



Taking STEPS Toward God

A collection of Christian-themed stories to help you find meaning, truth, resilience, and hope both at Christmas and all during the year.

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A night sky with a star and a comet-like streak. The background is a dark blue night sky with a bright star on the right side, emitting a starburst effect. A long, thin, white streak, resembling a comet or a meteor, curves across the sky from the upper left towards the center. The bottom of the image shows a dark, silhouetted landscape of trees and a horizon line.

*“Taking Steps
Toward God”*

Introduction

This is a collection of stories about finding truth and meaning at Christmas and all during the year. The goals of our journey together are to:

- Help you learn to deal better with issues such as sadness and worry.
- Increase both the peace you feel every day and your hope for the future.
- Give you knowledge and encouragement to bolster your faith in God.
- Help you work with God to transform your life, one day at a time.

You will surely enjoy and benefit from this material if you're already a Christian. If you are still looking for your own spiritual path, all I ask is that you keep an open mind and search for the truth along the way.

For each chapter (category), I highly suggest you listen to the audio, but you also have the option to read the material in text form as well.

In addition, you can download and print this document and use that as a handy reference to revisit the material whenever you like.

To take the next step, [listen to the audio](#) for this Introduction to hear about the journey we will be going on together. Now, enjoy, and let's get started!



[Listen to the audio](#)

Finding Reason to Hope

Seeking assurance when we feel hopeless, recognizing holidays may bring sadness, understanding the allure of false hopes, and finding reason to hope.



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Christmas is not the same for every kid. Or for adults.

Some kids don't have much to look forward to at Christmas, and it's heart-breaking to see a child who has no hope for what should be a joyful morning. Meanwhile, other kids hope to get lots of presents, but their happiness with the toys they receive often fades quickly.

Christmas should be a time of hope. But, for many kids—and adults—it is the opposite: they feel hope-less. For other people, they feel cheerful during the holidays, but their hope soon evaporates. Because it is false hope, a fragile expectation built on a faulty foundation.

This Christmas, my wish is that you find reason to hope. And that your faith transforms that hope into an assurance that stays with you throughout the coming year, and beyond.

Because it is based on truth.



When We Lose Our Hope

For years, I volunteered at an inner-city ministry. Each Christmas, we invited nearby families to a holiday event with decorations, table hosts, a sumptuous dinner, and wonderful entertainment.

And, for the kids, toys!

The smiles, laughter, and squeals of delight from that annual gift-giving will stay with me always. But, so will the memory of the thousands of kids we could not help. Whose tearful Moms had to tell—their hearts aching—that there wasn't enough money for presents that year.

But, it's not just disadvantaged kids who may have lost hope. There are many grownup who feel that way as well, including at Christmas. Even with things to celebrate, loneliness, more time for introspection, or comparisons to *what could be* can become disheartening.

In fact, the holidays are one of the saddest and loneliest times of year for many people. Such as those struggling with grief, depression, or addiction. And those who feel anxious or ashamed.

For anyone who feels that way, finding reason to hope can be a challenge.

When We Build False Hopes

Most kids are more advantaged than those described above. They hope to get lots of presents for Christmas, and they do. They feel those new toys will make them happy and, for a while, it works.

But, soon, the toys lose their newness, school starts, and life returns to normal. And their hope becomes focused on circumstances: the next holiday, or event, or weekend to look forward to.

Many adults do the same thing.



We put our faith in substitute gods—idols—creating false hopes that do not ultimately bring us happiness. We blindly choose to worship the idol of materialism, or control, or pride, in each case focusing on our *self* rather than on God.

Or, our hope is based on circumstances: we yearn to get that next raise, for our 401k to go up, or our kids to get good grades. So, we can feel comfortable, or in control, or fulfilled as good parents. And these false hopes rise and fall with the ups and downs of our lives.

False hopes based on idols or circumstances are fragile. Like kids whose fascination with their Christmas toys fades, we eventually realize we need something more solid to place our hope in.

Finding Reason to Hope

The article "The Birth of Hope" shows how *hope* is a feeling something good will happen, while *faith* is belief—trust—that it will. And faith leads to *assurance*, being certain about the future.

But, how do we find assurance? By searching for, and finding, the truth.

Which is why Christmas brings hope! Because the birth we celebrate at Christmas *did* happen, and Jesus *is* the truth. Jesus Christ is the reason to hope and the source of our assurance.

And, at Christmas, we should remember that Jesus came not only to save us, but also to restore all things and make them new. Including us. We have hope for eternity, but also for now. All year, we have the assurance of being loved and the certainty of a God of grace who is in charge of all things.

This Christmas, I wish for you to find reason to hope, and a faith that brings assurance for the future. An assurance based on the truth.

The Birth of Hope

Coping with anxiety or sadness, how we can search for hope, and using the truth of God's Word in the Bible to help us rekindle our hope.



[Listen to the audio](#)

We all need hope. In good times, the future seems bright for a while as worries retreat into the background. But, when trials and troubles come, our optimistic outlook may fade. Even the routine activities of everyday living can sometimes dull our outlook of a positive future. So, often, we find ourselves searching for hope that things will turn out all right.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the hope we seek was readily available? All of the time?

But, on an average day, there is rarely a lack of things to feel anxious about: money issues, illness, family problems, job concerns ...; the list goes on and on. Too often, uncertainty creeps into our minds, and sometimes we begin to feel helpless and hopeless.



"I still remember the night times. In the darkness of early morning, I would wake to a feeling of dread. The next few hours would be clouded by fear and shame, with questions tossing in my head: "Why is this happening? How can we turn things around? What is going to happen to us?" I would pray over and over for answers and help that didn't seem to come. Eventually, I would wearily drag myself out of bed to face another day. Once into

the morning, I would feel better for a while. At least I was doing something; maybe things weren't so hopeless after all. But, too soon, the night would come again." (STEPS: A Daily Journey to a Better Life)

During that period in my life, all seemed dark. But beyond the darkness, there was hope; it just took me a while to find it. The whole time, God was still there, even in the dark.

Hope is a feeling that something good will happen. We can't conjure up hope on our own. It is something we find, or are given, and true hope must be founded in something real.

"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope." (Psalm 130:5)

And beyond hope there is something even stronger: faith. Faith is more than just a positive feeling; it is complete trust in something, or in some one.

"We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you." (Psalm 33:20-22)

Our search for hope can guide us along a wonderful, life-changing journey, and faith can become assurance, a state of being certain about something. How does that happen? If we investigate the claims of the Christian faith, we discover an incredible thing: it is founded upon historical fact, events that actually happened, and a person who literally existed.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

We find that the most wonderful hope of all was actually born two thousand years ago.

