had traded the old self for this ?! I felt all nine of these qualities, and I looked at everything differently. I did not get mad or angry. I was patient in lines and traffic jams. I decided to put it to the test!

I went in stood in line at Walmart at Christmas time which was unthinkable for the old and impatient Greg Viehman. I couldn't believe it! I wasn't the least bit upset or mad. I could care less the line was long and not even moving! This was crazy! I just couldn't get over it but who could I tell? I knew they would think I was a kook. I even checked my beta-blocker pills to make sure somehow they didn't get switched out for valium.

I had no desire to snap or mock anyone. Everything I had described earlier was simply gone. I felt love for others that I didn't even like! Now this is a very strange feeling to have overnight. It's a feeling of compassion and love that is coming from you but somehow you know it's not you. This was especially the case for me. It's very difficult to put to words without losing the tremendous magnitude of what had happened. Those first few days were some of the strangest days I have ever lived. A man comes to know what he is like and how he feels after thirty six years. I had experienced some good cries in the past, but this was something far beyond description or comprehension.

Now my physician, analytical, and scientific mind began to work. This was no self induced psychological job, not even infinitely close. I had known myself all of my life, and I was blown away at what had happened to me. I then began to analyze it all. I had to piece it together since I had no expectations that anything like this could happen. I had no answer and couldn't tell anyone or they would think I was crazy. Suspension of my medical license was a real fear. I did not even tell my wife. I also feared maybe something was wrong with me physically. It's not easy for a proud doctor who thought he understood the human body to not understand what has happened to his own existence. I was different in every way. I did not have an experience but a transformation. The very nature of my existence had been changed. Religion, emotions, feelings, desires, and even the deepest yearnings cannot produce this. What in the world was going on?

Chapter Four

The Analysis

The Analysis of what happened to me, and how I arrived there is critical. The starting point and assimilation of facts that followed deserve careful illustration and attention to detail. I want to review the circumstances preceding my transformation, and then carefully analyze my thought process as God put the pieces together. I began *The Journey* to find ammunition against hypocritical Christians, which I felt were not practicing what they preach. I was looking to find evidence of hypocrisy in their Bible. I was not out to prove Christianity true. I repeat. I was not out in any way, shape, or form to prove Christianity true.

I was the biggest skeptic of all time, and had no reason or need for religion in my life. I wanted to use the Bible, the book that was so revered by others, to illustrate their own failure to follow it. I would vindicate what I knew was true all along. Church people act holy one day a week without carrying what is preached into their daily lives. It's a charade of righteousness and social morality only exists in the pews and the mind, but not in the real world. That was the goal and nothing more.

My starting point was as close as possible to zero experience or knowledge of religion or the Bible. This is an important distinction I would unknowingly discover later. I maybe believed in a god somewhere, but only in an abstract way. The idea of a real and active personal God at work right now in the present day was not even a possibility in my mind. I was the gemstone of a modern society permeated with and reverent of tolerance, relative truth, evolution, and God as unknowable.

What happened next was a gradual and unnoticed entrapment into the subject matter. The search for ammunition quickly became a quest for truth with the artillery long forgotten. I did this alone with almost no outside influences, *Just The Bible* and commentaries on it. My fallacious traits brought a strong conviction of guilt with an unplanned surrender to Jesus Christ in my room one night. Self-condemnation took on a life of its own that caused a confession, repentance, and plea for help that unknowingly triggered a transaction of immense proportions with unforeseen eternal implications.

I thought I had in a moment of weakness turned temporarily "soft", and planned to bury it forever. What internally was a weird and embarrassing occurrence would prove to be the most life changing and eye opening event I will ever see as long as I am alive on this earth. I had no idea what had happened to me. None. The thought of finding Christianity tangibly real was impossible.

As I went to bed that night there were no expectations simply because they did not exist in my mind. The best case scenario consisted of regular church attendance. People that knew me might say 'that boy needed a little religion in his life anyway'. I had found a religion that was believable, but any present reality or tangibility was not a consideration. I only expected church, because this was the only thing I had ever seen except from the woman at work. As I went to sleep my universe created by the modern world did not include anything more.

I remember reading Josh McDowell's testimony which described his anger dissipating over time after accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. I distinctly recall not understanding how this was possible. How could his personality change from prayer? My medical degree and knowledge of science precluded any

link between a single prayer and complete change of personality and emotions. These are deeply wired within the brain and nervous system in biochemical pathways that are poorly understood. Socialization from the modern world eliminated any ability to understand the relationship between the two. In my mind it had to be a self induced psychological change powered by a religious belief, a self induced euphoria.

I had found a God I could believe was real by historical analysis and faith, but I left Him in the realm of intellectualism. Nothing I had ever seen or heard in the world suggested a knowable reality to God. Growing up in the absence of God in a society ignoring God does not lead to any expectation other than religion. This had been ingrained in my mind for thirty six years. My faith would be based on my own personal journey comprised of the detailed examination of the evidence, since I trusted my own judgment.

I had planned to tell my wife that week “Ok. I’ll go to church. I have examined the evidence and it seems to be believable.” The outline for the future was comprised of a weekly church service, learning from the pastor, and a few hours of quality family time. I was even glad it was all over so I could catch up with my other hobbies. I never did.

The fact is I awoke as a completely transformed and new person in everyway. My brain, personality, emotions, thoughts, and neurological wiring were changed overnight. This was a fact that I had to sort out. I knew something was indescribably different, but I walked around for at least three days not knowing what had happened or how. It didn’t enter my mind that there could be a relation to my surrender since it was just a weird experience that night.

I decided to read the Bible and look for answers which led to the most startling realization of my life. It went far beyond my concept of reality and the universe that I had known, studied, and lived in for thirty six years. God actually heard what I said that night! *He Heard Me* and acted upon it! I was saved and didn’t even know it. It was amazing and comical at the same time.

I found in the scriptures what I had missed the first time through. The Holy Spirit of God Himself is put into the body at salvation. Salvation is not just a prayer to God, but triggers an actual transaction from God. The moment I cried out to God He forever changed the very nature of my existence. I was reconnected, alive, and restored by God now living within me. This was incredible! This is personal proof that Christianity is reality not religion. Faith becomes based on a new existence and not intellectual acceptance of doctrine. This was shocking and completely unexpected to me in today’s age of reason dominated by tolerance, agnosticism, and naturalism.

I kept thinking “You mean God is *that* real and knowable?!” I literally could not believe it, but this was just the beginning of *The Analysis of The Awakening*. I had stumbled into this and still had a lot of sorting out to do. The realization became evident that I was a walking miracle and proof of Christianity. It was also quickly evident that many people didn’t want to see or hear about such proof either. I found this was especially prominent in some people who go to church which was beyond perplexing for me. Why wasn’t everyone as excited as I was?

Now I completely understand why. The implications of that kind of reality to God are staggering and difficult to a world that is largely raised so far from this paradigm. It’s much easier for God to be distant and Jesus a fact that happened almost two thousand years ago. My mind was saying “Whooaa! I didn’t expect Jesus Christ to be *that* real and present. No one told me that His Spirit is put inside you at salvation.” Everything I was doing in life and had ever been taught were so far from this truth that I

understand why it is naturally avoided. Church on Sundays is much easier. I had no choice though since it was too late. The fact that I had never heard about this proof with so many Christians all around was *A Clue* to what I would find.

