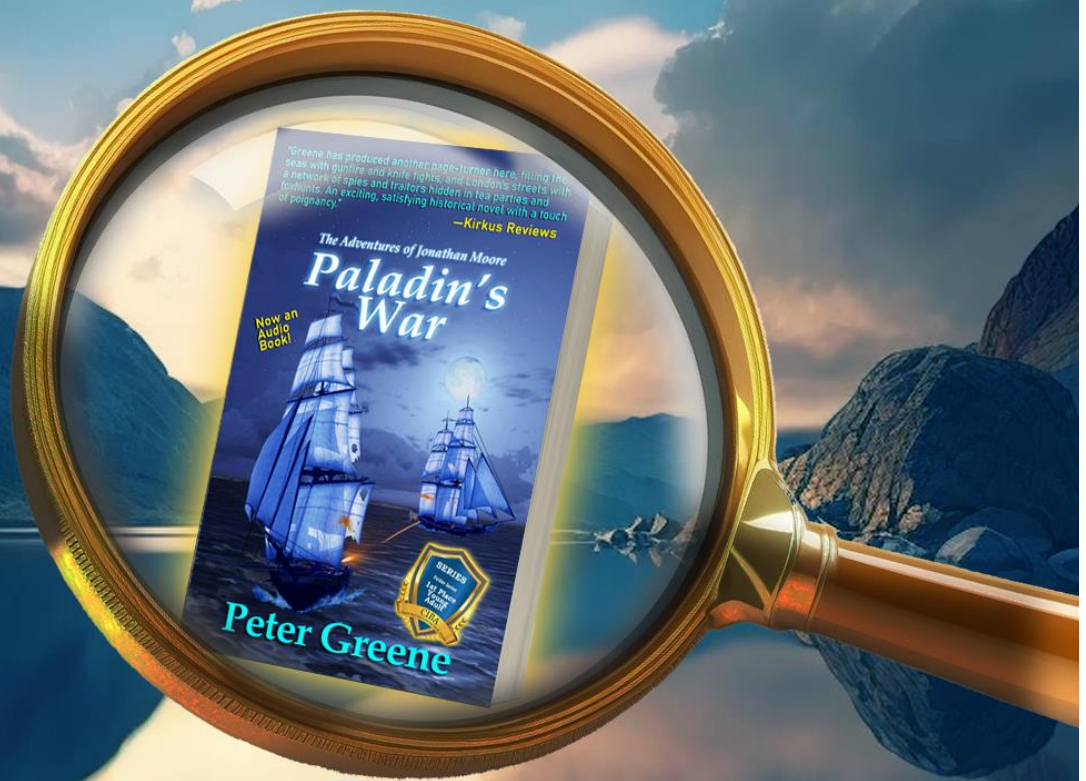


THINK ABOVE THE BOX

Looking at literature through a Biblical lens



Bible study guide for
Paladin's War

B.C. PIETSCH

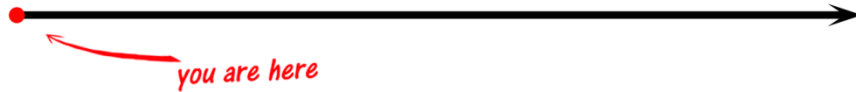
Think Above the Box

Bible Study Guide for

Peter Greene's
The Adventures of Jonathan Moore Book 3:
Paladin's War

by
B.C. Pietsch

LIFE IS SHORT. ETERNITY IS FOREVER.





Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box Bible Study for
Peter Greene's The Adventures of Jonathan Moore: *Warship Poseidon*
First Edition

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Think Above the Box Books

Our culture today has pretty much put God on the DO NOT TOUCH shelf for schools, teachers and students. The Think Above the Box series was born as an aid to counter the shutting out of all things Biblical in education today. This study guide is the first of hopefully a long series that will take more books into the theological realm.

When Peter Greene, the author of the award-winning Adventures of Jonathan Moore series, asked me to read and critique his rough draft of book 1, *Warship Poseidon*, I was honored. The book caught and kept my attention from the beginning in the dark alleys of London all the way through to the tearful and emotional final scene. Even though it was written as young adult adventure fiction, this story will touch people of all ages.

God is speaking through *The Adventures of Jonathan Moore* trilogy in so many ways throughout its nineteen chapters. As I was reading the story, Bible verses and concepts kept shouting at me from every page! I pitched my idea of doing a Biblical study guide to Peter and he agreed. This study guide will not ask for chapter outlines, plot points, character development, or word definitions but will provide an opportunity to take a secular story and use Scriptural references, videos, essays, music and thought-provoking questions to teach students how to comprehend a story using a Biblical worldview. *Think Above the Box Study Guides* for books 1 and 2 of the Jonathan Moore series are also available, with additional popular literature guides to come!

The Lord and His teachings are everywhere if one only knows how to find them. May this be the beginning of a whole new way of looking at literature through a Biblical lens!

Think Above the Box study guides are now available for all three
Adventures of Jonathan Moore books
(books available on Amazon, free guides at www.thinkabovethebox.com)



Send yourself back to the age of tall sailing ships and stow away with Jonathan Moore, Sean Flagon and Miss Delain Dowdeswell on their adventures to the Caribbean, the Black Sea, Africa and all points in between. Based in the early 1800's at the dawn of the Napoleonic Wars, the books are centered on Jonathan Moore and his adventures aboard various sailing ships of the British Royal Navy. Joining Jonathan on these journeys is his best friend and confidant Sean Flagon, their acquaintance made on the mean streets of London. In their travels they meet Delain Dowdeswell, an adventurer in her own right, challenging the order of things as she demands her fair share of excitement and intrigue.

Book 1: *Warship Poseidon* tells the tale of the seemingly-orphaned, twelve-year-old Jonathan Moore, as he is abducted by a gang and pressed into service aboard HMS *Poseidon*, a forty-four gun fighting frigate of the British Royal Navy. However, there is more to the event than just a change of address. How is it that some members of the crew, including the captain, already know his name? Why do the officers seem to favor him

above the other new crew members? As Jonathan endeavors to solve these mysteries, he is thrust into a daring mission to recover a hidden treasure on a remote Caribbean isle. Unfortunately, the crew and officers of the *Poseidon* are not the only ones searching for the prize. In a desperate race across the Atlantic, Jonathan is pitted against sword-wielding spies, engages in terrifying ship-to-ship battles, and in the end, must match his wits and courage against a ruthless and cunning French captain and his powerful warship.

Book 2: ***Castle of Fire***: Jonathan Moore is now reunited with his father, though soon leaves the comfort of family and London on what is considered by all to be a 'peach' of a mission. However, with the arrival of another midshipman holding a severe but unexplained grudge, life aboard HMS *Danielle* is anything but pleasant. Why are the new midshipmen his enemies? Who is stealing food from the ship's stores, and why must Jonathan and Sean sneak into a heavily guarded Spanish fort in the middle of the night to do some burglary of their own? In this second book of the Adventures of Jonathan Moore Series, Jonathan must capture a stolen British ship from blood-thirsty pirates, solve the mystery of the surprising stowaway, and defend his honor and his life during a fierce duel to the death with a murderous adversary. Alone and vastly outnumbered, the crew of the *Danielle* engages in a violent battle on the wild seas south of the farthest tip of Africa. Only Jonathan, Sean and an unexpected guest can turn the tide of the struggle by unlocking the secrets of a mysterious island and re-igniting the ferocious power of the *Castle of Fire*!

Book 3: ***Paladin's War***: 1802. Midshipman Jonathan Moore, Marine Private Sean Flagon and adventurer Delain Dowdeswell enjoy the company of family and friends during a delicate peace between France and England. However, mysterious spy networks now freely roam Europe's great cities, and the ships and armies of all nations remain on the edge of war. An elaborate scheme involves misleading and manipulating Jonathan, now aboard the eighteen-gun HMS *Paladin*, commanded by his friend and mentor, Lieutenant Thomas Harrison. Their mission: to deliver the King's treaty to a clandestine location in the Black Sea. Remaining in London, Delain encounters a shadowy black rider sneaking about the mansions of London's elite. Suspecting foul play, she investigates and enters a web of secret meetings, spies, coded messages and kidnapping. At first merely interesting, Delain's investigation soon turns deadly as she finds that all clues lead to the *Paladin's* mission, and to her friends, now thousands of miles away—and in grave danger. Led to waters far from home, the boys now fight for their ship and their lives against a rogue naval commodore with a war plan of his own. Now in an impossible situation, Jonathan must find a way to defeat his powerful enemies in the Black Sea - and survive the final conflict of the *Paladin's War*.

Think Above the Box and this study guide are dedicated to
Mason, Tanner, Evelyn, Scarlett and Molly.
May you always remember where you came from and to Whom you belong.

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How To Use This Guide

What you will need:

- a copy of this guide. You can download more for free at www.thinkabovethebox.com
- a copy or copies of the book *Warship Poseidon* by Peter Greene, available in paperback, hardcover and eBook on Amazon. There may be coupon codes available to Think Above the Box friends to discount the entire series of Jonathan Moore Books. Check our website before purchasing!
www.thinkabovethebox.com

The book is written on the fourth/fifth grade reading level, is clean, without magic, and contains mild violence. For more information on the series, see: www.jonathanmoorebooks.com

Reading and using the guide:

Have students read a chapter of the book, or read aloud together. At the completion of a chapter have students open their copy of *Think Above the Box Bible Study Guide for The Adventures of Jonathan Moore*, and answer questions individually or have the teacher guide the discussion.