*"A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn."*

May you find assurance from the one true source of hope during these holidays.

What Christmas is All About

What we can learn from “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” realizing that we all have worries and issues, and focusing on the story that changes it all.



[Listen to the audio](#)

We all wonder what Christmas is all about. Is it possible we can find the answer in a cartoon?

People say Christmas is about good will. A time to think about the important things in life more than we normally do. An occasion when we sing with others, perhaps out of tune, but sincerely and joyfully. And a season where we strive to act a little more like we wish we acted all of the time.

Many also say that Christmas is about Jesus. Somehow, it seems that almost everyone loves Jesus this time of year.

Christmas is about a lot of good things. But it is also about the baggage we bring with us into the holiday season. The fears and insecurities we carry the rest of the year may weigh even heavier on us during what is supposed to be such a festive time.

Just as they do with Charlie Brown.

We Are All Charlie Brown

In “A Charlie Brown Christmas” by Charles Schultz, things don’t go well for the young hero, leading him to the conclusion that, “Everything I do turns into a disaster!”



And he wonders, as do we sometimes, “I think there must be something wrong with me.” “I know nobody likes me,” he mutters. And the Lucys and Peppermint Pattis of our world seem to be telling us, at least in our insecure minds, that we are “stupid” and “hopeless” as well.

And our Christmas tree is not nearly as big or shiny as everyone else’s Christmas tree.

We desperately search for the meaning of the season. We are all Charlie Brown. So, we cry out, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”

What Christmas is All About

Linus provides the answer. Yes, Linus, the one with the security blanket that never leaves his hand. Ever. Except this time, because right in the middle of speaking, Linus drops the blanket.

He marches to center stage and tells the story of what Christmas is all about:

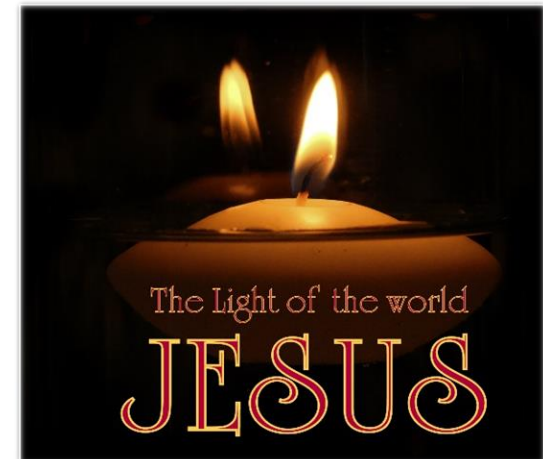
“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not ..., [and Linus lets go his blanket] ... for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you.’”

A gentle story, softly told. Yes, about a baby. But a baby the angels proclaim. One who brings joy to all people. A Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

At times, we are all Charlie Brown, living in fear of disasters, real or imagined. But we are also Linus. We may sometimes need a blanket to lessen our insecurities. But, if we listen, we can hear the holy command to, “Fear not!” And, at least for a while, we can let go of our blanket as well.

Because we are designed for more than that. And we have a God who is more powerful than that, one who cared so much for us that he sent his Son to earth to show us his love.

“That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”



The God For All Time

Seeing the parable in “A Christmas Carol,” dealing with the ghosts of our past, present, and future, and getting to know a God for all time.



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Last week, my wife and I saw the play “A Christmas Carol.” We decided to go largely because it seemed a *Christmasy* thing to do, and we enjoyed the *holiday-ness* of the event.



In the play, Charles Dickens presents the moral of his story at two levels.

He was deeply concerned for the plight of the poor, and he felt that society was indifferent to the less fortunate. On a personal level, he gives us Ebenezer Scrooge as a man who is transformed, who becomes compassionate to others and chooses to give to the world rather than withdraw.

Both are lessons we can learn from. But neither of those themes is what affected me the most.

I was struck by the journey through time Scrooge undergoes. Partly, because we all have issues with the past, the present, and the future. But it also reminded me that we have a God who is uniquely able to help us deal with all three of them. The God for all time.

Ghosts of Our Past, Present, and Future

During the play, Ebenezer Scrooge is actually visited by four ghosts, not just the three we normally remember.

The first is his dead partner, Jacob Marley. As punishment for his self-serving life, Jacob's spirit must wander the Earth weighted down with heavy chains. At one point, Marley issues the chilling prophecy that, based on the life we lead, we each build the chains we become doomed to wear forever.

Scrooge swoons and falls into a deep sleep, but as the story continues, he is visited by three more frightening apparitions:

- **The Ghost of Christmas Past** takes Scrooge on a journey of regret. As a young man, Ebenezer lost his fiancée when his lust for money eclipsed his ability to love another. But all of us, not just Scrooge, have turned something we love into an idol, regretfully allowing it to replace those things most dear.



- **The Ghost of Christmas Present** shows Ebenezer his self-absorption, which we suffer from as well, when they visit the home of Bob Cratchit. But Scrooge's heart is softened by young Tiny Tim's warmth and kindness and by a family who shows joy in spite of not having turkey or presents to adorn their Christmas.
- **The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** introduces Ebenezer to his fear by showing him his *yet-to-be* grave and headstone. Scrooge desperately wants to alter his fate and overcome his frightening future. As do we, as we seek to deal with our own fear of death or the loss of health, or security, or comfort, or pride.

In the play, Scrooge *does* change, and remains changed. He becomes a saved man. As can we, if we adopt a faith for all time. So, we no longer need worry about ghosts anymore.



The God for All Time

Each of us is haunted by our past, present, and future. But we don't have to be, because we have an all-powerful God who is simultaneously ...

- **God of Our Past** – A Savior who can turn replace our regret with peace and joy.
- **God of Our Present** – A Holy Spirit that changes self-absorption to compassion.
- **God of Our Future** – A Lord who can transform our fear into hope and purpose.

We need more than a vision of ghosts to escape our past, embrace our present, and anticipate our future. We need a God who can transcend time, one who has overcome the world.

As “A Christmas Carol” concludes, we hear Tiny Tim say, “God bless us, every one!” The good news is that, in real life, God has done just that: he has blessed every one of us.

Because we have the God for all time. And Christmas is when we celebrate his birthday.



Why Was Jesus Born?

Including Jesus in our daily lives, understanding why God came to earth, and making that truth real and personal to each of us.



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Around Christmas, people actually *talk* about Jesus. Much more than they normally do. Kept within limits, it becomes almost politically correct, as long as the reference is offered in the holiday context of celebrating the birth of the baby Jesus.

For example, people talk about *when* Jesus was born. After all, that's what Christmas is all about. Oddly, he was almost certainly not born on December 25, and scholars aren't even sure of the exact year.