I carefully thought this through step by step.

1. The God of Christianity is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He see,hears, and knows all. This had to be the case if *He Heard Me* in my own bedroom. How this worked I didn't know.
2. The Bible is true cover to cover from every word to every sentence as the inspired and authoritative word of God as it claims to be. One part is not true and others false. Anything less is an internal contradiction with the definition of God. If He is alive and real then His book claiming to be His word must be so. Omnipotent God can certainly make sure a book is exactly the way He wants it. This has many consequences, and would lead to a plethora of other questions needing resolution. This was in addition to the objective proof of scripture from prophecy, the nation of Israel, and the historical soundness of the Bible.
3. Jesus Christ is the only answer to being made right with God as the New Testament states.
4. All other religions about God are false in ways that they contradict the Bible. Truth is exclusive by nature. This is a strong statement, but there are no other logical conclusions.
5. Heaven is a real place. This was exciting.
6. Hell is a real place. I was on my way there and had no idea. Thank God.

At this point that was all I could conclude. I did not know how it worked or how God *Heard Me*. Each conclusion would lead to many more difficult and complex questions that had to be reconciled. The most profound aspect that I thought a long time about was that *He Heard Me*. *He Heard Me* and acted upon it! **The reader needs to stop here and think of the implications this has for what we think of as reality.** The world is a very big place. Let the implications of this sink in.

This one undeniable fact began to change the way I thought about everything past, present, and future. The implications would change the very nature of everything I would think about, do, and say. It's not like I pushed a button saying "Ok listen up now because I am going to talk to you God." I did not fire a flare into the air or go up on my roof and scream for God to listen. The reality of the world changes by an infinite degree from this one fact. I still think about it everyday.

I also quickly understood exactly why this is a God that man doesn't want to be real. All secrets go away and full accountability instantly appears when you realize just how profound the implications of *He Heard Me* are. I could not reject or escape by unbelief, because it was already proven to me. I had to deal with it even though it was a very uncomfortable thought. I think this one aspect can tell a lot about why Christianity has been rejected and why stories like mine are explained away. These six points will now be reviewed in detail.

1. The God of Christianity is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. This means God is aware and active over the entire earth for all people at all times. Yes billions of people. He heard my prayer and acted on it. What if one thousand people over the whole world were doing the same? How could He hear and act on all of them or be aware if another five hundred would do it ten seconds later? I was not told to call back because the line was busy. What does this incomprehensible truth mean? How did He know the heart behind the words!?! This is even more profound.

Our concept of reality is far from what really exists. God is infinitely more complex than our minds can even begin to comprehend. The converse of this is also true. Humans are infinitely less complex than God. Mankind thinks he knows and has mastered a lot about the world, the universe, and science. I quickly realized I knew nothing at all. Nothing.

My initial self elevated status went from near the top of intelligence and knowledge about life, the earth, medicine, and science, to a creation of God who is infinitely more complex than my “complex” brain could ever imagine. I had been rewired at the cellular level. I knew the human body inside and out, and somehow my brain and neural connections were completely rearranged. What did this mean? I was a miracle, a real present day act of God miracle. I was walking and living proof that Jesus Christ existed and was right there in the room when I prayed that night. Suddenly, I believed all of the miracles in the Bible.

Any God that is able to rewire a human being can do whatever He wants, like walk on water, part the sea, and heal the blind. Give me “In the beginning God” and *He Heard Me* and all miracles disappear for they are nothing. A vast and endless universe suddenly shrank down to nothing. Man went from being master of the universe to a creation of an awesome power called God. The human race went from being the intelligent scientists running the experiments to the amoeba in the water being observed. What was my reaction as I reasoned through this?

Joy, excitement, and a mesmerizing euphoria beyond any words all filled my heart since I was now a creation of God. Before this I was convinced of being nothing more than a cosmic chance event that evolved from a Big Bang. I came from cosmic soup through apes into a human. This was a transformation from the definition of meaningless to a divinely created and valued being. I was awestruck. My life suddenly had so much more meaning and importance. I wasn’t just cosmic dust that organized itself by chance over billions of years as I had learned in school. Suddenly, I was a creation that was important to Someone awesomely powerful.

The four big questions were answered:

1. Where did I come from? 2. Why am I here? 3. Who am I? 4. Where do I go when I die?

The answers now had meaning instead of the emptiness and fear of being a random event in space with no purpose, afterlife, or intrinsic value. Somehow the thought of death was always troubling to me especially when I hugged my children, and watched them lay innocently asleep in *A Moment of Silence*. I wondered how my intense love for them could only have meaning and origination from my own mind. If they tragically died then the source of this love would become matter without life that would decay back to its pre-evolved state. How does a child that inhabits the heart and soul only represent evolved matter?

This was another *Clue* that I had overlooked for so many years after being indoctrinated into evolution. Death went from being a cold and meaningless recycling of matter to entering eternity with my Father. I never dreamed of such a radical reality change! Now my entire family was the creation of God who promised love and eternal life. It was too good to be true and yet it was true.

It was then that I realized everything I had ever believed and been taught about my existence and purpose was a lie. I had been living in *The Great Deception*, a deceived state of reality that man has made to protect his heart from the truth of his fallen and separated existence. Yes, the genius doctor knew nothing about his world, the universe or existence for one third of his life. This

shook me to the bone. I walked around wondering how I could have been deceived my entire life.

God and the Big Bang is an insulting attempt to merge oil and water. God does not need evolution over millions of years to make His divine creation. This theory which I will explain later also contradicts the basic doctrine of the entire Christian message, the resurrection. If *He Heard Me* then I am created in His image period. This presented absolutely no problems for me at this point. I also began to ponder do people really believe in evolution, because it is logical or because evolution destroys the creation event, the power, and accountability of *He Heard Me*?

As I thought about creation and *The Ski Trip* incident I had to admit to myself this was true. I rejected this story in part because the creative power behind it spoke of ownership, sovereignty, and accountability that I did not want. I always hated admitting that I was wrong, but I was about to splurge into being wrong in every aspect of my life as I worked my way through *The Analysis*.

Paradoxically, once I was on the other side the fear of accountability and God's all knowing presence was replaced by comfort and relationship. I was so lonely most of my life I was ecstatic that He was there and so personal. I have never felt lonely, empty, or disenchanting since the day I was saved.

The next logical step led to a more difficult and frightening conclusion. Could money, power, and prestige motivate not only the creation of evolutionary theory, but the suppression of creationism? The nature of man proclaims an astounding and horrifying yes. This was very troubling because my entire education and framework for understanding medicine and life on earth was being turned upside down. How could I have lived for thirty six years and have been taught evolution as the only theory from grade school through medical school if creationism was true? Man wouldn't really do this on purpose or would he? All of it becoming a lie will rattle the very core of a persons past, self identity, and meaning from hundreds of hours of study. What I would find would do just that but on a grander scale than I could have ever imagined.