▶ There are questions noted by a blue dot as shown in the following diagram.

▶ **TAB** (*Think Above the Box*) says:

The author has given you guidance on answering questions, in red! Check it out!



Think Above the Box: There are also discussion/reflective questions shown under the *Think Above the Box* logo (see above) that have no answer given due to the nature of the question.

Hyperlinks to featured articles, blogs, videos and music:

Hyperlinks listed in the guide are available within chapters in **bold orange**. Just click and go!

Links to music will be prefaced with a musical notation: 🎵

chapter in book

Guide for Chapter 4 *A Hot Steaming Bowl*

topic #1

1. Jonathan looks about the ship and marvels at all of its varied components and equipment. It must have been overwhelming to see how much learning lay ahead. He made it his private goal to know everything about the ship with a positive, ambitious and determined attitude. Think of a new believer facing an unopened Bible.

question

▶ What should their attitude be?

answer

▶ **TAB says:** The same as Jonathan's: eager, positive, determined, ambitious.

for discussion



Think Above the Box: Do you see Bible study with the same attitude that Jonathan viewed his seamanship training or do you see it as a chore? How could someone improve their attitude? Read the blog below!

link to web content
(click on it)

<http://ronedmondson.com/2015/01/7-ways-to-better-enjoy-reading-the-bible.html>

topic 2

2. Jonathan, Sean and Claise stand 'bowl-less' in front of the salvation of their hunger - fish stew! After Steward declares that there are no more bowls for them, Harrison improvises with three small cooking pots from the galley. Steward had never even considered them for use as he was looking only for bowls.

Bible verses

2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

another question

▶ Why does God use unlikely, weak, imperfect, unsuitable 'vessels' (people) for furthering His kingdom?

answer

▶ **TAB says:** We are all sinners here on earth so no one is perfect. If God used people that the world considers the best, the brightest, the smartest, the most talented, etc., we would end up giving the credit and glory to them and not to God.

question

▶ How are Moses, Rahab, David, Jonah, Samson, and Paul imperfect?

answer

▶ **TAB says:** Moses: stutterer, murderer; Rahab: prostitute; Jacob: liar; David: adulterer, murderer; Jonah: ran from God; Samson: womanizer; Paul: persecuted Christians.

Guide for Chapter 1

The Lost Echo

1. While considering the hands on HMS *Echo*, Commander Joshua Gray lamented the lack of abilities coming from the ranks of the press gang-procured crew. Depending on how a captain treated them, this form of filling the ranks could prove successful or disastrous! In reading the Bible, you may have noticed that there are quite a few verses that talk about slavery, without necessarily condoning the practice:

1 Timothy 6:1-2 (ERV Easy-to-Read Version) All those who are slaves should show full respect to their masters. Then God's name and our teaching will not be criticized. Some slaves have masters who are believers, so they are brothers. Does this mean they should show their masters any less respect? No, they should serve them even better, because they are helping believers, people they should love. This is what you must teach and tell everyone to do.

Colossians 4:1 (TLB The Living Bible) You slave owners must be just and fair to all your slaves. Always remember that you, too, have a Master in heaven who is closely watching you.

Exodus 21:16 (GW GOD'S WORD Translation) "Whoever kidnaps another person must be put to death, whether he has sold the kidnapped person or still has him."

Ephesians 6:9 (NLT New Living Translation) Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

1 Timothy 1:8-10 NLT We know that the law is good when used correctly. For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching.

Now, why is that? One would think that God, through His Word, would highly condemn such a system!

Read the following blog to get a better understanding of bondage and servitude:

Does the Bible condone slavery? | GotQuestions.org



Think Above the Box: The above link states, "the purpose of the Bible is to point the way to salvation, not to reform society." What do you think of that?

2. The *Echo's* original orders were to deliver mail to the British naval station at Gibraltar. The straightforward mission was changed at the last minute to a somewhat clandestine prisoner exchange at a dark, foreboding inlet on the western coast of the island of Dugi Otok. Gray felt most *uneasy* about this new mission and would probably have preferred to keep the uncomplicated original assignment but altered course and followed orders. In the Bible, the prophet Jonah decided to flee from the command that God had given him to go to Nineveh and preach to the Assyrians, a people he detested (for many valid reasons!) *Unlike* Commander Gray, who accepted and followed the new operation, Jonah first disobeyed and fled...

Jonah 1:1-3 (AMP Amplified Bible) Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim [judgment] against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” But Jonah ran away to Tarshish to escape from the presence of the Lord [and his duty as His prophet]. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish [the most remote of the Phoenician trading cities]. So he paid the fare and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord.

The following post presents an excellent message on how God wants us to ‘follow orders’ and go to our ‘Nineveh,’ whether that is in your school, work, neighborhood, family or team!

God Wants You in Nineveh! | Keep Believing Ministries



Think Above the Box: You know what's coming - describe what you feel your ‘Nineveh’ is and an experience you had sharing Jesus with someone not exactly open to the good news. How did it go? Did you feel God urging you on? Did you try to board a ‘ship to Tarsus’ first? Would you do it again?

3. Upon entry into the cliff-enclosed inlet, Captain Gray’s cautious instincts led him to slightly alter the original orders and send a jolly boat in to investigate before proceeding with the ship. All the factors leading up to this mission had caused him to be wary and apprehensive. He told Mister Hayes, “Discretion is the better part of valor.” The discovery that the prisoner’s manacles had been removed was an additional warning sign left unheeded. But even after Spencer’s report of the bowl-like, windless cove the captain decided to proceed only after having the crew prepare the bow chaser. All of these factors led to the horrendous attack on the ship resulting in death and destruction for the Royal Navy. The *Echo* had become ensnared by Aggar’s diabolical (and successful!) ambush.

▶ Did the Captain have any subtle warnings about trouble ahead?

▶ **TAB’s take:** Yes, mysterious change in orders, enclosed cove with only one escape route, no wind, prisoner mysteriously unrestrained before order given, unusual mission for a packet, and a questionable crew.

▶ Why didn’t he rely upon his instincts?

▶ **TAB says:** He was following orders and trusted his superiors, following the Royal Navy chain of command.

Sometimes there are traps laid out for us in life, many we don’t see coming, but others that, when we look back, left numerous warning signals and alarms along the way. As stated in the following post, “*Whether you realize it or not, you are walking down a figurative trail in life and Satan has placed many concealed traps in your path in order to take you captive.*” Read about how Satan, like Aggar, can use people as a strategy to entrap us (PS: check out the cool pic!):

How Satan Uses People to Set Traps for You! | The Agapegeek Blog

These verses from Psalms tell us to rely upon God when we are in danger of becoming ensnared by Satan:

Psalm 25:15 NLT My eyes are always on the Lord, for he rescues me from the traps of my enemies.

Psalm 141:9 (AMPC Amplified Bible, Classic Edition) Keep me from the trap which they have laid for me, and the snares of evildoers.

Psalm 91:3 (ESV English Standard Version) For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.

Psalm 31:4 TLB Pull me from the trap my enemies have set for me. For you alone are strong enough.

Psalm 124:7 (TPT The Passion Translation) We are free from the hunter's trap; their snare is broken and we have escaped!



Think Above the Box: Think of a time when you entered a seemingly benign situation that ended up being your very own personal gnarly-pined cove with almost no escape. What were some warning signs that you either ignored or didn't perceive? Has the experience made you more cognizant of Satan's traps?

REAL LIFE: Dana Goodrum's life with an abusive father, several disastrous relationships, and the abortion of her third child had left her in a deep *cove* of rejection and regrets. She tells how Jesus became the wind that got her out from the foggy, rock bottom, inescapable inlet that her life had become:

Torn Between Two Worlds | CBN

APOLO-GET-ITS: After all this Jonah talk, let's get some facts on the question: Was Jonah really swallowed by a big fish? First, an overview:

Matthew 12:38-41 ESV Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

Since the story of Jonah is very controversial to non-believers, let's dive into these links:

Was Jonah truly swallowed by a whale? | GotQuestions.org

Jonah and the Great Fish | Answers in Genesis

Did Jonah Really Get Swallowed by a Whale? | The Institute for Creation Research (icr.org)

Just for fun, how about checking out Northland Church's rendition of the Newsboys' song *In the Belly of the*

Whale? You might have heard it...

♪ **"In The Belly of a Whale" - YouTube**

EXTRA CREDIT: for the detail-oriented etymological research geeks amongst us:

Jonah and the "Whale"? - Apologetics Press

Guide for Chapter 2

Ice Cream

1. After experiencing all of the excitement, frenzy and thrills of being a stowaway and firing cannons at Napoleon's forces from a castle turret, the life of a proper young lady getting schooled in the prim decorum and deportment of London society was downright dull and excruciatingly boring to Delain Dowdeswell, *adventurer*. In life, we all experience ups and downs, good and bad, scary and safe, don't we?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NLT For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

Philippians 4:12 NLT I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.

God is with us through them all:

Romans 8:28 AMP And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose.

Psalms 37:23-24 AMP The steps of a [good and righteous] man are directed *and* established by the Lord, and He delights in his way [and blesses his path]. When he falls, he will not be hurled down, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand *and* sustains him.