Christmas stories exalt *where* Jesus was born. It was in Bethlehem, but we are not sure it was in a stable. The manger could have been in a cave or a house.

Those *when* and *where* aspects of the birth of Jesus are interesting. But, they are not the most important question, the one many people don't take enough time to examine.

Why was Jesus born?

The Critical Question

One of the most important questions in life, whether we ask or ignore it, is: Why was Jesus born?



- **He was born to fulfill Biblical prophecy.** The coming of the Messiah was foretold throughout the Old Testament leading up to Jesus Christ. In fact, God promised the Savior would come.
- **He was born for God to reveal himself to us.** There are many miracles about God, but one of the most wonderful is that he loves us enough to share his very nature with us.
- **He was born for God to come to earth.** Though beyond the pale of modern political correctness, it is the truth, historically as well as theologically, that Jesus was—and is—God.
- **He was born to die.** Jesus died to take away the eternal impact of our sins. For that to happen, he had to become the perfect sacrifice. He was born, and he died, both God and man.

With a God who is all-powerful and supernatural, mystery should be expected, and there will always be things we cannot understand. But what a gift God gave to mankind to allow himself to be known so intimately! And to offer us an eternity of companionship with him.

Why was Jesus born? He was born so we could live in connection with God. For eternity.

Why Was Jesus Born?

When I was a child, I casually believed stories about Jesus that were told to me. But, as a young adult, there was a long time when I didn't think about God much at all.

Later, I went through a period of questioning and learning. Eventually, I reached the point where, intellectually, I knew everything about Jesus *had* to be true. But, parts of me still resisted. Finally, there came a time when I understood, for sure, why Jesus was born.

He was born for me. And I know that to be true with all my heart, and with all my mind.

This question of why Jesus was born takes us on quite a journey, and there is one last step. It is not to debate alternating belief systems, or to seek morals hiding inside of nice Christmas stories.

Why was Jesus born? He was born for you.

The Meaning of Easter

Looking back on Easter traditions, remembering the historical event of the Resurrection, and focusing on the real meaning of Easter.



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Easter has a number of meanings and contexts to consider.

For example, we loved Easter egg hunts when our kids were growing up.

My wife and I would follow the two boys around as they searched. The older brother had the advantage but we would try to keep the number of eggs each one found about the same. “Hey, Ryan, do you think there could be an egg over here?”

We liked Easter egg hunts so much, we got sort of mercenary about them as the boys got older. As they became less fascinated with our annual tradition, we started putting money in some of the eggs to bribe them into at least feigning excitement.

Tacky perhaps, but we still had fun.



Other Meanings of Easter

Like Christmas, Easter is a tradition that developed later in church history. And, obviously, there are no bunnies, chocolate, or eggs mentioned in the Bible, even though those things are part of the Easter tradition for many of us.

Easter is a time when families come together, and that's a good thing. Our extended family is gathering for an Easter meal this weekend, and such get-togethers are always a special occasion.

This Sunday is one of the most-attended church days of the year, and that's a good thing as well. It's a wonderful inconvenience to have to get to church early and park further out in the parking lot because so many people are there for the service.

The meaning of Easter is also tied to one of the most dramatic events in recorded history, something more amazing than anything Hollywood movie-makers could ever have dreamed up.

Think about the event from the disciples' point of view, knowing they experienced it personally.

They had to watch the gruesome execution of their friend, companion, and teacher as Jesus was brutally crucified in front of them. And they were in dire danger of the same painful death if their allegiance with Jesus was discovered.

The disciples also had to deal with the uncertainty of Jesus' body disappearing for a while, a situation which surprised them even though Jesus had tried to prepare them.



During the brief period until Jesus reappeared, their faith must have been sorely tested. They had watched God be executed! What did that mean? Was everything Jesus had taught them a lie? Had all hope for the future been lost?

The Real Meaning of Easter

But we haven't touched on the most important meaning of Easter.

As history records, what seemed to be the worst thing that could possibly happen to the disciples turned out to be the very best thing that could possibly happen to humanity.

Let's set the context with some amazing, foundational truths:

- There is a God, and that God created the entire universe.
- That same God made us, designing each of us as special.
- God came to earth, and we know him by knowing Jesus.

Then, Jesus died (for us!) and returned. And because of that historical and theological fact, we can be saved, our sins can be forgiven, and our eternity can be guaranteed.

And that is amazing, life-changing, and fantastically miraculous.

In today's jaded and busy world, we hardly think about miracles. We don't acknowledge the miracles we see with our own eyes, such as the wonders of nature or a newborn baby. We think even less about the most incredible miracle of all that happened over 2000 years ago.

This Easter don't let that be the case. Celebrate the greatest miracle of all eternity, and revel in the joy and freedom that brings.

Then, go ahead and eat the ears off that chocolate bunny.



An Invisible God

Recognizing the visible evidence for God, seeing how the Bible and Jesus help us know God, and developing and expanding our faith.



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Some people ask, “How am I supposed to believe in an invisible God?”

My answer would be, “Who told you that he was invisible?”

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18)

How God Can Be Seen

You know, it would be pretty cool if God designed a universe that let us see how great he is. Perhaps a universe that just *appeared* in one big bang at some instant in the past, which would obviously prove that he created it. And a world designed and precisely tuned just for us, as if he wanted us to see how much he loved us.

Wait a minute: he did that!

And it would be helpful if God left us a record that let us understand him better, a book or something. Perhaps with



references to events and people, and facts that could be verified by historians. Wouldn't it be awesome if we could read about God, and see what he is like *in person*?

Just imagine if we could see details of how God would act if he was here in our world. To be able to learn from the type of person he would be and how he treated other people. What if he literally told us, straight from his mouth, what was important to him, both in the present and the future?

Oh yeah, he did that too.

But, I wonder why such a God would not have made his existence even more obvious.

For example, he could have appeared on earth at a time and place that had been predicted for generations. Now, that would be interesting! And he could have performed dozens of miracles only a god could perform. In fact, he could have told people he *was* God to make it even clearer.