2. The Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God – God by definition would not have a revelational book for His creation that contained any errors or truths that only modern man could figure out. Does a God who creates the entire universe have trouble inspiring a book exactly the way He wants it?

The Bible had already passed all of the historical and reliability tests for me before I was saved. It was clearly the word of God by its cohesiveness despite many authors over such a long period of time. The preservation of Israel and the many prophecies of Jesus clearly proved its divine authorship.

Now that God was also personal and tangibly present within me how could I doubt His word? If He changed the nature of my existence why would I question His ability to make a book? I also realized that since I was saved with the Holy Spirit within me the Bible came to life in a brand new way. Now the Author was inside me to instruct and teach me. He witnesses to you that it is true. You cannot understand this until you are saved.

3. Jesus Christ is the only answer to being made right with God as the New Testament states. Jesus claimed to be God, proved to be God by historically rising from the dead, and will answer your prayer as God changing you just like me when you call on Him. He is just as tangibly knowable

today as he was 2000 years ago. He is the only way because he is God. The only way for man to be saved from the penalty of sin, which is death, was for God to die in our place. He is the only way because there was no other way even for God Himself. To complain about one way instead of rejoicing for there to actually be a way is illogical. Jesus gives mankind the righteousness of God that allows us to enter heaven.

I must also issue a warning worth remembering. I have found that every cult denies the full deity of Jesus Christ. If you pin them down and ask them “Is He fully God eternally equal to the Father who always was and always will be?” then they will deny Him. They will play on the word “Son of God” and use all kinds of wrangling schemes. They don’t realize they are blaspheming the work on the cross of the eternal God. Run from them.

4. All other religions are false in ways they contradict the Bible. Truth is exclusive by nature as Ravi Zacharias taught me in his books. All worldviews when carefully studied are exclusive and cannot all be right. This is applied in every setting except God by our society.

This was a very difficult fact that I was forced to swallow. I researched other religions and found they were not all the same and are not all worshiping the same God. They were all exclusive at many points and filled with internal contradictions. I did not understand how this could have happened at first. I had always viewed a world of religious pluralism as proof there is no answer. If there was an answer then man would have not run off in so many directions. A world of religious pluralism perfectly reinforced my notion that the real God was unknowable and manifesting Himself in many different ways.

I quickly began to realize that if man didn’t want accountability, but felt a need to be religious and quiet his conscience I just might have reversed the logic. We must be seeing the results of man running from the truth or inventing his own.

I also realized all other religions are man reaching out to God when Christianity is God reaching out to man. Other religious figures are dead while Jesus is alive. No other religion has a Savior that comes with the answers to sin. Jesus not only speaks the truth, but gives man the ability to actually carry it out by indwelling the saved believer. No other religion has God on earth saving man and then inhabiting mans existence to change him. Other religious books also fail to pass almost any of the historical tests that the Bible sets the standard for.

5. Heaven is a real place – I had always worried about and feared death. The peace, relief, and comfort that emanate from an absolute certainty of eternal life cannot be described. The fear, uncertainty, anguish, and lack of meaning that characterize death in today’s world all vanish. No single question has plagued mankind more than death. Conquering death with a tangible heaven does more for the human mind and spirit than anything else conceivable. I could not believe that eternal life starts now on earth before I even get to heaven!!
6. Hell is a real place – I never considered while growing up the possible reality of heaven or hell. They were imaginary places created in the minds of humans seeking a meaning that did not exist. God proved the Bible and Jesus Christ are real in one mighty demonstration of power and healing in my bedroom that night. Jesus spoke more about hell than heaven when I looked at the Gospels. I remembered hearing about pastors who did not believe in hell, but this made no sense to me since Jesus so clearly talked about it many times. They had better inform Jesus about their modern interpretation.

The reality of hell also made sense. Man is born separated from God due to sin and simply stays separated if he dies in his sin. God does not send anyone to hell. They choose it by denying His own personal sacrifice. What more could God do to save us and convince us? Man cannot enter heaven without the righteousness of God imparted to him. If people don't want a relationship with God now then he won't force one in the next life. God proved his love in that while man was still sinful He came and died for us. The cross shows Gods heart to save mankind. I think it will take eternity to understand what he actually did on the cross.

The next area that needs explanation is the transformation itself. How does it work? What happens to someone who is saved by accepting Jesus Christ? How did God hear my prayer in my bedroom that night? How could a human be transformed in such an unimaginable way? Without this radical transformation of my very being I would have awoken the same person the next morning. I would have nothing but faith to go on. This is exactly what I expected so it wouldn't have been a surprise anyway.

What exactly did happen? The complexity and reality of the transaction cannot be understood by man except in the simplest of terms. When such a prayer is spoken from the heart several critical things occur as God hears and answers by His grace. First is the forgiveness of sin which leads to a new verdict of "not guilty" with God. Jesus Christ now pays your penalty for sin, and this enables you to be reconnected to God when His Holy Spirit enters your body and joins with your spirit to make you spiritually alive. This aspect is the rebirth of the spirit. The results can be dramatic and immediate like I experienced or more commonly a gradual process that occurs over time.

The Holy Spirit brings the power by which a person is changed. Not only did God want to save us from the penalty of sin He also wanted us to have power over sin. God in His awesome plan knew that simply forgiving sin would not be enough since the same individual making the same mistakes would remain. In my case, the same Greg Viehman would roam the earth with all his bad qualities still in place. God knew that help, guidance, and power were needed, since we couldn't change on our own. The Holy Spirit is the answer to this problem.

The Holy Spirit personally proves the Christian message is real and the only true answer. What other world view has the Spirit of God dwelling in the body as evidence? This is one of the most incredible and awesome displays of infinite power. He is *The Forgotten Evidence* that Jesus is here and alive today. Today's culture not unlike Jesus' time demands miracles, but doesn't realize the miracles are real and alive today via the Holy Spirit.

Entire personalities are changed with the reversal of lifelong outlooks and desires. Radical alterations of character are occurring that are not possible or explained except by divine intervention. Emptiness is quickly filled with a deep sense of warmth and peace felt inside your body. The crucial sign of true conversion is God's love which can be defined as unselfish giving. Man is naturally selfish and a taker. Only God can give man unselfish motives to serve. When God's love is seen through one of His children it is clear that something is different. Other religions claim to have experiences but they don't have transformations emanating in love. This is a test that begs every skeptic to be very careful about rejecting.

Chapter Five

The Unexpected

At this point I was about to discover two very unexpected truths. First, I had no idea God was going to be personal to my life's details. I never expected Him to communicate with me, and guide my life in a real and tangible way. Secondly, the secular man would expect that if the Christian message is true then everyone "believing" in Jesus would be saved. Eternal life and the complete forgiveness of sins are incredible gifts that I assumed everyone would want and have already obtained. I was about to discover this wasn't the case at all.

I knew that people prayed, but I didn't understand God interacts in the personal details of people's lives. I figured He did enough by saving us and giving man the Bible to go by. I really thought we were on our own until we died, and then went to heaven to be with Him. I knew that God had healed and saved me, but I didn't expect anything else. I never heard anyone except the woman from the lab talk about what Jesus was doing in their lives. If he was personal and involved then people should be talking about it. I heard silence for thirty six years.