We can grow in our Christian walk through all the times and phases of our lives, whether they are quiet, boring, busy, fascinating, hard, sad, terrifying, scary, exciting, adventurous or happy.

▶ What do you think God would have had Delain do during this season of learning and lounging in London assuming she was a believer?

▶ **TAB** says: She should pursue knowledge and study as if she had the Lord as her teacher, aiming to be a good witness for Christ in whatever she does, knowing that He is with her wherever she is and striving to show the love of Jesus to all she encounters.

The following blog delves into the ups and downs of the roller coaster of life:

The Roller Coaster | CBN



Think Above the Box: Do you feel as Delain does, that there are seasons of good stuff and then seasons of bad (or boring?) Name a time when you went for a 'roller coaster ride' in your life. Do you think we learn and grow more from the ups or the downs? Did you feel God walking alongside you? How would you know? What did you learn about yourself (and others?)

2. While lamenting the dullness of her city life, Delain remarked that one thing that stimulates her imagination is 'people-watching.' With her gifts of observation, insight, acuity and perceptiveness, a simple glance at a person told her many things, such as when she noted a seemingly unremarkable man in the street. His out of season costly coat, slack grooming habits, muddy shoes and gold pocket watch did not seem to add up. The ability to *discern* people and events is a very beneficial quality to have. God thinks so too!

Romans 12:2 ERV Don't change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but let God change you inside with a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to understand and accept what God wants for you. You will be able to know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.

Hebrews 5:14 AMPC But solid food is for full-grown men, for those whose senses *and* mental faculties are trained by practice to discriminate *and* distinguish between what is morally good *and* noble and what is evil *and* contrary either to divine or human law.

Hebrews 4:12 ESV For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning** the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

You may have heard a statement similar to this, *"When you believe in nothing, you'll fall for anything."*

This rings true, especially for believers. Biblical discernment is a skill all Christians should possess!

1 Kings 3:9 ESV Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may **discern** between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?

Acts 17:11 ERV The people in Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica. They were so glad to hear the message Paul told them. They studied the Scriptures every day to make sure that what they heard was really true.

What is biblical discernment and why is it important? (gty.org)

When involved in a conversation about God and what people believe, Christians should be able to *discern* if the arguments that are presented are valid in regards to the truth of Jesus and the Gospel.

1 John 4:1-6 TLB Dearly loved friends, don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God: test it first to see if it really is. For there are many false teachers around, and the way to find out if their message is from the Holy Spirit is to ask: Does it really agree that Jesus Christ, God's Son, actually became man with a human body? If so, then the message is from God. If not, the message is not from God but from one who is against Christ, like the "Antichrist" you have heard about who is going to come, and his attitude of enmity against Christ is already abroad in the world. Dear young friends, you belong to God and have already won your fight with those who are against Christ because there is someone in your hearts who is stronger than any evil teacher in this wicked world. These men belong to this world, so, quite naturally, they are concerned about worldly affairs and the world pays attention to them. But we are children of God; that is why only those who have walked and talked with God will listen to us. Others won't. That is another way to know whether a message is really from God; for if it is, the world won't listen to it.

The following article offers an in-depth discussion on this topic:

Three Ways To Discern the Truth (biblehelpsin.org)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever run across someone speaking false doctrine? How did you discern that it was not Scriptural?

3. Delain was right to question the strange bearing of the bearded man, Orvislat, as he took a serpentine route from the ice cream shop to Queen Anne's Gate, confident that he had not been detected or pursued. Have you ever observed an ant scurrying about the grass, blissfully unaware of your foot and its own demise just inches away? Or how about the *ubiquitous* presence of cameras everywhere you look from home security systems to our cell phones and computers? Ever get the feeling that you are being watched wherever you go? Well, you are! Camera lenses can be covered, but Scripture tells us that God has had His eye on us from before we were born!

Psalm 139:15-16 AMP My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being formed in secret, and intricately *and* skillfully formed [as if embroidered with many colors] in the depths of the earth. Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were appointed *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them [even taking shape].

Hebrews 4:13 TLB He knows about everyone, everywhere. Everything about us is bare and wide open to the all-seeing eyes of our living God; nothing can be hidden from him to whom we must explain all that we have done.

Jeremiah 23:24 AMP "Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?" says the Lord. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord.

Listen and/or read the following message that addresses Psalm 139 and the fact that there is no escape from God:

Psalm 139: No Escape From God | Bible.org

► I keep seeing that word *ubiquitous* everywhere I look! But what does it mean?

► **TAB says:** *Ubiquitous* means something that is everywhere you look.



Think Above the Box: Mull over the questions at the end of the article above!

REAL LIFE: As discussed in question 3 above, there is no escape from God, but that is a **good** thing!

Deuteronomy 31:6 GW Be strong and courageous. Don't tremble! Don't be afraid of them! The Lord your

God is the one who is going with you. He won't abandon you or leave you.

Read about a young teen's roller coaster journey to finding her way to trusting in God:

TESTIMONY: ROLLER COASTER RIDE (kingjamesbibleonline.org)

APOLO-GET-ITS: Guess who this describes?

He was despised and rejected — a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

If you guessed Jesus Christ, you are correct! Did you know that in 1866, several German scholars commented on the above stating, *"It looks as if it had been written beneath the cross of Golgotha"*? [Golgotha is another name for Calvary, the hill that Jesus was crucified on.] Now the fascinating thing is that these are verses from **Isaiah 53:3, 5, 9, 11 NLT** which were written about 700 years **before** Jesus' arrival on Earth! Many people through the ages have come to Christ after learning about this ancient prophecy that could only have been fulfilled by Him.

Watch this video depiction of Isaiah 53 (courtesy of clips from *The Passion of the Christ*):

Isaiah 53-Passion of the Christ - Popular Christian Videos (godtube.com)

Then invest some time in this verse-by-verse Bible study:

ISAIAH 53 COMMENTARY & BIBLE STUDY (bibleversestudy.com)

EXTRA CREDIT: For a deeper dive into Isaiah 53, watch the following video:

MESSIANIC PROPHECY—Isaiah 53 - YouTube

EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: Take some time to peruse this site's commentary on Psalm 22, written over 500 years before Christ:

PSALM 22 COMMENTARY & BIBLE STUDY (bibleversestudy.com)

Guide for Chapter 3

Paladin's Race

1. Young Sean was undergoing Royal Marine training under the skilled eyes of Corporal Hudson, with the added assistance of Private Hicks. In the course of preparing for target practice with a heavy musket meant for a larger man, not a mere boy, Sean asked if he really needs this big weapon when he is already masterfully skilled at swordplay. It would have been so much easier on him to count on his sword rather than struggle with musket practice. Hudson admonished him and stated that it was the Marines' duty to keep the enemy *off* the ships, which was best accomplished by muskets, and that swords are for when the enemy had actually *boarded* the ship and were a last resort. The preference for sword versus musket could be a picture of a person using earthly, human based values when making choices in their life as opposed to using God's direction as written in His Word. They may be quite adept at the ways of the world and elect the easiest route, resulting in what most people call 'success.'

Genesis 13:10-13 ESV And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

Mark 8:36 TLB And how does a man benefit if he gains the whole world and loses his soul in the process?

"There is much more in life than the outward and material. We must base our choices on God's Word, not on the assumptions of our culture. Those principles encompass the whole Bible and take a lifetime to learn thoroughly.

- Steven J. Cole

Please read and/or listen for Biblical insight into this concept of choices and consequences:

Lesson 28: Choices, Consequences (Genesis 13:5-18) | Bible.org

And now for the musical portion of our program:

🎵 **Toby Mac - Lose My Soul with lyrics - YouTube**



Think Above the Box: So how about you? Have you ever based a decision on what would be easiest for you rather than on what God would want you to do, that may indeed be much harder to accomplish, but is the right thing to do? Discuss a famous person who represents the embodiment of **Mark 8:36**.

2. As His Majesty's fine ship *Paladin* sat like a buoy waiting for the elite yachts of London to circle around her, the crew lamented about not being able to participate in the race, especially since their ship was the fastest in the British fleet. Alexander observed, "When we have such a fine mare, it seems a waste to...keep her in the barn." After standing by until the last 'scow' passed them, Harrison gives the order to "heave

anchor” and the *Paladin* flew like a bird past all the contestants to the cheers of the crowd. It must have been excruciating for the men of the *Paladin* to sit back while the slower yachts competed, but in the end, they gracefully sailed by them all and continued on their way to Wapping, to the acclaim and cheers of the crowd.

Isaiah 40:31 GW Yet, the strength of those who wait with hope in the Lord will be renewed. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and won't become weary. They will walk and won't grow tired.

Psalms 27:14 TPT Here's what I've learned through it all: Don't give up; don't be impatient; be entwined as one with the Lord. Be brave and courageous, and never lose hope. Yes, keep on waiting—for he will never disappoint you!

Lamentations 3:24-26 NLT I say to myself, “The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!” The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord.

Habakkuk 2:3 AMP “For the vision is yet for the appointed [future] time. It hurries toward the goal [of fulfillment]; it will not fail. Even though it delays, wait [patiently] for it, because it will certainly come; it will not delay.

In life, we often want to rush headlong into things, as our ‘I want it now’ culture demands of us. Just like the crew readying the sails and manning the anchor in anticipation, God works on us while we wait.

“There is actually something happening while nothing is happening. God uses waiting to change us.”