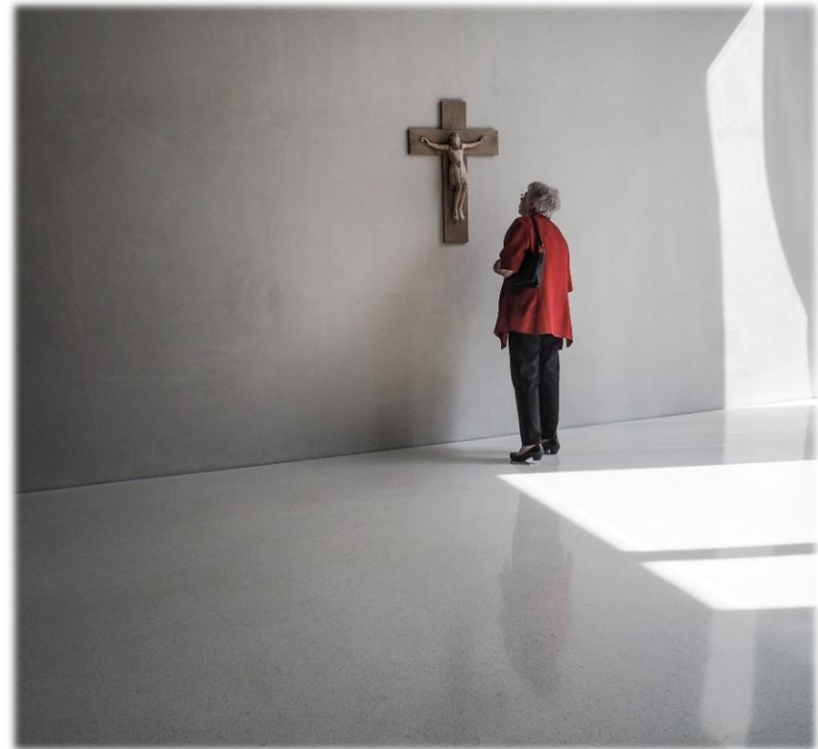
Wait, that doesn't sound like an invisible God at all!

Finding an Invisible God

And it would be even more incredible if this God could have done something dramatic to show his extreme love for us. Some supreme sacrifice performed for our sake. And what if he did it with hundreds of witnesses who could tell other people about what happened, and even write it down?

Wow. Pretty amazing, because he did just that.

But, what would such a loving God want to give us with such a sacrifice? What gifts could be *that* valuable? Surely, not something as miraculous as our sins being



forgiven. Or a lifetime with more peace, joy, and purpose than we could ever find on our own. Or our eternal future guaranteed.

The good news is that is exactly what God did.

Wow. Nothing could top all of that. Unless Unless this God made it personal. With me! So I could be sure, absolutely sure, that he was really there.

What if he would sometimes answer when I talked to him, and reach out to me when times were tough? And what if he was there in worship, and in a sunset, and in the eyes of the unfortunate? What if he let me—yes, me!—actually *see* miraculous examples of how he interacts in our lives?

Well, God has done all that too. Which brings me to the undeniable conclusion that even though we may not be able to literally see him, he's not an invisible God at all!

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1-2)



Was God There?

Hearing a personal story of wondering about God, how God shows up in our lives, and discovering the meaning of the journey.



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I used to wonder: was God there only later in my life, or was he there before and I didn't notice?

As a boy, my family went to church, but those Sunday services were boring and seemed to drag on forever. There were only so many doodles I could fit on those small programs they handed out, and then what do I do? My spiritual outlook picked up for a while in my teens when I noticed that cute girls went to church too, but any experimental thoughts about God soon evaporated in the excitement of college and starting a career.

Along the way, I found a loyal companion—alcohol—who seemed to serve my needs well. And I was able to make it through some stupid choices okay although, in retrospect, I'm not sure how I did. Was God there in those times, and did he protect me even while I was ignoring him?

Continuing the Journey

During my 20s, I had fun, but seeking purpose in excitement, achievement, and money didn't bring the satisfaction I sought. Getting married was a big step, although it turned out I now had a convenient drinking buddy who also had put God on the back burner.

Having kids was a bigger change—was I a grownup now?—but life was still good. And being highly functional at work was all the evidence I needed that alcohol obviously wasn't a problem. Was God there, following my random search for purpose, patiently waiting for me to look in his direction?

With kids, we started going to church occasionally (aren't families supposed to?). Surprisingly, I found myself thinking about spiritual things more, and I slowly became fascinated with books on the factual evidence surrounding the Bible, God, Jesus, and the Resurrection. It seemed necessary for me to figure out God intellectually before I could consider him emotionally or spiritually. Was God there all along, gently encouraging my toddler-like steps and urging me to come to him?

During that process of learning, I would repeatedly ask my wife, "If all that stuff about God and Jesus is really true, doesn't that change everything?" That struck me as a truly profound question.



When Everything Changes

Until, eventually, the facts and logic became indisputable: it is all true! But I still needed a change of heart before it became real. Moving to Orlando interrupted that discovery process, but we seemingly randomly (or not) found ourselves going to a great church near our new home.

And, somehow, I wound up tagging along with the men's group to a Promise Keepers event. Me? How did that happen? We arrived at the football stadium late, and it was dark as we wound our way up the ramps to our upper deck seats. We found our aisle and emerged into a floodlit panorama of 60,000 men all gathered together for one reason: to worship Jesus Christ.

Suddenly, everything in my life made sense. And, without a doubt or second thought, it became totally clear: God was there all along!

I could see the milestones that had led me to that moment, and my life took on a new and deeper significance. God literally overwhelmed me with his presence and goodness. I saw the purpose I had sought all my life, and my heart welcomed Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. From that moment, my life began to change in incredible ways, and God was present on a frequent basis.



Getting Through the Valley

But my more-than-social drinking continued, and after a while I began to feel that the habit (idol) meant too much to me. Was this going to be what the rest of my life was like? Was I being disobedient to the God I said I followed?

Life became miserable. I knew I had to quit, and I am convinced God helped me through that process. I grew to enjoy and respect what I was learning in recovery, and I saw that taking those steps with Jesus added a supernatural—miraculous—element to that journey.

But my family's tough times continued. My wife struggled with depression and relapse, and our son got into drugs in high school. Our life came to revolve around anxiety, addiction, and recovery.

During some of those dark nights, my prayers seemed to go nowhere: was God there then? Why wasn't he listening to me? But, amazingly, those trials didn't lessen my faith; they increased it! I desperately clung to God as my lifeline to sanity, and he became the birth of my hope.

The Meaning of the Journey

Now, I have no doubt that God's involvement in my life and his power and grace were what got me through and led me forward. I actually *appreciate* the tough times we endured, and my faith in Jesus Christ is the most important thing in my life. I have no doubt God was there all along.

My relationship with God has a new context now. I *know* he's there, and every day I'm excitedly trying to notice what he's doing, and how. I meet someone that it seems I'm *supposed* to meet: was that a divine appointment? Something I feared turns out not so bad: was God there? The theme for an article pops into my mind: was he there? And there, and there, and there?

If you wonder about the Bible, God, and Jesus, realize that taking a step of faith is a choice. But consider: "If all that stuff about God and Jesus is really true, doesn't that change everything?"

When you're near the end and look back on your life, will you wonder: what if God was there?