I didn't know He wanted a personal relationship with me. This really blew my mind. A daily ongoing personal relationship to provide support and guidance through prayer was unimaginable. I then began *Looking Back* at my past and realized how the Lord had put all of the pieces together in my life to save me. If He orchestrated all of those details then He logically would want to be involved in my life now. You see I realized that I didn't find God in a personal quest for truth at all. He came and rescued me! The entire *Journey* was my Father in heaven coming after a lost son. This blew me away! I could sense the love just by thinking about this.

Then I started praying all the time. I talked to God wherever I went about anything and everything. It really felt good to talk with him. I felt like an *Orphan* that had been found by his lost Father. I was overcome with joy, peace, and meaning until it hit me. Suddenly, I realized a lot of my family and friends were not saved. They were still living in *The Great Deception*. Now the horror began. They were headed straight to eternal separation where those that never acknowledge God spend eternity without Him. I began to pray for family and friends who were lost. My prayers focused on a chance to give my testimony to those who might need to hear it.

The results that I have seen from prayer in the past six months are staggering to the imagination. The orchestration of all lives and events by God has been made very clear to me. Ultimate "coincidences" and specific results have both been observed in direct relation to prayers for specific individuals. Things began to happen to people who I prayed for to such a degree it made them stop and think. People began to be saved and it was awesome. My life was dichotomous. I was overcome with excitement and wonder about God saving me, but I also was filled with great fear for those people still deceived like I was for thirty six years.

I did have some Christian friends though! Thank goodness they would all be saved, and I didn't have to worry about them! What a relief at this point! They had been religious their whole lives, believed in the Bible, and went to church. I could certainly take them off my list. I called one of my friends who is

Jewish and married to a Christian. I figured he would think I was nuts, and she would help me convince him to be saved. I had to approach him no matter what he thought, because he was my buddy. We had lived most of our lives as good friends and he was first on my list to help. I knew if I could convince him that his family would follow. Thank God I could count on his Christian wife for assistance right? You can see it coming, I was wrong.

She basically said “I don’t see what the big deal is. Why are you bothering him with this? We believe in God. You are just stating what the Bible says. I went to Christian high school, and I believe in Jesus and the Bible. My husband believes in “God”. What is this Holy Spirit and being saved business? I know the trinity but so what?” I was speechless and didn’t even argue. What she said says it all. This illustrates one of the most critical problems facing Christianity today that was totally unexpected to me.

She didn’t get it. She was a “Christian” and still didn’t get it. I was going to have an easier time with him! She did not understand her own faith at its most crucial point. How could this be? Jesus Christ came to earth to save mankind. Christianity without salvation is useless. I could not understand how a Christian would not embrace the critical issue of salvation for her family. It didn’t make sense to me, but I didn’t understand what was going on yet. I quickly thought this must be a fluke.

I then decided to talk to some of my church friends who would be glad to hear I was saved. They were likely praying for me all along, and would rejoice at the news. I quickly noticed that most of them were very uncomfortable with my good news. They seemed very uneasy and looked at me like they had no idea what I was talking about! They almost didn’t even want to hear it! What in the world was this about!? I just didn’t get it!

It came out in these conversations that most of them had never read the Bible, and did not understand salvation, the Holy Spirit, or a personal relationship with God. Even more astounding was quite a few of them didn’t really believe when you pinned them down despite many years of church attendance. I was shocked again to learn that many of their churches didn’t even teach the Bible let alone believe it was the word of God!?!? This absolutely blindsided me. When I tried to explain it to them it was like a fog was over them. They just didn’t get it. I was irritating them! This is crazy but true.

At this point insanity was setting in and so I called my new pastor over to my house. I asked him what was going on. He knew exactly what I was talking about, and was even a little amused at my ignorance. I was so unchurched that my innocent confusion was almost funny. Then he laid it out for me. I will never forget this moment as long as I live.

He explained how many people in church are not saved including the pastor! He told me how the Bible wasn’t being taught as the cornerstone to the entire problem since it is the power of salvation. Many churches have become Sunday social gatherings to feel religious and quiet the conscience in order to avoid accountability and a changed life. False doctrine, manmade traditions, and rituals have largely replaced a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to the point that the beautiful message of the Gospel of salvation has been lost. Not only that but when you try and tell people the truth they fight it, which he explained reveals the underlying motive of the heart.

I kept asking him “Why? Why?” God is so good and personal why would people avoid Him for religion? Why wouldn’t people want to go to heaven and live forever? He then explained that many churches don’t even teach Biblical salvation! They have false doctrine even about heaven and being saved! He told me to talk to some people in church about their salvation.

Most of the people I talked with had “A Story”. Many of them had spent many years in church before actually being saved. A very common link was emerging. Wherever there were problems with salvation the Bible was absent. I didn’t realize the power of God’s word that makes the heart ready, the faith sufficient, and convicts the soul. This is the trinity of salvation and the reason that the Bible is the power of salvation. All of these people had been in *Churchianity*. It was all about church and not Jesus!?

One person thought they had salvation from joining a church. Another was convinced for a while that his baptism at birth and official ceremony of joining his faith earned him salvation. One person decided to join a faith, and took some classes and was told he was now “good”. One lady spent many years in church and never even heard about salvation, and so she assumed she had it. One person thought because they thought of themselves as Christian and were raised going to church that this defined being a Christian. Another man recited a sinner’s prayer and thought he was saved from a word formula.

They were totally blown away when they discovered Christianity is not a moral social club a person decides to join. These were all people who could now look back and realize they were *Mislead and Deceived*. They thought they knew Jesus Christ but didn’t. They had never repented of sin. Some of them had confessed sin, but they did not desire to change. I also began to realize that I had humbled myself and literally cried out for mercy and grace that night. I had come to the end of myself and knew I needed a savior. A lot of people are not willing to humble themselves because of pride. Asking for salvation is like being a beggar who admits being a helpless failure in the eternal sense. Many people “believe” in Jesus and understand who He is but never receive Him. Some people told me that when they got saved people church friends avoided them! It actually caused problems?!

What was going on here? How could all these people who went to church for many years, listening to sermons, and intellectually believing in Jesus be so close and yet miss the mark? It’s like a bunch of people won the lottery that are sitting in the claims office but never redeem the tickets. Why? I just never thought I would discover something so strange. If God is real then why not rejoice over Him? If salvation is a real event and transaction why get upset over it? I was told many people like to go to church, but didn’t want God to be that real.

As you will see many people are victims of churches in *The Great Defection* which make people feel good and “Christian” to quiet the conscience by watered down doctrine. Maybe if these teachers realize the true implications of *He Heard Me* they will teach the truth out of fear. Many people are trying to do the right thing with sincerity and honesty, but are not being taught the truth. Christian religion is probably the most dangerous risk factor for missing heaven. This is sad but true.

Those who are sincere and in search of truth should be encouraged by a scoffer and physician turned evangelist almost overnight. People who are victims of *Churchianity* will be helped by the testimonies of people who escaped *The Great Deception*. You will read their testimonies.