- Jade Mazarin

God Is Working in Your Waiting | Desiring God



Think Above the Box: Just for fun, let's tie up questions 1 and 2 with the following video. Who would have thought this scene contained a Biblical allegory? Can you offer any connections? If you're worth your *salt* you can...

♪ **Veruca Salt: I Want It Now! (Willie Wonka & the Chocolate Factory) 1971 - YouTube**

3. Picture the scene of the *Paladin* jolting forward and flying by all the other ships like a charging racehorse in the wind. Imagine that all of the ships represent various civilizations throughout time. In regards to accomplishments and the betterment of humanity and society, the *Paladin* could be said to represent the influence of Jesus and his followers.

Ephesians 2:10 TPT We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned in advance *our destiny* and the good works we would do *to fulfill it!*

The immense impact of Christianity cannot be ignored, including charity, the abolition of slavery, human

rights, the scientific revolution, the founding of public education and universities, and the establishment of hospitals and modern medicine.

"In every era, and in their own words, we find people whose faith in Jesus and His teachings motivated them to change the world...It turns out that the greatest champions of humanity had one thing in common: Jesus."

- John S. Dickerson

Matthew 5:14-16 TPT "Your lives light up the world. Let others see your light from a distance, for how can you hide a city that stands on a hilltop? And who would light a lamp and then hide it in an obscure place? Instead, it's placed where everyone in the house can benefit from its light. So don't hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others, so that the commendable things you do will shine as light upon them, and then they will give their praise to your Father in heaven."

Please check out Dickerson's website for fascinating facts about the beliefs and lives of people you may have learned about in school:

JesusSkeptic



Think Above the Box: After examining the above website, why do you think it is that Christians were responsible for so many positive accomplishments for humanity?

Ok, one more link from JesusSkeptic.com! This is about Frenchman Louis Braille who revolutionized education for the blind with his method for reading and writing by touch:

LOUIS BRAILLE | JesusSkeptic

How 'bout a musical interlude on the following scripture about a blind man?

John 9:1-3 AMPC His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man or his parents sinned, but he was born blind I order that the workings of God should be manifested (displayed and illustrated) in him.

🎵 **The Book of John in Song - Chapter 9 - "I Once Was Blind" [Live] (Tommy Walker) - YouTube**

REAL LIFE: Luke 15:32 AMPC But it was fitting to make merry, to revel *and* feast and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!

Chapter 2's APOLO-GET-IT delved into the many prophetic aspects of Isaiah 53. Watch the testimony of a Jewish drug dealer who discovered that Jesus is the true Messiah with this prophetic Old Testament chapter pointing the way:

"Living a double life, this Jewish drug-smuggler and father of two eventually hits rock bottom. Arrested, divorced, and shaken by a brutal car accident, it's only through his new girlfriend's old

faith that he finds peace and recovery, and eventually meets his Messiah."

- One for Israel Ministry

International drug-runner gets trapped by God's love - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Did you ever wonder if there was evidence for the various shocking and improbable incidents that transpired during Jesus' crucifixion outside of the Bible? The following video touches upon five of these (three hours of darkness, an earthquake, the tearing of a one-foot-thick temple veil, dead believers rising from their graves and the conversion of the Roman guards at the cross) using extra-Biblical sources:

Miracles at the Crucifixion of Christ - YouTube

Guide for Chapter 4

The Silver Star

1. Upon approaching the front door to Captain Walker's London residence, Delain hesitated, worried that the (well-deserved) wrath of the "Grand Dragon" might once again fall upon her and Jonathan. Captain Moore assured them that once on land, Walker would become congenial, gracious, amiable and serene. People throughout time have either gotten hung up on the angry, vengeful side of God, while neglecting the loving, compassionate forgiveness and eternal life He offers us and vice versa. God's wrath and grace are actually harmonious and compatible, like two sides of the same coin.

"He is able to save you from the wrath and reconcile you to the Father. He has opened the door of heaven, and He is able to bring you in."

- Colin Smith

Romans 6:23 AMP For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God [that is, His remarkable, overwhelming gift of grace to believers] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 ERV God did not choose us to suffer his anger. God chose us to have salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Smith's post below explores six facets of God's wrath:

Six Things You Need to Know About God's Wrath | Open the Bible

2. As Captain Walker bemoaned his boredom due to the lack of war, Gorman assured the men and boys that the truce would not last as, "Many are still fighting...No one is ever really **satisfied**. Never can be." Read the quote below regarding the human heart. Does it sound similar to his statement (but through the use of fancy old-fashioned language?)

"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."

- Blaise Pascal

This famous quote has undergone a slight metamorphosis through the years. An abridged version refers to a 'God-shaped vacuum' in our hearts which paints an accurate picture of the sentiment, as people search in vain to fill their hearts with worldly things but still find themselves unfulfilled, incomplete, miserable, discontented and unsatisfied.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 AMPC He has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has planted eternity in men's hearts *and* minds [a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can **satisfy**], yet so that men cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity* stated, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." The following essay addresses this:

The Vacuum in our Hearts (thelife.com)



Think Above the Box: Can you think of a book, movie or television series where a character sought after worldly things to satisfy that God-shaped vacuum? Did they gain the world but lose their soul or did they resolve their yearning by seeking the Lord to fill the desire of their heart?

3. As Jonathan bid Delain goodnight, the reality of their impending separation seemed to hit them both at the same time. As she reflected upon the rough childhood that he endured as an orphan, Delain couldn't help but be anguished and distressed about Jonathan's past suffering. But he took a very different view of those travails and tribulations and assured her, "I am all right now, Miss Dowdeswell. And remember: without my life as it was, I never would have met Sean, never would have met you." What an attitude!

Psalm 34:17-18 ESV When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

God also tells us that this life's ordeals and burdens work for our benefit in the long run:

James 1:12 TPT If your faith remains strong, even while surrounded by life's difficulties, you will continue to experience the untold blessings of God! True happiness comes as you pass the test with faith, and receive the victorious crown of life promised to every lover of God!

Romans 5:3-5 ERV And we are also happy with the troubles we have. Why are we happy with troubles? Because we know that these troubles make us more patient. And this patience is proof that we are strong. And this proof gives us hope. And this hope will never disappoint us. We know this because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts through the Holy Spirit he gave us.

Romans 8:28 AMPC We are assured *and* know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together *and* are [fitting into a plan] for good to *and* for those who love God and are called according to [His] design *and* purpose.

Genesis 50:20 ERV It is true that you planned to do something bad to me. But really, God was planning good things. God's plan was to use me to save the lives of many people. And that is what happened.

But what 'good' is God talking about? Is it getting the latest smartphone, owning a classy sports car, being voted most popular, having the ultimate prom date, etc.? Read the following to find out!

Do All Things Work Together for Good? (billygraham.org)



Think Above the Box: Name a time in your past when all seemed lost. In

hindsight, can you name any benefit or spiritual growth that occurred for you as a result of the experience? Was there anything that you learned that made your character more Christ-like? What changes occurred that, like Jonathan, you are grateful for?

REAL LIFE: Jeremy Camp is someone whose life definitely hit rock bottom when his new bride succumbed to cancer only months after their wedding. Such a devastating loss could cause a person to lose all faith in a good God, but throughout the experience, he chose to trust in God's plan for his life.

Psalm 23:4 TPT Lord, even when your path takes me through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer me, for you already have! You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way. Your authority is my strength and my peace. The comfort of your love takes away my fear. *I'll never be lonely, for you are near.*

Watch the following interview where Jeremy talks about his journey:

Jeremy Camp "I STILL BELIEVE" - YouTube

And watch the following music video with lyrics to his song *I Still Believe*.

♪ **I still believe by Jeremy Camp with lyrics - YouTube**

EXTRA CREDIT: Watch the trailer to the film *I Still Believe* using the link below. Here's the synopsis: *"From the makers of I Can Only Imagine comes the true life story of Christian music mega star Jeremy Camp. Jeremy's remarkable journey of love and loss proves there is always hope in the midst of tragedy and that faith tested is the only faith worth sharing."*

I Still Believe (2020 Movie) Official Trailer | KJ Apa, Britt Robertson - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Delain gave Jonathan a lovely parting treasure to remember their adventures by, a silver crescent moon sitting on a silver star with the compass points engraved on the corners, knowing that every time he gazed upon the star, it would bring back thoughts and memories of his relationship with her. God has given us lovely gifts to remember Him by also!

Psalm 19:1 TLB The heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of his craftsmanship.

1 Corinthians 15:41 AMPC The sun is glorious in one way, the moon is glorious in another way, and the stars are glorious in their own [distinctive] way; for one star differs from *and* surpasses another in its beauty *and* brilliance.

Genesis 1:16-18 TLB For God had made two huge lights, the sun and moon, to shine down upon the earth—the larger one, the sun, to preside over the day and the smaller one, the moon, to preside through the night; he had also made the stars. And God set them in the sky to light the earth, and to preside over the day and night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God was pleased.

Time to unwrap the presents that God has bestowed on us to aid in knowing that He really exists:

Is There a God? 6 Reasons Point to God's Existence (everystudent.com)

Please be sure to link to this article on “Beyond Blind Faith:”

[Jesus Proved He Was God \(everystudent.com\)](#)

This site sure has some fascinating articles and videos!

EXTRA CREDIT: How about giving the whole site a look?