A Search For Truth – Part 1

Identifying life's critical questions, embarking on a search for truth, and learning about the evidence for the truth of the Bible.



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You have a worldview, whether you realize it or not.

It affects what is important to you and what you deem trivial. It is the foundation for your character, and it shapes who you become. It also serves as a compass to guide you along the journey of life.

As you formulate your worldview, you have a solemn responsibility—to search for truth.

To honestly seek what is true and what is false about life, there are some questions that simply must be asked, and this STEPS Journey Blog series will explore several of them.

Here is the first critical question we will examine: Is the Bible true?

Is the Bible True?

If the Bible is true and if it is the inspired word of God, it would make sense that it would align with how the universe operates. The amazing thing is that science and our use of the intellect and logic are in total concert with the Bible:

The Bible is very specific and easily proved or disproved. The Bible describes hundreds of events as well as people's names, what they did, and where they did it. Thousands of people over hundreds of years have tried to disprove the Bible. Not one shred of tangible evidence has been found to significantly discredit anything in the Bible.

Many findings of archaeology have confirmed specific aspects of the Bible. Numerous discoveries have validated different locations, events, and people from the Bible. In addition, no finding of archaeology has ever disproved anything in the Bible.

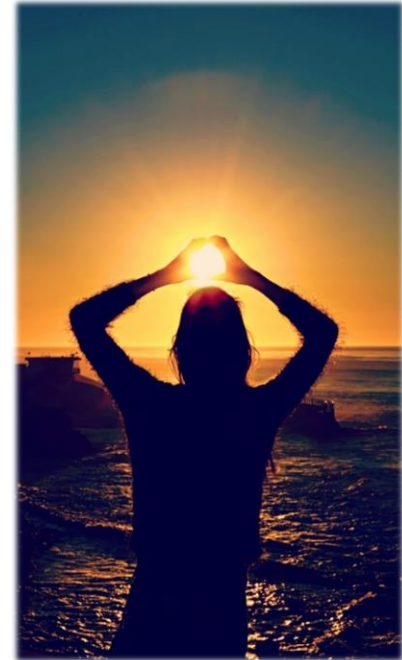
The Bible is the most widely validated book of ancient history. Many manuscripts have been discovered to authenticate it. The New Testament, with thousands of copies, was written from A.D. 40 to 80 and dates fewer than 100 years from events it captures.

Hundreds of prophecies in the Bible accurately predicted future events. Many of these prophecies were very specific. The idea that the fulfillment of these predictions was mere coincidence or chance has been shown to be logically and mathematically absurd.

There is harmony and wisdom in the writing that cannot be explained by accident. The Bible was written over a period of about 1500 years by over 40 authors. From beginning to end, the Bible is a consistent story that meshes together perfectly. There is no reasonable or logical way it could have been created without divine inspiration.

Historical data from other sources supports the writings in the Bible. Dozens of sources have corroborated more than 100 facts about Jesus' life, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection. There are many reliable sources for other biblical subjects as well.

Eyewitness accounts form the foundation of the New Testament. The New Testament was written by people who were eyewitnesses themselves or who related the accounts of eyewitnesses of the events they capture. They had direct knowledge of what actually happened. In addition, thousands of their readers at the time were eyewitnesses as well.



You just know. Millions of people find personal verification daily that the Bible is truth.

A Search for Truth

This information is presented in a factual manner to assist you in your search for truth. Hopefully, along the way, you will come to accept that:

- You can use your mind as well as your heart and soul to understand God.
- Science, intellect, and Christianity are in support of each other, not in conflict.
- People who keep an open mind and conduct a sincere search for truth can, in fact, find it.

Christianity, unlike other religions, is not just a belief system; it is based on historical fact. Therefore, it can be investigated and proven intellectually.

That process may not, alone, lead someone to faith. But if you have not yet chosen to commit your life to God, it can be a good place to start.



A Search For Truth – Part 2

Examining our disbelief, seeing how faith can change everything, and appreciating all the evidence for the truth that God is real.



[Listen to the audio](#)

Do you think God is real?

Or is he a product of centuries of built-up mythology? Or perhaps a talisman that fearful or unsophisticated people grab onto when they can't deal with the fears and pressures of life?

In the last *STEPS Journey Blog* article, we talked about how all of us have a worldview that shapes how we think about life and influences the choices we make along the way.

And that we each have a responsibility to search for the truth about life.

We will continue our search for truth with another question: How can we know God is real?

Most people who believe in God do not reach that conclusion through an intellectual exercise. Faith normally doesn't work that way. But that doesn't mean you can't move toward God through a study of the facts as well.



How Can We Know God is Real?

Both science and logic support the existence of God. As you continue your search for truth, here are a few facts that should help you along the way:

The “Big Bang” is a scientific principle that proves the universe was created at one incredible moment in time. This principle is commonly accepted by virtually all scientists today. Prior to the Big Bang there was nothing, so there had to be a force, an Intelligent Designer, to make it happen. We know this intelligent designer as God.

The universe runs in an extremely specific manner making Earth suitable for life. The fundamental laws of physics have precise numerical values that together make life possible, as demonstrated by our planet’s gravity, the mass of the sun, the expansion rate of the universe, and many other factors. This fine-tuning of the universe by God was in order to establish Earth as a hospitable place for us to live.

Major scientific developments in the last few decades have helped describe God in a way that aligns with the Bible. As discussed, scientific evidence shows there was a Creator that brought into being in one moment our universe. Therefore, God must be timeless and all-powerful. God precisely designed everything about the universe and Earth so that life could flourish on this one planet. This shows we have a caring God who has gone to vastly elaborate detail so we could have an ideal environment in which to live.

One has simply to look around to see evidence of God everywhere. God makes his presence easily known to anyone willing to look for him. Think about the starry heavens at night; the vastness of the ocean; a breathtaking sunset; the thousands upon thousands of plants and animals; the wide variety of billions of members of the human race, each with their own intellect and feelings; the miracle of a new baby’s birth. The incredible complexity, variety, and beauty of our universe shout the existence of a loving God.



If you believe the Bible is true, you must believe in God. The Bible contains the story of God, so all evidence for the Bible also supports the existence and attributes of God. In fact, we have a detailed description of what God is like and how he cares for us.

You just know. Many of you believed in God long before you started reading this book. You have felt God in your heart, and you know God is real and that he is the truth.

A Search for Truth

This blog series is addressing questions we all must face as we search for truth about how life works. The last article discussed: "Is the Bible true?" Now, with this question about whether God is real, you have been presented with some foundational elements of a spiritual worldview.

It can be liberating to discover we can use our minds as well as our hearts to think about God.