Chapter Six

Looking Back

God had been with me every moment of my life, but I was unaware He even existed. Did my past have meaning, *Clues*, and evidence of His purpose for me? Was my life orchestrated and arranged to lead up to this day? If this was the case then my past was still relevant as an educational tool and thus began the search for *Clues*. Once I started searching my memory banks the past became crystal clear, and everything took on a whole new meaning and outlook.

Lucy. The Missing Link?

In 7th grade I wrote my first term paper. By no coincidence it was on *Australopithecus afarensis* or LUCY. This form of primate was supposedly the “missing link” in the evolutionary tree from ape to human. I remember visiting the Natural Museum of History and seeing diagrams of man evolving from apes. I cannot go into any detail since it is far beyond the scope of this book, but let me say this. I have investigated evolution and its basis in great detail. The more I learn and study the more astonished I am at just how far man has gone to hide the truth. I cannot begin to tell you the damage that this does to the heart, faith, and self image of a young child. The results are playing themselves out all over the world today.

The Ski Trip

Remember *The Ski Trip*? God sent me on that trip and was there watching me debate eight people at once about Adam and Eve. I knew I was right and had won the debate in my mind. The indoctrination of evolution is a hard thing to overcome. My friends and parents agreed with me that they were religious fanatics trying to brainwash me. “Save me from what?” I thought from inside *The Great Deception*. I was wrong and another chance was blown. I still to this day think they were too aggressive, but the “fanatics” were right. What seemed foolish was wise, while my own wisdom was foolish.

The College Cross Kook

He was right! This man knew we were lost and living in *The Great Deception*. His call was to the many lost students caught up in the struggle to get ahead in the world and make more money. Isn't that the general outline for success that is taught by society? Study hard, get into the best college, get a great job, and make lots of money since it can buy security and happiness. This man was dismissed as nuts by college geniuses like me, but he actually knew more about eternity than we did. He had given up his life to preach the Gospel and would go to heaven while I was on my way to eternal separation. I was getting a good education though and would be a doctor. How ironic. Who was the fool?

The Tracts

I did not mention this in my biography, but I can recall on several occasions being given handouts that said: “Are You Saved?” I always threw them directly in the waste basket after a brief glance revealed their religious content. It was garbage from religious freaks right? Wrong. Salvation is clearly explained in an era when even many church attendees don't understand it due to biblical

illiteracy. These little slips of paper dismissed as rubbish explain the key to eternity, but I didn't listen. I graduated number one in my class and was an educated doctor. They were nuts with this Jesus business. How many of you now remember these slips of paper? What seemed foolish was actually wise. A pattern is emerging.

Going Off The Deep End

I have had several friends and family members think this about me. I will clarify up front there is a distinction between "Christian" religious practice and following Biblical doctrine through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I used to think that anyone that suddenly became really on fire for Jesus was *Going Off The Deep End*. I always thought they either had problems or had done something seriously wrong and were hiding in religion. When a person makes a quick and sudden turn towards Jesus Christ they are often attacked, ridiculed, and labeled as *Going Off The Deep End*. Why?

First, it's both threatening and convicting at the same time. This can be magnified when the right person *Goes Off The Deep End*. When the epitome of anti-religion makes an about face and radical conversion it sends a strong message that many people will not want to face. This person has either found a life changing truth or has lost their marbles. The dramatic reversal is something that is not understood and somewhere deep inside you know they have found something foreign to you.. This is heightened when close inspection and analysis over time reveal it's not a whim and the joy is both real and stable. My message to you now is that these are the people who are figuring out reality. It seems like they are *Going Off The Deep end* because the rest of us are living in *The Great Deception*.

The Marco Island Visit

John 14:15-17

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. NIV

I have previously described something in the air that I could sense and feel all around me like the wind. This was the same feeling I was experiencing right before salvation. This was the Holy Spirit of God drawing me to the Father. Someone was there not something!

#1 In My Class

I graduated #1 in my class in medical school and was proud of this achievement. C.S. Lewis described competitive pride as "cancer to the soul".¹ He called it the greatest sin. I had this one and so did most of my medical school. This kind of pride strives to do well in order surpass and rise above others rather achieve your personal best. The goal is to be ahead of others and somehow gain an advantage over them. This basic motive is very pervasive in medical school. It becomes the measure of many students success. I had won! I could stand on top of the mountain as king. My friends and family were also proud. Guess what? I was headed for eternal separation from the God Who made me and had absolutely no idea.

Look at my life: born into a good and prosperous family, attended private school with "A" average, graduated Magna Cum Laude from college with biology major and Phi Beta Kappa, graduated Suma Cum laude from medical school with scientific publications and Alpha Omega Alpha membership, chief resident in Dermatology at Duke University Medical Center, fellowship in Mohs Surgery from Duke, married with a wonderful family, started a successful private practice

in Dermatology. I had reached the pinnacle of success as defined by society and would finish last in the end.

Philippians 3:4-9

Yet I could have confidence in myself if anyone could. If others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! 5 For I was circumcised when I was eight days old, having been born into a pure-blooded Jewish family that is a branch of the tribe of Benjamin. So I am a real Jew if there ever was one! What's more, I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 And zealous? Yes, in fact, I harshly persecuted the church. And I obeyed the Jewish law so carefully that I was never accused of any fault.

I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ 9 and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. NLT

Mark 8:36

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? NKJV

The Expletives

All of the “bad words” were a part of my everyday vocabulary. I used these words as verbs, adjectives, & nouns. If something even simple went wrong like dropping a glass, the first thing I would say often included the name of Jesus or God in a negative way. These words just naturally came out of my mouth without even thinking about what I was saying.

I have never said either of those words in that context again since the day I was saved. This was another thing that vanished that night. The first few weeks after I was saved I kept waiting for my mouth to speak these words, but they simply never came out. I can't explain how except the desire and natural utterance are gone. It's not that I am holding them back simply because its wrong and against the commandments. This was part of the rewiring of my brain that occurred that night. Amazing but true.

Now that I look back it seems weird. Why was I saying “Jesus Christ” when I stubbed my toe or broke a glass? How strange? Did I somehow expect Him to do something? I didn't even believe or know Him. I should have called out “Donovan McNabb”. This may seem funny, but it's true. I believe in this Eagles quarterback and I respect him. Why did I always immediately invoke the Creators name even in trivial situations?

The key question though is why millions of people do this everyday. They have little knowledge or belief in Jesus Christ and yet utter His name all the time. The context is that of blame and not help. That is the first *Clue*. We are blaming Him for the occurrence. We are saying if He was real or true then this wouldn't be happening. Are we saying I wish there was a loving God? Somewhere in the bottom of my heart underneath all of my armor that I wear in society, I really want there to be a God and heaven. Internally we are angry that we don't have this and then lash out from that discord.

It's also interesting that this phenomenon does not occur on such a grand scale with any other person in History. This is a remarkably profound and overlooked fact. In my opinion this is a witness that Jesus Christ is the true and living God, because the enemy seeks to profane the name of the living God.