[Does God Exist? See Short Articles & Videos Offering Evidence \(everystudent.com\)](#)

Guide for Chapter 5

The Treaty of Akbar

1. The ever-perceptive Delain reignited her detection skills once more in regards to Lord and Lady Wilder. This resulted in the consternation of her two sisters, whose main goal in life seemed to be that of transforming into proper ladies of London, enjoying tea and fashion *ad nauseum* for the rest of their days. However, the middle Dowdeswell sister couldn't stop thinking that things did not check out with this couple and that a little investigating was in order. Delain's determination to uncover what was up with the Wilders paralleled the Bereans in the Bible, who didn't take teaching at face value but investigated and researched Scripture to verify any message taught to them:

Acts 17:10-11 TPT That night the believers sent Paul and Silas off to the city of Berea, where they once again went into the synagogue. They found that the Jews of Berea were of more noble character and much more open minded than those of Thessalonica. They were hungry to learn and eagerly received the word. Every day they opened the scrolls of Scripture to search and examine them, to verify that what Paul taught them was true. A large number of Jews became believers in Jesus, along with quite a few influential Greek women and men.

Sounds like a great *modus operandi*, doesn't it? Ok, you can now impress your friends and spout Latin words for "method of operating!" But in all seriousness, read why we should be like the Bereans:

5 Important Lessons We Must Learn From The Bereans | Becoming Christians

Other verses in Scripture corroborate this:

1 John 4:1 GW Dear friends, don't believe all people who say that they have the Spirit. Instead, test them. See whether the spirit they have is from God, because there are many false prophets in the world.

2 Timothy 3:15 TLB You know how, when you were a small child, you were taught the holy Scriptures; and it is these that make you wise to accept God's salvation by trusting in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:9 AMP He must hold fast to the sure *and* trustworthy Word of God as he was taught it, so that he may be able both to give stimulating instruction *and* encouragement in sound (wholesome) doctrine and to refute *and* convict those who contradict *and* oppose it [showing the wayward their error].

2 Timothy 4:3 ERV The time will come when people will not listen to the true teaching. But people will find more and more teachers who please them. They will find teachers who say what they want to hear.



Think Above the Box: Have you ever encountered a teaching that is contrary to what God tells us in Scripture? How were you able to discern that it was non-Biblical? Have you ever missed a false teaching and how did you eventually arrive at the truth?

2. Lord Wilder appeared to enjoy outings in the obscurity of night! Dressing himself in cumbersome, indistinguishable clothing, lurking in the shadows, going for rides in unlit carriages and receiving secret

instructions were all part of the routine. Now why was that? Could he have been doing something clandestine that he wanted to keep hidden? The tragic thing was that Wilder thought he was helping his king and country even as Orvislat instructed him to tell no one and to destroy the rice paper evidence. It's too bad that he wasn't a Berean! As Scripture tells us, sin likes darkness too:

John 3:19-20 ESV And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

Proverbs 2:13-14 NLT These men turn from the right way to walk down dark paths. They take pleasure in doing wrong, and they enjoy the twisted ways of evil.

John 11:10 TPT Jesus replied, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight *in every day*? You can go through a day without the fear of stumbling when you walk in the One who gives light to the world. But you will stumble when the light is not in you, for you'll be walking in the dark."

2 Corinthians 6:14 GW Stop forming inappropriate relationships with unbelievers. Can right and wrong be partners? Can light have anything in common with darkness?

John 1:4-5 ERV In him there was life, and that life was a light for the people of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not defeated it.

Let's shed some light on this whole *darkness* thing by reading the following article:

30 Important Bible Verses About Darkness And Light (EVIL) (biblereasons.com)

3. Wilder was asked to let Orvislat's 'nephew' be assigned to the *Paladin* for its mission to Dugi Otok to which the hapless pawn agreed. Planting a spy onboard would prove invaluable to the enemy. Upon his departure, Orvislat couldn't help chuckling at the gullible member of the British Navy Board who so easily complied to his evil strategy. God warns us about such people in both Testaments:

Jeremiah 23:16 AMPC Thus says the Lord of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the [false] prophets who prophesy to you. They teach you vanity (emptiness, falsity, and futility) *and* fill you with vain hopes; they speak a vision of their own minds and not from the mouth of the Lord.

Acts 20:28-30 ESV Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

From the beginning to this very day, there have been people infiltrating the Church who lead unsuspecting, Biblically uninformed souls into false doctrine. Kinda like *this* guy...

Genesis 3:1-4 GW The snake was more clever than all the wild animals the Lord God had made. He asked the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must never eat the fruit of any tree in the garden'?" The woman answered the snake, "We're allowed to eat the fruit from any tree in the garden except the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, 'You must never eat it or touch it. If you do, you will die!'" "You certainly won't die!" the snake told the woman.

The following post states, "*Since that very moment in the Garden of Eden when a single bite shattered the harmony*

of the world, man has tried to make his own way, be his own master, and set up his own kingdom. It's nothing new." Sad but true! Learn about some fraudulent ideologies that are in circulation today in so-called Christian churches and how believers can respond to them:

Confronting False Teaching (Itw.org)

REAL LIFE: Psalm 139:13-14 AMP For You formed my innermost parts; I will give thanks *and* praise to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.

Luke 1:44 NLT When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy.

Jeremiah 1:5 ERV "Before I made you in your mother's womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I chose you for a special work. I chose you to be a prophet to the nations."

Watch the following video interview about how the witnessing of an actual abortion led to Planned Parenthood's Employee of the Year seeing the light and leaving the darkness to become a leading Pro-life advocate:

Abby Johnson's Testimony from "Changing Sides" - YouTube

Check out Abby's website for more information:

Abby Johnson – Be not afraid to be countercultural

EXTRA CREDIT: Watch the film *Unplanned* about Abby's journey. Here's the trailer:

"All Abby Johnson ever wanted to do was help women. As one of the youngest Planned Parenthood clinic directors in the nation, she was involved in upwards of 22,000 abortions and counseled countless women about their reproductive choices. Her passion surrounding a woman's right to choose even led her to become a spokesperson for Planned Parenthood, fighting to enact legislation for the cause she so deeply believed in. Until the day she saw something that changed everything, leading Abby Johnson to join her former enemies at 40 Days For Life, and become one of the most ardent pro-life speakers in America."

Unplanned Official Trailer - In Theaters March 29 - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Just as Orvislat's 'nephew' was going to be able to infiltrate the crew to spy on the *Paladin*, there are 'Christian' denominations that have accepted and allowed the infiltration of the belief that aborting one of the 'least of these' is ok with God. Do you think these denominations follow Jesus correctly on their views?

7 Christian Denominations with Most Liberal Stance on Abortion | Newsmax.com

At the end of the above article are two links about five pro-choice and five pro-life arguments made by Christians:

Abortion: 5 Pro-Choice Arguments Made by Christians | Newsmax.com

Abortion: 5 Pro-Life Arguments Made by Christians | Newsmax.com

Please put on your *Berean* team jersey and discuss what God's assertions are on the subject. How does Satan's darkness come into play? How about God's light?

APOLO-GET-ITS: *"An engineering feat that far surpasses landing a man on the moon is taking place all around us. Developmental biology is one of the most awesome biological disciplines to display the glory of God and the immeasurable value of human life."*

- Dr. Laurieanne Dent

It's time to add a little biology to your day! The video below illustrates various aspects of embryo development and the intricate processes involved. Read and/or listen to Dr. Dent's fascinating article that delves into life's hidden marvel (note: a long but captivating dissertation, so give yourself **EXTRA CREDIT!**)

Life's Hidden Marvel | Answers in Genesis

What do you think about this?

'Light of life': There is an explosion of light at the moment of conception in a human egg | OpentheWord.org

So, does life begin at conception or birth? Let's hear what these distinguished scientists and physicians had to say to a U.S. Senate subcommittee:

Why a Human Being Begins At Conception - NAAPC

Don't forget to watch the inspiring video at the top of the page. Now go out and hug a baby!



Think Above the Box: Imagine you are telling a non-believer about the pro-life stance. What facts would you put forth to show them there is another side to the abortion argument? How could you bring God into the picture? Have you ever had a conversation in school or with friends about pro-life versus pro-choice? How did it go?

Would viewing this music video help?

♪ Psalm 139 (Wonderfully Made) by Danielle Rose - YouTube

Guide for Chapter 6

Simply Lieutenant Gray

1. Commander Gray and his small crew found themselves marooned on the island of Dugi Otok, on the shore of a most inhospitable cove with few natural resources. Sailors were dying daily due to lack of food, fuel and medical supplies. The men had to rely on their ingenuity to stay alive, including fashioning a crude fishing hook from Gray's pin and Ike William's fishing line. The clothing of the dead was kept for warmth, one man's sole job was keeping flies off their meager food supply and what little brush was procured was gathered for the nightly fire that lasted only an hour. We can define *resourcefulness* as the ability to handle a crisis or situation with talent, competence and imagination. Under these bleak conditions, it would have been very easy to succumb to depression and hopelessness, as Gray stated, "There is no way out, except as angels." Fortunately, the Captain and his men refused to give up or surrender. God wishes us to also never lose hope:

Psalm 46:1-3 TPT God, you're such a safe and powerful place to find refuge! You're a proven help in time of trouble— *more than enough* and always available whenever I need you. So we will never fear even if every structure of support were to crumble away. We will not fear even when the earth quakes and shakes, moving mountains and casting them into the sea. For the raging roar of stormy winds and crashing waves cannot erode our faith in you.