But now that you have been presented with this information, you must make a choice: do you accept these facts as truth or, if not, what truth do you choose to accept?

Either way, the answer can change your life.



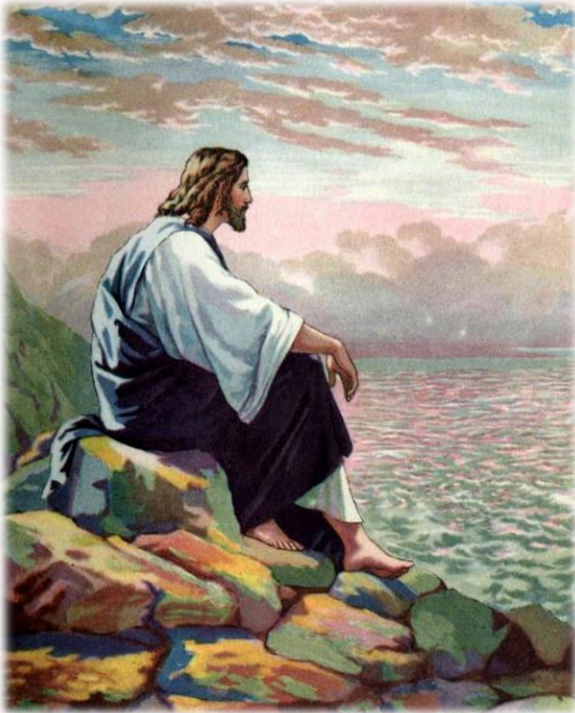
A Search For Truth – Part 3

Wondering who Jesus is, understanding the one choice that changes everything, and taking the time to examine the evidence for Jesus as God.



[Listen to the audio](#)

In the last two *STEPS Journey Blog* articles, we talked about if the Bible is true and how we can know that God is real. Intellectual study and open-minded analysis can lead to profound understanding and acceptance of the Bible and God, but what about Jesus?



One of the most interesting aspects of Christianity is that it is not defined by vague spiritual beliefs or stories that are impossible to prove. It is based on historical fact, different from every other religion the world has known!

The truths about Christianity can be deduced intuitively, and they can be reached through faith alone, but they can also be learned intellectually.

Who is Jesus?

Is Jesus really God?

The way you answer that question will affect your entire life. As you search for truth, you will see that history and logic strongly support a Christian worldview about Jesus:

Many Old Testament prophecies accurately predicted the coming of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, there are 60 major prophecies and over 250 other predictions that were fulfilled by one person, Jesus Christ. The odds of one man in history fulfilling all or even some of these prophecies are mathematically absurd. The coming of Jesus was clearly and specifically foretold many years before it came to pass.

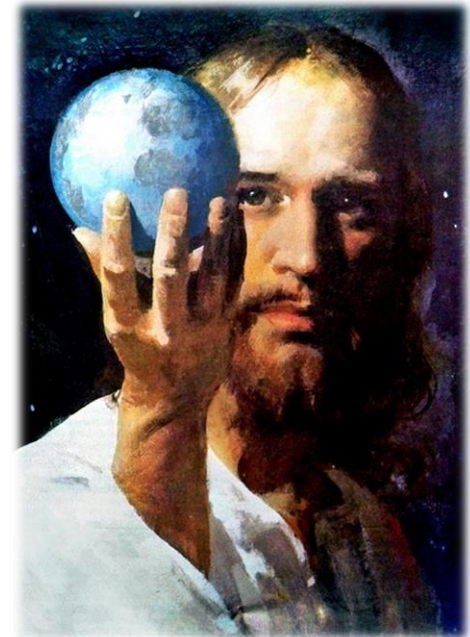
Many facts about Jesus are well accepted by even non-Christian historians. These facts include much of the resurrection: Jesus died by crucifixion; his friends placed his body in a guarded tomb; followers found the tomb empty on the third day; afterward, the followers of Jesus reported that Jesus appeared to them in bodily form on several occasions; and virtually all the disciples and thousands of other people were willing to be tortured and killed to support the fact that Jesus was the Son of God.

There were 35 recorded, documented miracles performed by Jesus. These miracles were done publicly, sometimes before thousands of witnesses. Many of those witnesses were hostile to Christ. None of Christ's critics ever denied that he performed these miracles, and these claims were widely accepted as the truth by everyone concerned.

Jesus stated repeatedly and publicly that he was God. During the feast of the dedication of Jerusalem, he stated to the authorities that, "I and the Father are one." In Mark 2:5-7, he claims to be able to forgive sins. During his trial, Jesus was asked directly, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" He answered, "I am" (Mark 14:62).

Jesus' friends and enemies knew and represented that he claimed to be God. In Matthew 16:16, Jesus' disciple Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' enemies knew this as well. When Jesus asked the Jewish authorities why they wanted to punish him, they replied, "for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:33).

Because Jesus claimed to be God, he could not have been only a wise teacher or a good man. Jesus was telling the truth about being God, he was a liar, or he was insane; those are the only choices available to us. Every word and action of his life was open and honest, and he showed the noblest character known in history. No one



who knew him doubted his sanity, and his teachings over several years are the wisest that have ever been witnessed. The only possible choice is that Jesus told the truth and that he was, and is, God.

We can learn much about Jesus, and we know God because he has appeared in human flesh. The life of Jesus is the most well-recorded existence in ancient history. The Bible clearly states that Jesus is God, so we have historic evidence of what God is like. God sent his Son to earth to show us a living example of his character, and we can know God by knowing Jesus.

A Search for Truth

This information may have struck you in a number of ways:

- If you were already a believer in Jesus, hopefully you found it interesting, even reassuring.
- If you were undecided about Jesus, perhaps you are now engaged enough to search further.
- If you believed that Jesus was at most a wise teacher or a great leader, that option has now been taken away from you, and you have a choice to make.

C.S. Lewis was a Cambridge University professor and one of most recognized intellectuals of the 20th century. He summarized the dilemma this way, “One who claimed what Jesus claimed about himself couldn’t be a good moral man or a prophet. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.”

Josh McDowell expands this thinking in his book *More Than a Carpenter*. It comes down to this: Since Jesus claimed to be God, you have a choice to make about who you believe him to be: Is he a liar, or a lunatic? Or, is he the Lord?

Which do you choose?



A Search For Truth – Part 4

Studying the most important event in history, seeing how history changes everything, and accepting the evidence for the Resurrection.



[Listen to the audio](#)



It is the most important—and controversial—event in history.

This incident has changed the lives of millions, yet others pay it little attention.

This is the last of a *STEPS Journey Blog* series that examines four questions critical to how we form our worldview. We have talked about the Bible, God, and who Jesus is.

Now, we will talk about how Jesus died. And, incredibly, how he then lived again.