Our Town

Why did God send me to this play in 1989? Why did I cry? What did Emily Gibbs realize? She discovered that her entire life was lived caught up in the day to day routine. The hustle and bustle of daily existence prevented her and her family from seeing and living the truth. No one stopped to really enjoy mere existence and the miracle of life. The fact that humans exist with a mind and emotions such as love is a miracle. If you miss this then you are missing big *Clues* which I'll explain later. This colossal mistake in her case was only realized after death. Does this sound familiar?

Our Town was describing the mistake many of us are making right now both personally and eternally. Many of us are so busy with life that we don't stop to love each other and make sure the question of eternity is answered with absolute certainty. *The Great Deception* and the maze of life distract our attention away from meaningful interactions with family and friends and from God. You can waste away the precious moments of time and miss out on family and eternity with God. A dualistic truth applies both to the individual and the grander scale of eternity. If our memories are not founded in eternity then they are lost and painfully short and meaningless.

The Great Deception of life is hiding mankind from the truth about God and Jesus Christ. Luckily it's not too late. God was teaching me about the lost state of our world and warning me to value my own personal life at the same time. *The Great Deception* can cause the moment to moment joy and wonder of life to be lost in addition to the universal truth of God. Life is suddenly over and not only was the essence of relationships squandered, but also many chances to receive eternal life.

Our Town is a play that is a must read for everyone. The story and piercing moral truth are unforgettable. The reason it stings so much is that it is true in a world that says this life is it or we don't really know. If now we are shown by Emily Gibbs that we even squander this away without knowing it then the tears begin to make sense. The reality of Emily Gibbs and her lesson about day to day to life remains even for the person who denies God. It changes the way you live and cherish each moment; even the ones that seem trivial become immensely full of meaning. In *Our Town* there is no hell except the realization of her mistake in day to day life, but in the real world we have both. *Our Town* is a literary gem and a very important *Clue*.

The Patient

A man came in for surgery in room number four a few days before I received Jesus Christ. I will never forget him for several reasons. First, he was very strange and I noticed he worked for a church. I was thinking about *The Journey* all the time and his background caught my attention. We did not talk about religion at all, and he said almost nothing. His eyes looked glazed like a blind man, and he laid on the table just staring at the ceiling. There was something very peculiar about him. Just as I was about to leave the room he sat up and asked me out of the clear blue "Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?"

I almost fell over as he took me by complete surprise. I have never had a patient unprovoked ask such a question. I quickly exited to escape his question. In the lab I kept thinking about why in the world he asked me that. His cancer was gone in one small stage and he left very quickly. Little conversation ensued after his one comment. I kept trying to figure out what was different about him. Was it just a coincidence that this man came to my office just days before I made my decision?

I later went back to find out who this man was, especially since something was odd about him. I figured I would call him, and let him know I was saved about two days later. Our office keeps impeccable records with a photo of each patient, a database, and all of the old actual schedules used in the clinic for each doctor. I knew the date within a week, the room he was in, and exactly what he looked like. I will never remember a patient more than this one.

I started by pulling the old schedules for the month of October. I knew he was a male and in room number four. All of this information is on the old schedules. I scanned every day and made sure none were missing. I found about four males seen in the right range of dates, but none of them were him. I then checked all of the other doctor's patients in case a mistake was made, but still to no avail. I then checked September through December for all doctors with males in room four with no result. I was both perplexed and frustrated.

The schedules are used in the back of the clinic by nurses and doctors so I could not miss him. I then searched the database without success. That was the last straw. I called our programmer and had him build a search engine to show me the photo of every single surgical patient by sex, doctor, and date range. Even if a photo is absent or missing it will show it. I searched every patient for a six month period by any sex or doctor and still cannot find him. He is gone from the system and even the records. The most memorable patient I have ever seen does not exist. I took every precaution and checked every loophole conceivable. I spent at least ten hours on this. If a photo was missing I pulled the chart. I even checked all women. The billing and scheduling system also had no results. Draw your own conclusions. *He Heard Me.*

Chapter Seven

Looking Forward

What now? I live a dichotomous life. On the one hand I feel joy, excitement, and an amazing sense of fulfillment that is indescribable. God heard my cry, reached down, and changed the very nature of my existence that night forever proving His availability, proximity, and personal concern for my life. This is something I never even dreamed was possible.

The other side of my life is full of fear, guilt, and horror from seeing *The Great Deception* everywhere I go. If I could just sit back and live a nice private Christian life I would, but this isn't possible anymore. When you finally realize you are living in *The Great Deception* there is no turning back.

The Paradigm shift

Paul described the first paradigm shift almost two thousand years ago in the book of Acts. Once you realize that you will live forever and that earth is just a training ground for eternity everything changes. Paul was a very educated Jewish Pharisee. He had lots of accomplishments and things going for him in life. Then suddenly he considered them all worthless. Why? He went from the earthly perspective to the eternal one after he was awakened on the road to Damascus. He realized that awards, stature, money, accomplishments, power, glamour and the other things that man has made important are worthless.

One of the first things I did was take down my wall of fame in my office. I had a wall with all my plaques, awards, honors, degrees, and accomplishments. I would sit in my office and subconsciously think how great and smart I was. These framed and hanging trophies proved it. I could worship myself and my great achievements with a competitive pride. Now my walls are filled with artwork that my children make in school and their photos. The awards are in the closet.

I thought I had made it in the world by reaching the pinnacle of the world's definition of success and happiness. I studied very diligently for years and became a doctor. I had a good job, prestige, and a wonderful family. I had security and was set for life. I used to think all of my hard work had paid off. I was assured a good and happy retirement and my kids would be secure also. I had figured out how to win in the world. What else could I ask for? I was living the *American Dream*.

Despite having everything the world had to offer I was lonely, empty, disenchanted with life, and frustrated by the *Empty Space* in my heart. Now it's all gone because of Jesus. I thought being a Christian would mean giving up things that were fun and cool. Now I realize they were empty, stale, and dead. I didn't give up anything of meaning, but I have gained everything in Him. Who I was searching for all along has found me.

My Parents

I had to tell my parents once I figured things out. I reasoned since they had left me to make my own decision then they would be glad I finally did. I thought about how excited they would be that I had found Jesus Christ to be real and alive in a personal way without even realizing it! After all, I was

telling them that Jesus really existed and that heaven and eternal life were easy to obtain. They had Christian backgrounds in their past which would make it an easy sell. You would think since I was number one in my class, and they had celebrated my intelligence they would believe me. I am not some stranger but their son, and not some person handing out flyers on the street. What is there to lose? I told them my story.

They didn't believe me. This was one of the hardest things for me to comprehend. I lost many hours of sleep and suffered dehydration from crying. What could possibly be stopping them from taking the final step? What reason is there not to? There is nothing to lose and everything to gain. They love me, my wife, and especially the grandchildren and yet it was not enough. I had forgotten that salvation is an act of God.

I then began to pray and begged God everyday to help them and got friends to do the same. The answer came one month later (four days before Christmas). Both of my parents accepted Jesus Christ within a few days of each other. This was the best Christmas present I had ever received. It was also the first present that had the real meaning of Christmas.