Romans 12:12 AMP ...*constantly* rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast *and* patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength].

Romans 15:4 TPT Whatever was written beforehand is meant to instruct us in how to live. The Scriptures impart to us encouragement and inspiration so that we can live in hope and endure all things.

Matthew 24:13 TPT But keep your hope to the end and you will experience life and deliverance.

The following post states: "I believe that God wants us to be good stewards of the resources He has given us and to find the best ways to use what we have for problem solving, for surviving and for blessing others."

Resourcefulness vs Wastefulness | (wordpress.com)



Think Above the Box: Discuss one of the Biblical figures mentioned in the post above and how they were able to be resourceful during a time of distress. Have you ever used Scripture as a resource in dealing with a problem?

2. Heartened by their new escape plan of using the anchor ropes to scale the cliffs to safety, Hayes awarded Captain and Commander Gray his lapel pin back to which he sadly replied, "I am not a captain, for I have no ship. Probably never will again. So I am simply Lieutenant Gray." Being stripped of all honors due to the traitorous and humiliating loss of the *Echo* had left the man with the reduced title of Lieutenant. Even though Gray stated that he was no longer Captain, his actions and care for his men showed that he was still a true leader in his heart. In life, we may be called by many monikers, such as Boss, Coach, rockstar, champion, millionaire, Doctor, President, Principal and General. But once deprived of all such honors, what are we left with? No matter who *we* think we are, God knows our true self and heart:

Acts 10:34 ERV Peter began to speak: “I really understand now that God does not consider some people to be better than others.”

Luke 16:15 NLT Then he said to them, “You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God.”

Acts 15:8 TLB God, who knows men’s hearts, confirmed the fact that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he gave him to us.

Jeremiah 17:10 GW I, the Lord, search minds and test hearts. I will reward each person for what he has done. I will reward him for the results of his actions.

1 Samuel 16:7 ESV But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

“Character is what you are in the dark.”

- D.L. Moody

Do our outward actions match an inward spirit centered on a heart living for Christ? Read the following post:

Character is what you are in the dark. D.L. Moody | nelsonsamuel (wordpress.com)



Think Above the Box: **Matthew 5:15** GW No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, everyone who lights a lamp puts it on a lamp stand. Then its light shines on everyone in the house.

Another Moody quote that would make a good bookend to the one above:

“We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won’t need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don’t fire cannons to call attention to their shining - they just shine.”

What do you think Moody is inferring? Would God agree?

REAL LIFE: Steven J. Cole of **www.Bible.org** writes:

“The harvest is at the end of the age. Often we will not know what God accomplished through our labors or our prayers or our gifts until we stand before Him. Then we will meet people who are in heaven because we sowed the seed through our words or our gifts or our good deeds. We will enjoy a harvest of eternal joy!”

See his complete article:

Lesson 10: Embracing Hardship for the Gospel (2 Tim. 2:3-7) | Bible.org

God can use anyone to spread the gospel:

Galatians 6:9 ERV We must not get tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest of eternal life at the right time. We must not give up.

Matthew 28:19 GW So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

"You know, I never heard that anyone I ever spoke to had gone on for the Lord. Some made professions of salvation when I spoke to them but I never ever knew any more than that."

- Frank Jenner

Read more about this man who had a heart for saving souls:

The Frank Jenner Story - Words of Life Ministries



Think Above the Box: How would you answer this question?

"Young man, if you were to die tonight, where would you be, in heaven or in hell?"

- Frank Jenner

APOLO-GET-ITS: *"We have a loving God who planned all of this, and as I continue to study the complexity of the human body, I must return to the statement found in **Psalm 139:14**, 'I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and my soul knows very well.'"*

- Franklin Powers

In keeping with the *heart* theme of this chapter, let's learn some things about those amazing tricuspid and mitral valves:

The Marvelous Design of the Human Heart — Warren Christian Apologetics Center (warrenapologetics.org)

Guide for Chapter 7

A Change of Orders

1. The promotional titles that the lead officer of the *Paladin* held were the subject of much consternation for Miss Barbara Thompson as Admiral Moore attempted to explain the “strange lexicon” to her. Was Harrison a Lieutenant, Captain, Master or Commander? Or all of them? Such are the military rankings of the British Royal Navy which are rewarded to an individual based on their performance and achievement. The Bible tells us that believers will also be “ranked” in Heaven in the form of rewards (crowns) bestowed upon them by Jesus.

Matthew 16:27 AMPC For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory (majesty, splendor) of His Father with His angels, and then He will render account *and* reward every man in accordance with what he has done.

Matthew 25:21 TPT “Commending his servant, the master replied, ‘You have done well, and proven yourself to be my loyal and trustworthy servant. Because you have been a faithful steward to manage a small sum, now I will put you in charge of much, much more. You will experience the delight of your master, who will say to you, “Come celebrate with me!”’

2 Timothy 4:8 AMPC [As to what remains] henceforth there is laid up for me the [victor’s] crown of righteousness [for being right with God and doing right], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me *and* recompense me on that [great] day – and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved *and* yearned for *and* welcomed His appearing (His return).

Does this mean we have to *work* for our admittance into Heaven? NO! Just as Harrison was a standing member of the British Royal Navy, all believers will be standing members of Heaven, regardless of ‘rank.’

“While we, as Christians, don’t believe our works have anything to do with our entry to heaven, we do understand our works have everything to do with our reward once we get there.”

- J. Warner Wallace

Are There Different Degrees of Reward in Heaven? | Cold Case Christianity



Think Above the Box: Do you think it is fair that some people will receive more rewards than others in Heaven? Compare a person who has been a believer joyfully doing good works for God most of their life to someone with a deathbed conversion:

Ephesians 2:8-9 AMPC For it is by free grace (God’s unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment *and* made partakers of Christ’s salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God; Not because of works [not the fulfillment of the Law’s demands], lest any man should boast. [It is not the result of what anyone can possibly do, so no one can pride himself in it or take glory to himself.]

1 Timothy 6:18-19 TLB Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven—it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well.

Luke 23:40-43 TLB But the other criminal protested. “Don’t you even fear God when you are dying? We deserve to die for our evil deeds, but this man hasn’t done one thing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” And Jesus replied, “Today you will be with me in Paradise. This is a solemn promise.”

2. Nathaniel Moore, in bidding goodbye to his son Jonathan and Sean, warned them to be careful on their voyage, cautioning that “Just because there is a peace [no war with France,] the sea is still a dangerous place.” A calm ocean can swiftly change into a raging squall. Could this admonition also apply to the life of a Christian in that we are saved and no longer at odds with our Maker, but we are still must live here on a fallen planet?

John 16:33 AMPC I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace *and* confidence. In the world you have tribulation *and* trials *and* distress *and* frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]

How can we stay alert and prepared for battle when all about us looks tranquil and serene? Well, here’s some more Latin for you: *Si vis pacem, par bellum*. Learn what that means in the blog below and discover how King Asa applied it to the nation of Israel:

BIBLICAL BATTLE TACTIC: PREPARE FOR WAR IN TIME OF PEACE | [redeemedwarrior \(wordpress.com\)](http://redeemedwarrior.wordpress.com)



Think Above the Box: In your own life, how do you live in peace but stay prepared for spiritual battle?

Ephesians 6:18 ERV Pray in the Spirit at all times. Pray with all kinds of prayers, and ask for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready. Never give up. Always pray for all of God’s people.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 ESV First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Luke 6:28 TPT When someone curses you, bless that person in return. When you are mistreated and harassed by others, accept it as your mission to pray for them.

Isn't it a natural human reaction to 'strike first'? How can you train yourself to pray first in all things?

3. Upon their arrival aboard the *Paladin*, mates Smith and Jones provided comic relief for the crew with their banter, remarking how it was good luck that they were leaving on a Sunday, as Monday was the day in the Bible that Cain slew Abel! The addition of Sean's beloved cat Stewey also proved serendipitous, as cats were good luck aboard ship and there was "magic in their tails," according to Jenkins. When Jonathan stated that it was all hogwash, Jenkins advised him that even so, the crew believed. Seafarers have long held firm convictions about good and bad luck charms and superstitions. Many people today believe in the good luck of a four-leaf clover and the bad luck of a black cat crossing their path.

1 John 5:21 ESV Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

1 Timothy 4:7 AMPC But refuse *and* avoid irreverent legends (profane and impure and godless fictions, mere grandmothers' tales) and silly myths, *and* express your disapproval of them. Train yourself toward godliness (piety), [keeping yourself spiritually fit].

Colossians 2:8 ESV See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Isaiah 8:19 NLT Someone may say to you, "Let's ask the mediums and those who consult the spirits of the dead. With their whisperings and mutterings, they will tell us what to do." But shouldn't people ask God for guidance? Should the living seek guidance from the dead?

Can anyone force God's hand by rubbing a rabbit's foot? The following article sheds some light on the subject:

What does the Bible say about superstition, is it a sin in Christianity? | Christian Lifestyle Magazine (bestforchrist.com)

REAL LIFE: Learn about Chris Baker of INK 180, a self-described "Repo Man for the Lord" who is helping to heal victims of human trafficking and ex-gang members by designing over their dehumanizing past tattoos. He advises us that we all can use our unique talents, abilities and skills for God's work.