You can use your mind and your heart to move toward God. You do not have to set aside your intellect, or your questions, to believe.

You simply have to be committed to a search for truth.

What About the Resurrection?

The most startling event in human history, the resurrection of Jesus, is a proven fact:

New Testament books were written soon enough after the events they recorded to be historically accurate. Most books in the New Testament were written during the period from A.D. 50 to 95. Many people who were alive at the time of Christ would have still been alive when these books were written. If anything in the writings were wrong, including the story of the resurrection, they would have cried out publicly to that effect. But the writings withstood all scrutiny.

Christ predicted his own resurrection and other events proved it. Jesus told his disciples of his coming death and that he would be raised from the dead. If the tomb had not been empty, the disciples could not have maintained that lie for even a single day since there were so many hostile witnesses around. The success of the early church, based on the preaching of the disciples, is also evidence that Jesus arose from the grave.

Jesus appeared in public many times with many people after his resurrection. Acts 1:3 states, “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days.” Peter said, “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” Writing about A.D. 56, Paul says that more than 500 people witnessed the resurrected Christ at one time, and most of them would have been living when Paul wrote that account. Over a period of time, hundreds of witnesses saw Jesus alive and personally interacted with him.





The disciples were eyewitnesses of the resurrection, and most of them were killed proclaiming that truth. When Jesus died, the disciples scattered in fear. After the resurrection, these heartbroken followers suddenly turned into courageous witnesses and martyrs. They knew for sure what had happened, and almost all of them were tortured and killed for proclaiming that Christ rose from the dead. People die for causes they believe in but they do not die for a lie, and the disciples knew the truth. They claimed to have seen Christ after he arose. They were willing to die rather than deny that truth.

There is no plausible explanation for the resurrection other than it occurred as written in the Bible. Frank Morrison, an agnostic journalist, attempted to write a book refuting the resurrection of Christ. After investigation, his opinions changed and he became a believer in Jesus Christ. Similar transformations have happened involving many people who chose to explore the facts about Jesus.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is one of the most well documented events in ancient history. Professor Thomas Arnold, who was a Chair of Modern History at Oxford, and many other scholars have studied the resurrection events exhaustively and concluded that the evidence for Christ dying and rising again is irrefutable.

You just know. If you sincerely and openly search for truth, you will find it. If you want to search for God, the best way is to get to know Jesus. At some point, your heart, mind, and soul will come to the same conclusion. It will require a step of faith, but once you believe, the Holy Spirit will confirm this truth in you over and over.

A Search for Truth

Some people believe the Bible is a collection of fables, God is a myth, and Jesus was perhaps a wise historical figure. And none of that affects their worldview very much.

You don't have that choice any more.

If you are engaged in a search for truth, you will eventually come up against a life-changing realization that confronted me in my late thirties. If all this is true, if the Bible is believable, God is real, Jesus is God, and he came to earth to live and die to save us, doesn't that change everything?



Doesn't that change **everything**?

The Gospel refers to the story and teaching of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, over time, the term "Gospel" has also come to mean "something accepted as unquestionably true."

The word "Gospel" also translates to mean "good news." The Gospel—Jesus Christ is God, and he died so we could be saved—is the truth. And it is also the best news we could ever receive.

What is your worldview? Is it still being shaped by your search for truth?

The truth is out there, and you can find it. And, yes, it will change everything!

Taking Steps With Jesus

Growing closer to God by walking with Jesus, learning about the 5 steps for personal transformation, and seeing life as an adventure.



[Listen to the audio](#)

The book [*STEPS: A Daily Journey To a Better Life*](#) presents five STEPS we can apply to live life better, one day at a time. The names of the STEPS are: Surrender, Transformation, Empathy, Progress, and Service.

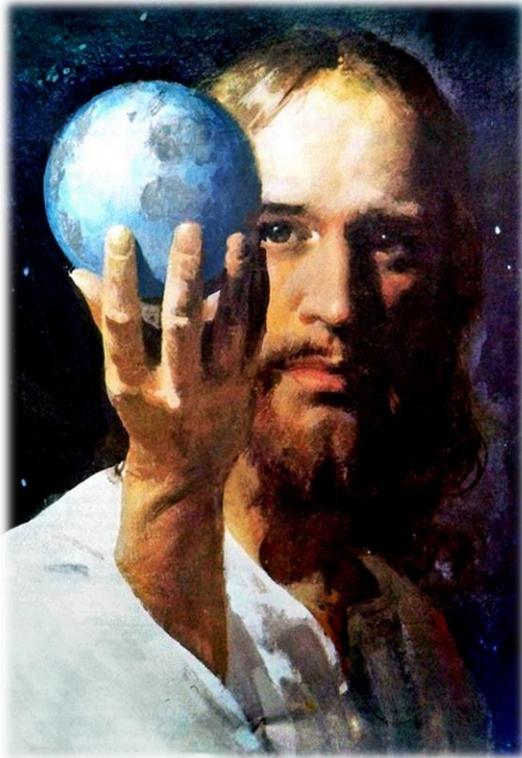
If we follow the five STEPS, we will improve our life and grow closer to God.

But our life—past, present, and future—can only become what it is truly meant to be when we are taking steps with Jesus.

As we do, life can become a wonderful adventure as we find reason to be:

- Courageous, because we have a cause to believe in.
- Inspired, due to firm and positive direction for which way to go.
- Hopeful, from experience proving that hope is realistic and achievable.
- Persevering, by learning we can overcome the challenges life will bring.
- Resilient, even in tough times, because we know where help can be found.





If you believe in and follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can achieve those things, and also acquire access to power you could never comprehend or utilize otherwise.

When you are focused on taking steps with Jesus, each of the STEPS will come alive in a way that is truly supernatural, and your life will be transformed in wonderful ways.

Surrender

Surrender your will to God and make choices based on faith and courage.

Jesus Christ is God. As you surrender your will to God, decide also to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. That is a choice you make on faith, and it will change your life.

When you surrender your life to Jesus, you position yourself to receive greater peace and joy. There is no worldly way to experience the depth of peace and the height of joy that you are meant to have, except through Jesus. More importantly, surrendering your life to Jesus brings you the promise of eternal life, a guarantee you can take with you always.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
(Matthew 6:33)

Transformation

Humbly admit your mistakes and make positive changes in your life.

Jesus died on the cross so you could be saved. When you accept Jesus as your Savior, you loosen the grip sin has on you and acquire the power to live a life of freedom.

By accepting God's grace through Jesus and repenting from your mistakes, your sins are forgiven. Those sins will be erased, and your life will be instantly transformed. You will be able to put down the weight of your past mistakes and move forward with the positive, wonderful assurance that your sins are gone forever.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.... For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Empathy

Seek forgiveness and invest in good relationships.