They admitted in retrospect that they were a little skeptical at first. There was a slight thought that I had done a psyche job on myself. Why did they finally do it? It was God acting on prayer from others and my parents seeking Him from reading the Bible. I had them start with the book of John. Again notice the Bible linked to salvation. There is something about God's word that makes it the power of salvation. The words are a trinity of salvation that build faith, convict the spirit, and prepare the heart.

The most amazing thing was when I saw them for the first time. For thirty six years there was always a slight tension I felt in the family. An indescribable subtle tension that was silent but real. Something was always missing and seemed wrong. In the first ten seconds when I picked them up from the airport I knew it was different. The tension was gone. I could feel it in their presence without saying a word. I knew they were saved. There was a silent harmony, warmth, and peace that had replaced this silent rift. It is indescribable and wonderful.

The Cross on the Necklace

I used to see crosses on people's necks and wonder why they had these. Now I have received one from my wife for my birthday. It's a heavy thick gold cross. I wanted one like this for several reasons. First, I can feel it all of the time. Whenever I move I can feel it against my chest. It's a reminder to me of what God has done for mankind. It reminds me of what I used to be like and that my entire family was living *The Great Deception*. It represents that I have to start over and live a new life now.

The cross symbolizes the power to transform lives. It nudges me to try and get others out of *The Great Deception*. It embodies the basic inherent wickedness of mankind without God and Jesus Christ. It reminds me He conquered this evil while enduring evil. The cross is God's glory and victory over death that is foolishness to men but the wisdom of God. It is the way to hope, peace, and freedom that He has provided for us. It is a *Mirror* of who I really am, and what I really need to be doing.

If the cross only stood for the forgiveness of sin I probably wouldn't wear one, but that's not the case at all. The cross is the power of God to set you free and have eternal life as a free gift. It stands

for the immeasurable and inconceivable love of God that marks the most important event in human history. The cross is the definition of agape love which is unselfish giving. This is the opposite of religion which is selfish giving to manipulate something from God without commitment and surrender. It's the power to conquer sin that no other worldview or religion even begins to address. They have rules and regulations and many laws with no inner way of keeping them.

You see I never mentioned it as a sign to others of my own Christianity because its not. Most of the time it's not visible anyway. It's for me lying there heavy right close to my heart. People frequently say "I see you have turned religious" and I correct them and say "No. I follow Jesus Christ and the Bible. He is The Word." I get the strangest looks especially from people who attend church. This is a big *Clue*.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. NIV

The Great Deception

What is *The Great Deception* that I have alluded to so often? *The Great Deception* is the world of the 21st century we live in: a world that has so many things, places, responsibilities and issues of daily life that the eternal nature of our existence has been lost. *The Great Deception* makes you think it's all about this life here on earth. *The Great Deception* was built by man as he struggled over the centuries to live without God. *The Great Deception* is the pinnacle of the age of reason that defines its glory in tolerance, relative truth, and God as unknowable. It is the end stage of man's rebellion against God.

The Great Deception takes the basic human defect of separation from God and capitalizes on its resultant selfish nature. It is a way for fallen, sinful, and, separated man to live without the apparent need for God and forget his fallen state while happily existing in it. *The Great Deception* is the story of *The Machines* that constructed a world overtime that successfully shut God out of mainstream culture. *The Great Deception* has done exactly what man intended it to. *The Great Deception* has put ear plugs on *He Heard Me*.

The Great Deception is a complex all encompassing world of distractions and time consuming events like jobs, school, entertainment, computers, sports, mass media, material things, vacations, technology, religion and everything else that composes the rat race of life today. It is a false reality that keeps us from discovering the truth of our fallen existence. *The Great Deception* is almost identical in type to the movie *The Matrix*. Watch it.

I lived my entire life inside *The Great Deception*. I never even thought about God for thirty six years. It was all ancient Bible nonsense that I had no use for. You see mankind got exactly what it wanted in *The Great Deception*. I was a shining example of mission accomplished. Not only was God out of the picture, but I even fought against the concept of Him. When I first realized what had happened to me I was dumbfounded, because nothing I had ever seen, heard, or experienced really spoke of this truth in daily life. I just couldn't believe it.

The Great Deception has even twisted truth by making religion quiet the natural conscience of man created by God for God. The final escape door to freedom of the will was opened when Christianity became *Churchianity* in the age of false, soft, and watered down doctrine that seeks to please or

manipulate but not save. A lot of churches are a part of *The Great Deception with Toy Swords and Sour Milk*. How ironic. One day a week in Sunday school can't compete with *The Great Deception* which has either shut Jesus Christ out, made a generic "God of love", or God unknowable.

Everyday I see the world filled with created beings made in the image of God that have forgotten they are created, images, and also fallen. The rat race of life and paradigm of families, school, and jobs has almost everyone convinced this is what human life is supposed to be about. The fallen state of *The Machines* can be seen everywhere from the arguments in the home to the disease in the hospitals but it is ignored and explained away.

The "weird concept" has now been reversed for me. I used to think Christians in fellowship with Jesus and reading *Just The Bible* were weird like *The Ski Trip*, but now everyday life around me is weird. Man has veered so far from the truth by building a "nice" and comfortable world that has not only forgotten our intended purpose but also the very nature of our existence. You have been born into this era and it is one of the most difficult eras in all of history to escape from.

Infinitely Blessed

Since I first started this book Jesus has infinitely blessed my life. Everything from my mind to my heart has changed for the better. My wife and I have even recommitted our wedding vows now that we know the real Officiator of weddings. People think biblical Christianity is boring or religious bondage, but this is nowhere near the truth.

I lived my whole life without God. Now He is my Lord, Shepherd, Creator, Light, Best Friend, Passion and Everlasting Strength. He has changed my life, touched my heart, and set me free. A relationship with Jesus Christ is not weird like I was taught, but the most wonderful, awesome, fulfilling, and exciting way to live more than I could have ever imagined. He is the sole reason we exist. God is awesome!

Chapter Eight

Just The Bible

Don't read books about life. Read the book that is life.

I began a journey reading the Bible to search for ammunition against hypocrisy. I did not believe it nor ever intended to. *The Journey* was *Just The Bible*. Ironically this proved to be the safest path. Even once I “believed” in Jesus Christ I never even considered that there was tangible proof that He was real and the stories I read were true.

I went into it with the view that many people have today including church attendees. I thought the Bible was a religious book written by men describing their beliefs about God and what they claimed to observe. The stories in it must be metaphorical and relative to the times and by no means actual history. God was relative in my mind and defined in many ways by a world of religious pluralism.

I then found my self completely transformed from a prayer of repentance to Jesus Christ asking for forgiveness and help. My mind was so ingrained with the ideas of society I didn't even realize what had happened. I found out the answers were in the Bible and salvation is a real event causing real changes with proof from the Holy Spirit just as the Bible describes.