Proverbs 3:27 ESV Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Galatians 6:2 TLB Share each other's troubles and problems, and so obey our Lord's command.

Matthew 25:35-40 AMP For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; *I was* naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me [with help and ministering care]; I was in prison, and you came to Me [ignoring personal danger]. Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it for Me.'

Tattoo Artist Uses Talent as a Showcase for God - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Some of the most stunning incidents in the Bible feature miraculous phenomena beyond human belief and scientific explanation such as the parting of the Red Sea, turning water into wine, raising the dead, walking on water and healing the sick. Why did God do these things?

John 4:48 GW Jesus told the official, "If people don't see miracles and amazing things, they won't believe."

John 2:11 GW Cana in Galilee was the place where Jesus began to perform miracles. He made his glory public there, and his disciples believed in him.

Matthew 19:25-26 TPT Stunned and bewildered, his disciples asked, "Then who in the world can possibly be saved?" Looking straight into their eyes, Jesus replied, "Humanly speaking, no one, *because no one can save himself.* But what seems impossible to you is never impossible to God!"

Acts 2:22-24 NLT "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip."

"Miracles declare that God is active in our world and that he can disrupt the activities of nature to reveal his character and accomplish his purposes."

- thenivbible.com

What Does the Bible Say About Miracles? | Jesus Miracles (thenivbible.com)

According to Lee Strobel, miracles point out that God is real, powerful, loving and sovereign. Watch and/or listen to his message on the case for miracles. And go ahead, give yourself some EXTRA CREDIT:

Lee Strobel: The Case for Miracles - YouTube



Think Above the Box: When Lee asks the congregation if they have ever been affected by a miracle, many raised their hands. How about you? How can you ascertain that something is a miracle and not just an amazing coincidence? Miracles come in all sizes and sometimes we don't even realize God's hand in our life. Listen to the following song by Elevation Worship. Don't forget to peruse the comment section!

"I've got some blessings that I don't deserve / I've got some scars but that's how you learn / It's nothing short of a miracle I'm here / I think it over and it doesn't add up / I know it comes from above / I've got miracles on miracles / A million little miracles..."

♪ Million Little Miracles | Elevation Worship & Maverick City - YouTube

And now for a bonus track!

“Right before I hit the ground somehow You came along and found me / Some will say it’s magic / But I know that You did all that / You’re the reason, there’s no doubt...”

🎵 **Colton Dixon - "Miracles" [Official Video] - YouTube**

Guide for Chapter 8

Two Plots

1. Cloak and dagger types often communicate by code so that their plans are not discovered, which explains the rather nonsensical discourse at O'Sullivan's Cock and Bull between the three men sitting in a shadowy corner of the pub. A passerby might surmise that they were discussing the weather when in actuality they were trading valuable intelligence. Many non-believers look at Scripture the same way - that it is too complicated to understand, doesn't make sense and can't be taken literally as truth. A believer can address this by knowing that the Bible makes use of the tools of phenomenological language, hyperbole, metaphors, anthropomorphisms, personification and symbolism. Oh my! Are your eyes crossing yet? It's time to uncross them! The following link will show how, "*The fact that figures of speech and other literary devices are used in Scripture in no way takes away from its nonfiction message.*"

Should the Bible be interpreted literally? (compellingtruth.org)

Just for fun, here are some illustrations:

Phenomenological language **Psalm 93:1 NLT** The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.

Hyperbole **Matthew 7:3 ESV** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Simile/Metaphor **Proverbs 13:14 ESV** The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.

Anthropomorphism **Isaiah 23:11 GW** The Lord has stretched his hand over the sea to shake kingdoms.

Personification **Luke 19:40 TPT** Jesus responded, "Listen to me. If my followers were silenced, the very stones would break forth with praises!"

Symbolism **Hebrews 11:12 GW** Abraham was as good as dead. Yet, from this man came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore.

EXTRA CREDIT: find one more example in the Bible for each term.

2. Gorman and his two cohorts, Frey and Fairchild, frequented the clandestine, tawdry underbelly of London as spies for the king. They stalked and sometimes captured various *ne'er do wells*, criminals and pariahs for the greater *good* of Britain. Jesus also hung with thieves, criminals, prostitutes, the sick and the dying to further *His* kingdom. Now why would the Son of God hang with the lowest people instead of the very learned and accomplished scribes, Pharisees and religious scholars of the time?

Matthew 9:10-13 ERV Jesus ate dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and others with bad reputations came and ate with him and his followers. The Pharisees saw that Jesus was eating with these people. They asked his followers, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?" Jesus heard them say this. So he said to them, "It is the sick people who need a doctor, not those who are healthy. You need to go and learn what this Scripture means: 'I don't want animal sacrifices; I want you to show kindness to people.' I did not come to invite good people. I came to invite sinners."

Matthew 23:25-28 NLT "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites!

For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too. What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people’s bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

“Spiritual blindness to our own condition must be overcome if we are to be saved from sin. As long as we do not believe we are sinners, we cannot receive the cure, for only those who know they need a cure will receive it. In order to move closer to God, we first have to confess how far away we are from Him.”

- Ligonier Ministries

Jesus, the Great Physician | Reformed Bible Studies & Devotionals at Ligonier.org | Reformed Bible Studies & Devotionals at Ligonier.org

▶ Does sin only inhabit the lower castes of humanity and the dregs of society?

▶ **TAB** says: No, people of all levels of life from the highly successful, learned, and powerful to the poorest, lowest beggar are all sinners, some just don’t recognize it in themselves, but only in others.



Think Above the Box: The Pharisees and scribes believed that they had no need for a savior. Could it be that one reason was that they were leaning on their legalism (following strict rules) to get to Heaven and neglecting the fact that they were sinners too, regardless of how perfect their tithes, offerings and accomplishments were? Let’s take a deeper look into why this bunch hated Jesus so much:

Why Did the Pharisees Hate Jesus? (ligonier.org)

3. During their ride through the serene and beautiful Van Patton Wood, Barbara and Delain discussed their social stations in life in regards to their future. Barbara declared, “Our role is to be ladies, not adventurers...We need to be literate, engaging in conversation, intelligent,” to which Delain interrupted with, “Do nothing with our talents and education?” This preplanned role was nothing more than being a bird in a cage. It seemed a waste to have all that education and knowledge and not be able to use it except through polite conversation! We could look at someone’s Christianity the same way. Some believers are literate in Scripture and attend church weekly, but are those actions the extent of what they give to God? That sort of behavior smacks of legalism. Or do they also live for Jesus in their daily activities, including prayer, conversation, service and ministry, etc.? There comes a time when a believer must choose between being a *pew warmer* in a ‘Christian cage’ or a *fully flying member* of God’s family in *all* that they do. But how is this accomplished?

The following post answers the question of how to give your life to God. Hey, our old friend Blaise Pascal even gets a mention!

“From the moment we give our lives to God, the Holy Spirit gives us the power and desire to live

for God...Jesus knows the purpose for which He created us. Discovering that purpose and living it is the secret to real happiness. Following Jesus is the only way we ever find it."

- Bible Questions Answered | GotQuestions.org

How can I give my life to God? | GotQuestions.org

REAL LIFE: Genevieve became a Christian after the party life she was living as a teen hit rock bottom, but she gradually came to resemble one of those pew warmers above. Read how she learned to fully fly and live for God:

- Genevieve San Miguel - - authentic you testimonies worldwide (wordpress.com)

APOLO-GET-ITS: Have you ever felt that your thoughts on a subject are not given the same weight as someone older than you? Here is what Timothy had to say about that in regards to your Christianity:

1 Timothy 4:12 ERV You are young, but don't let anyone treat you as if you are not important. Be an example to show the believers how they should live. Show them by what you say, by the way you live, by your love, by your faith, and by your pure life.

"While we are often willing to spend time reading the Bible, praying, or participating in church programs and services, few of us recognize the importance of becoming good Christian case makers."

- J Warner Wallace

Read the following essay written by Annie Olson, a 7th grader who demonstrates that even young people have the ability to make the case for the truth of the Bible:

The Case for Christianity According to a 7th Grader | Cold Case Christianity

Guide for Chapter 9

The Bow Chaser

1. Fawcett was tasked with instructing Jonathan on the strategy of piloting the *Paladin's* massive wheel. He cautioned that small movements are most effective, enabling one to then make adjustments to stay on course. The methods taught were not natural to the inexperienced midshipman, who instinctively reacted to each change of condition by overcorrecting his actions. At the end of the lesson, the wheel was returned to its rightful owner, the sailing master. Like a fledgling ship's pilot, people who put the command of their decisions in life into their own worldly hands often find that they are careening far off course. But then who should their Pilot be?

Hebrews 6:19 TLB This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven.

Matthew 8:26 ESV And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Please read the blogpost below for more insight on the best Pilot a ship could ever have!

"The absolutely perfect match for a Sea Pilot would be one who has had a direct hand in building the ship, and who also has such an intimate knowledge of the sea and its navigation. Who else would be more qualified than the Maker of the Ship and the Maker of the Seas – the Lord Jesus Christ? He is not only the Pilot of our Ship, but the Captain of our Souls."