Out of thankfulness for the grace offered to you through Jesus Christ, seek sincere forgiveness from anyone you have hurt. Use Jesus as the example of a life based on love.

You will better appreciate the forgiveness of your own sins as you seek to forgive others for things they have done to you. You will feel closer to God as you use Jesus as your model of unconditional love. Experiencing the love of Jesus will help you repair and strengthen your relationships as you follow Biblical guidance for how to live with others.

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)

Progress

Spend time every day in prayer and meditation.



When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord, you also acquire the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in your life. The Holy Spirit is an invisible spiritual being, one with God.

As you spend time in prayer and the Bible, the Holy Spirit will provide direction, strength, and protection. The Holy Spirit is not a mystical “genie in a bottle” that will grant your every wish. The Holy Spirit is a guiding force that will affect your life in tangible ways with insight and understanding you would not receive otherwise.

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things.”
(John 14:26)

Service

Serve as an example and add value to the lives of others.

When you accept the good news of Jesus Christ, your heart will be changed. You will feel greater compassion and want to serve others in return for what you have been given.

By seeking to model your life after Jesus, you will serve as an example for others. You also become a vehicle by which they too can find hope and peace. As your desire to add value to the lives of others through service grows, you will find greater meaning. You will ultimately build a life of significance and purpose, one act of service at a time.

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:4)

Conclusion



[Listen to the audio](#)

I hope you have enjoyed "Taking Steps Toward God" and that it has helped you renew your faith and find a greater sense of hope.

I'll wrap up our journey together with one more story ...

Years ago, our family was going through some really tough times, and life was hard. During that period, I would sometimes go alone to the evening chapel service at our church.

One night, I was feeling especially discouraged. They were serving communion, and the pastor that night happened to be a friend of mine. As he handed me the communion elements, he personalized the blessing and said, "Steve, there is nothing that can separate you from God's love."

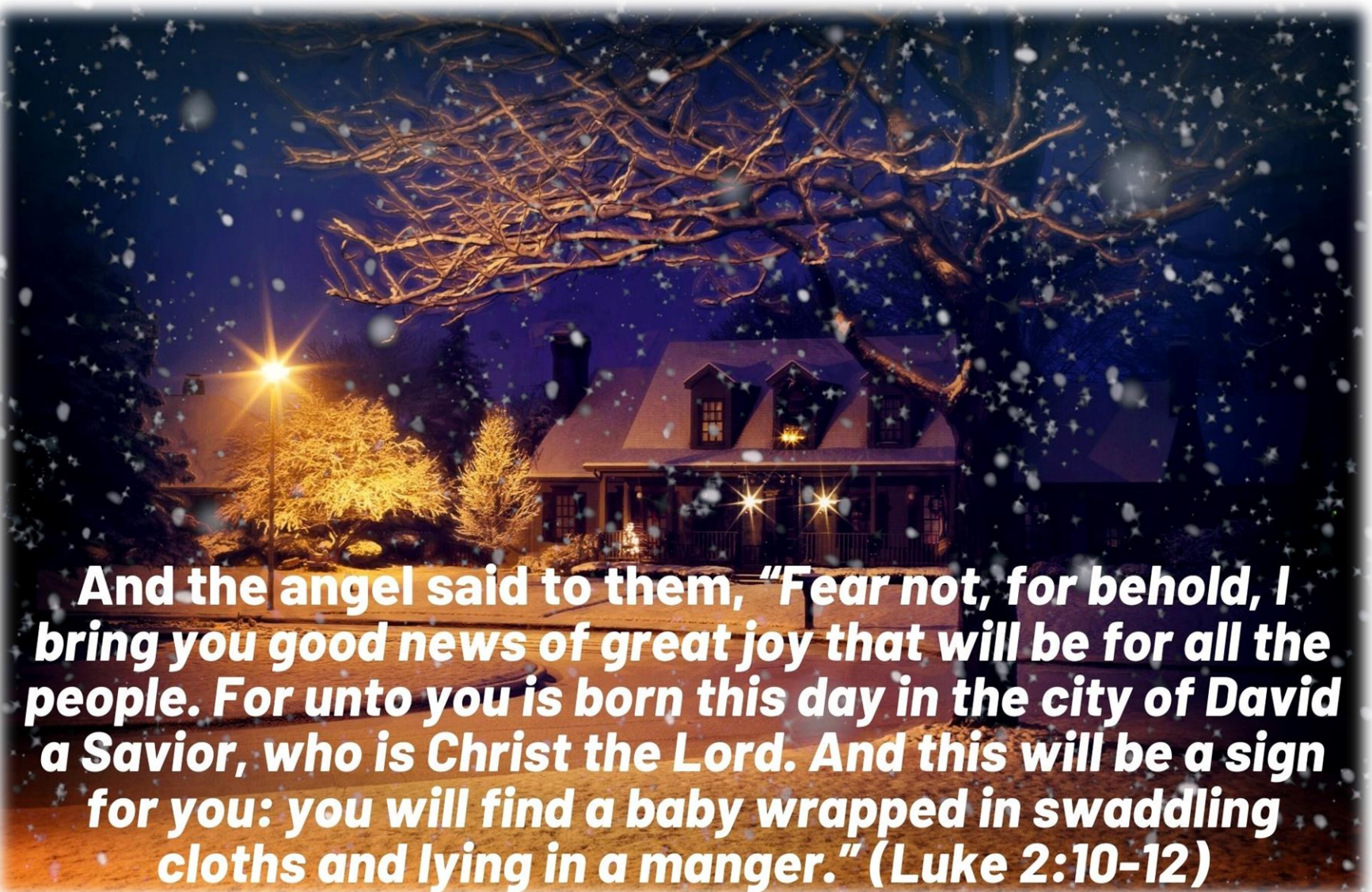
I felt something powerful sweep over me, and I started weeping on the spot. At that moment, I knew God loved me, personally, no matter what else was going on in my life.

"And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love."(Romans 8:38)

We can live each day knowing that God is good, and that He is in control of all things. Knowing He sent His Son to earth to live and die for us. And by trusting Him as our Lord and Savior, our past is forgiven and our future assured.

That's what we know about God. And knowing those things changes everything.

I hope you have enjoyed our time together, and I wish you the best along the rest of your journey. God bless.

A winter night scene featuring a snow-covered house with a porch, illuminated by warm lights. A large, bare tree stands in the foreground, and the sky is dark with falling snow and stars. The text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12)

RESOURCE LINKS:

STEPS Ministries Website

BOOKS:

Next Right Steps How to Live A Better Life

Steps: A Daily Journey to a Better Life