I have found the Bible to be the most fascinating and challenging book I have ever studied. It has the depth of the universe and the interconnected layered messaging system of DNA, which interestingly is also a very large word with a triplet (trinity) code. It is my daily bread, light for my path, and a never ending *Instruction Manual* for life. It is ironic for the same book to have been ancient religious nonsense just one year ago. I have never read and studied anything even close to it. The more I learn the more I realize I know nothing. This is the most liberating, paradoxical, and counterintuitive blessing imaginable

Today there are many arguments about the Bible. Is it the word of God and fully inspired by Him? These arguments have only divided people and caused division instead of unity. Simply look at what happened to me and what the implications of *He Heard Me* are. They answer all of them. The Bible proved to be true that night at least from a salvation point of view and the fact that Jesus is alive, omniscient, and omnipresent. He heard exactly what I said and acted on it by His grace. There is no other conclusion to draw.

If God is real and the infinitely powerful creator of the entire world and universe who is everywhere at all times then why would anyone think He cannot put a book into this world that is His word? Is there any logic in believing in God that is omnipresent and yet unable to make a book say what He wants it to? The Bible does claim to be the word of God. After what happened to me is there any reason to doubt the book? I cannot even as a scientist rationalize how a creator of that power would not make certain His creation had an *Instruction Manual* when He took the time to come to earth and die for His creation. The logic behind such a belief is simply not there. God has either revealed Himself exactly the way He wants in the Bible or He has revealed nothing at all.

I will tell you the truth, because I was chief executive scoffer. People reject the Bible and Genesis because of the implications it has for their lives. This creative power brings absolute accountability to every aspect of our life that I hated and didn't want. I hid behind all kinds of arguments and luckily had many scientists and evolution to give me the escape door I wanted. My heart knew the truth, but I would never admit it. Remember I did not start out to find God and really didn't even know it when I did. I had to accept the accountability and implications of Genesis and *He Heard Me*.

If you consider yourself a Christian then you should believe God came to earth to die for your sins so you can go to heaven. The basic initial goal is to "get into" heaven and live forever, but you need to know two things: how to obtain eternal life (salvation) and the definition of sin. You can't understand what Jesus died for and why this had to happen without understanding sin.

How can you ask for salvation without understanding how to be saved and what you are being saved from? If the Bible is relative, metaphorical, and mainly teaching stories and not God's word then how will anyone learn about these two essential points? Does man get to define salvation and sin? If Jesus said something in the Bible about salvation or sin how can it be trusted?

Does it really make sense to believe God came to earth to die for us and not leave mankind with exactly what He wants us to go by? How can anyone be certain they have eternal life? Do we really want to trust what a modern man tells us or what Jesus said? How can we know what God says being a Christian is about and how to become one? You see Christianity falls apart without the Bible as God's word.

Why is someone a Christian? Is it to have the certainty of eternal life or just practice a religion with good moral teachings and simply hope heaven is real? If it's just religion and another belief system then I guess the Bible is not important. If Christianity to some has become a religious social experience of spirituality based on parables and metaphorical stories from long ago then what really is it? If someone wants to base eternity on man made doctrines and traditions then they have every right to do so.

Why would a Christian object to the Bible as the word of God and basis for their belief system? If Jesus quoted scripture all the time and the Bible claims to be the word of God and Jesus the Word then why reject this? If it claims to show the way to eternal life why not study it intently? If it is made relative or rejected then on what basis is anything known? Do we really believe God died on the cross for mankind and then decided to let man decide what to believe and hope he would make wise choices about obtaining what He died for?

No, none of this makes sense. The majority of the Bible is crystal clear and has to be twisted from what the words simply say. It was written for everyone and not just "the modern man." If this is the case then why is it becoming so popular with books, churches, pastors, and college professors proclaiming it? There is a very popular movement to make the Bible relative, all interpretation, only a response of man to God, and metaphorical. There is only one common thread and reason that makes sense. They don't like what the Bible says. The Bible holds people strictly accountable to a standard imposed by God that today stands against most of the world.

The Bible is not politically correct today and this presents a major problem for many people in their careers and the politics of them. If the Bible can be made relative and no longer God's word

then these rules don't apply, moral law is relative to the times, accountability is eliminated, and our secret lives are justified in our mind. This is exactly where the answer lies. Man has by modern reasoning and intellectualization replaced God's divine revelation.

These scholars and teachers who basically say the Bible is a parable, metaphorical, and not an accurate account of history destroy the resurrection and Christianity right along with it. They also forget that their own view is a truth claim. If the Gospels are simply tradition, historical memories of men, perceptions, metaphorical narrative, and a sketch of Jesus and what believers claimed happened then what do we have? This destroys the hope of the resurrection. If the resurrection is not a real historical event then Christianity is a hopeless belief system. Even the Bible makes this claim.

1 Corinthians 15:16-19

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. NAS

They can call this Christianity but it's not. Jesus Christ came to save people and if you don't believe this as a "Christian" what do you have? This has gotten so ridiculous that some people even claim Christianity is not exclusive in its claims. A college professor in the New Testament said it's not even about believing or Christianity but simply about a generic "God". Religious pluralism has by "common sense" mandated that there can't be one way.

There is also a deep seated fear of simply rejecting the Bible. This is the reason man has tried to make what God said fit our selfish desires. Scholars, college professors, pastors and many others have come to the rescue embracing a relative read of the Bible that fits with our selfish desires and political agendas that are hidden behind degrees and historical analysis. Ironically, the Bible predicts that this very thing would happen.

The modern world is moving away from the Bible because truth about God has been made relative to justify the self-defined generation. Today's culture wants the individual personal tastes, morals, and values to define truth for that person. It's an escape from *He Heard Me*. I was kicked off the executive committee of this self-defined generation by a unanimous vote for finding and telling the truth.

It's also important to remember Christianity is a relationship and not a Bible study of facts and doctrines. The Bible is God's living word that has revealed Himself to man so we can know Him better and understand what He has to say to His creation. We communicate with words because we are made in the image of God.

Salvation is simple but is a major problem exactly because the Bible is not being read, taught, studied, and preached like it needs to be. If Biblical salvation is not taught then people will assume they have it or think they can work for it. They will also be subject to false doctrine and a poor understanding of what Jesus their own savior said about salvation. Teaching from the Bible is not the same as teach the Bible.

There are major sects of Christianity that have taken the power of salvation and given it to man while claiming to "believe" in the Bible. They claim man can earn his way into heaven by using water or completing a certain list of deeds on a checklist. This is completely unbiblical and in

contradiction to the early church and the words of Jesus Himself. Christianity is a huge mess today and it can't be explained away.

You see my task is much more difficult than I ever imagined. I thought it would be to convince people that Jesus Christ is the answer, and never dreamed the toughest audience would be people sitting in church! It is easier in many cases to convince someone with no religious background to receive Christ than someone who regularly attends church, because he doesn't have to unlearn anything.

The more time I have spent addressing topics like evolution, creation, the flood, religious pluralism, and Tarzan in the jungle who has never heard the gospel the more I have heard a little voice echoing in my heart. The voice keeps pointing me to the basics of life like mere existence and love. *Love is a Solitary Apologetic Argument* to find the truth. This will encompass the next section, which starts the body of the book. Follow your heart and you will find life.

John 6:63

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. NIV

The Bible is called extreme because we are afraid of being extremely wrong.