Anglican Orthodox Church Worldwide Communion: Hymns of the Church (Jesus Savior Pilot Me) – 5 August 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)

The choice of your sailing master (anchor) determines whether your life becomes adrift or sails true. Watch and listen to *Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me*, sung by Laura Gibson:

"Jesus, Savior, pilot me / over Life's tempestuous sea; / Unknown waves before me roll / hiding rock and treacherous shoal. / Chart and compass come from Thee; / Jesus, Savior, pilot me."

🎵 **Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me - BiFrost Arts - YouTube**

2. Harrison called a meeting with his officers to discuss the *Paladin's* new orders and included Lieutenant Quinn and Midshipman Moore for their input. Feelings of apprehension and guilt washed over Jonathan as he took part in discussing the plan, agreeing with Quinn on all things according to what he was told by the elder Spears and Wilder on the dock. Shouldn't he have wondered how these older, more learned officers were agreeing to what the two youngest advised? All the aspects of the mission, including an exact arrival date and backing into a deserted cove, were screaming of unsafe, unorthodox methodology. The wise suggestion of sending a shore party in first to investigate was also dismissed. Jonathan's guilty conscience must have been on overload at this point!

Isaiah 48:18 GW If only you had listened to my commands! Your peace would be like a river that never runs dry. Your righteousness would be like waves on the sea.

Romans 2:15 AMPC They show that the essential requirements of the Law are written in their hearts *and* are operating there, with which their consciences (sense of right and wrong) also bear witness; and their [moral]

decisions (their arguments of reason, their condemning or approving thoughts) will accuse or perhaps defend *and* excuse [them].

1 Timothy 1:19 NLT Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.

Do you think that sense of dread was his conscience telling him that he should have been honest with the captain? To drive the point home, later Jenkins echoed the sentiment, "Always best to tell the truth." What's a believer to do?

"A good conscience is powered by the Spirit and set by the Word. Hiding God's Word in your heart will train your conscience to sound the alarm and keep you from sin."

- Pastor Colin Smith

Read the details here:

How to Get and Keep a Good Conscience | Open the Bible



Think Above the Box: Do you listen to the Holy Spirit gently nudging you in your heart when making choices? Discuss a time when your conscience knew it was off-course but you went with a bad decision. Can you see what events led up to that bad choice? How can you avoid this in the future? Was there a situation where you heeded your conscience and were the better for it? What are some ways to keep the Word of God ingrained in your heart?

3. The gift of the 16-pound gun *Stowaway* from the *Drake* was indeed a welcome addition to the *Paladin's* deck. The new ammunition for it had Jenkins stating, "Called shells they are, or sometimes bombs, and they explode when they hit the target...Lots o' flame and such." When Jonathan observed that the shells were lighter than the customary shot used on their other guns, Jenkins again schooled him and remarked that they were, "Hollow with oil and powder inside that set fires..." These new projectiles, even though smaller, packed a bigger punch! Just as the new shells were lighter and appeared more innocuous than the heavier iron cannonballs, little words uttered by the human tongue have caused untold calamity and damage to mankind over the ages. Have you ever heard the saying, "Loose lips sink ships?" Used during World War II, this phrase was put into circulation to reduce the chance of enemy spies overhearing valuable intelligence that could be extremely damaging to our side. It is amazing what harm words can do to both body and soul!

James 3:5-6 NLT In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

Colossians 3:8 ESV But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Psalms 19:14 NLT May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

What does Scripture say about the power of our words?

Your Words Matter: What the Bible Says About the Power of the Tongue - David Jeremiah Blog



Think Above the Box: Have you ever had a time when you *held* your tongue rather than saying the first mean or negative thing that entered your mind and instead used your words to uplift someone? How do you think things would have turned out if that person heard your first thoughts? Look at what God advises in the Book of Proverbs (which is chock full of all kinds of wisdom!)

Proverbs 25:18 NLT Telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow.

Proverbs 18:20 TPT Sharing words of wisdom is satisfying to your inner being. It encourages you to know that you've changed someone else's life.

Proverbs 15:23 TLB Everyone enjoys giving good advice, and how wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time!

Proverbs 29:11 ESV A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

REAL LIFE: How did the following assemblage of pirates, sheep, a Scottish teenager, slavery, visions, and a daring escape lead us to an annual day of dyeing a river green, shamrocks and lots of beer? Read and watch below! But, first:

James 1:2-4 ESV Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Joshua 1:9 NLT This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Patricius: The True Story of St. Patrick | CBN

The True Story of St. Patrick - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Luke 11:21 ESV When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe;

Ephesians 6:11 AMPC Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies *and* the deceits of the devil.

1 Samuel 17:38 GW Saul put his battle tunic on David; he put a bronze helmet on David's head and dressed

him in armor.

Speaking of smaller and deadlier ammunition, let's take a look at the divine design of the defense structure of an actual living creature that is equipped with both cannon and shells, the diminutive bombardier beetle:

"How could the "ammunition" and "cannon" have evolved, since all the specific ingredients and mechanisms would need to be present at once to work properly? From the evolutionary worldview, the functionless machinery would have been selected against, since it would add no survival value until all of the necessary components were in place."

- Karin Viet

Bombardier Beetle–The Arsenal Insect | Answers in Genesis

And just because this little guy is so weird, disgusting, and fascinating:

Lessons from a Beetle | Answers in Genesis

So, you might be wondering how the bombardier beetle got his volatile defense/attack structure.

"Many people question the goodness of God when they see 'nature, red in tooth and claw,' and therefore, they accuse those who believe in the Bible of not seeing reality in nature's fight for survival, which in the view of the secular scientists substantiates evolution."

- Bodie Hodge and Prof. Andy McIntosh

Check out the entire post for the answer:

How Did Defense/Attack Structures Come About? | Answers in Genesis

Guide for Chapter 10

Black Riders and Tea

1. Trying to beat the rain, Barbara and Delain hastily dashed towards the horse carriage waiting in the driveway, oblivious to the fact that Steward must sit atop it unprotected from the storm. After ushering them safely into the covered vehicle before an impending downpour, the old man sardonically remarked, “Yet for some, it’s our lot in life. Serving others. Gettin’ wet. Bein’ ignored.” British society at the time dictated a strict division of the classes so it probably wouldn’t have occurred to the two ladies to even consider Steward’s cold, wet reality. As Christians, we are to always be cognizant of others in need. Jesus spoke of this also:

Proverbs 28:27 AMP He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes [from their need] will have many curses.

Deuteronomy 15:10-11 AMP You shall freely *and* generously give to him, and your heart shall not be resentful when you give to him, because for this [generous] thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy, and to your poor in your land.’

1 John 3:17 ERV Suppose a believer who is rich enough to have all the necessities of life sees a fellow believer who is poor and does not have even basic needs. What if the rich believer does not help the poor one? Then it is clear that God’s love is not in that person’s heart.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 GW This is what you must do whenever there are poor Israelites in one of your cities in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. Be generous to these poor people, and freely lend them as much as they need. Never be hard-hearted and tight-fisted with them.

James 2:1-8 AMP My fellow believers, do not practice your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of partiality* [toward people—show no favoritism, no prejudice, no snobbery]. For if a man comes into your meeting place wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, and you pay special attention to the one who wears the fine clothes, and say to him, “You sit here in this good seat,” and you tell the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down [on the floor] by my footstool,” have you not discriminated among yourselves, and become judges with wrong motives? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters: has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and [as believers to be] heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you [in contrast] have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress *and* exploit you, and personally drag you into the courts of law? Do they not blaspheme the precious name [of Christ] by which you are called? If, however, you are [really] fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself [that is, if you have an unselfish concern for others and do things for their benefit]” you are doing well.

Favoritism means giving preferential treatment and being partial and biased to a person or persons over others. Read the following link to learn what God has to say about *prosôpolepsía* (that’s Greek for *partiality*.)

25 Important Bible Verses About Favoritism (biblereasons.com)



Think Above the Box: What do you think these ladies could have done for Steward, being that in order to drive them to the tea, he *had* to sit out in the

open and tradition and decorum pretty much allowed them to ignore the fact that he was an older man out in the rain? Just as it was automatic for them to not even consider him, as Christians we should develop an automatic heart for love, care and service to all regardless of who they are.

2. Delain's curiosity and unrelenting quest for adventure found her at the rear of the Wilder's mansion, breathlessly hanging on to an outside ledge for dear life as the mysterious rider inside looked right at her face through the distortion of the angel clad stained glass window. To her relief, he didn't even see her as he gazed out to find the source of the sounds made by the gardener. For Delain, her glass 'guardian angels' protected her from harm.

Psalm 91:9-13 TPT When we live our lives within the shadow of God Most High, our secret hiding place, we will always be shielded from harm. How then could evil prevail against us or disease infect us? God sends angels with special orders to protect you wherever you go, defending you from all harm. If you walk into a trap, they'll be there for you and keep you from stumbling. You'll even walk unharmed among the fiercest powers of darkness, trampling every one of them beneath your feet!

There is an event in the Old Testament where a somewhat similar event happened in regards to someone not seeing what was right in front of them, 'the unseen spiritual world' complete with chariots of fire!

2 Kings 6:15-17 ESV When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

There are other examples of humans having the hazy 'stained glass' between our lives on Earth and the reality of Heaven pulled back for just a moment in time:

Seven Bible Characters Who Got a Glimpse of Heaven | Prayer A to Z (studyingprayer.com)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever had an experience where you felt like you got a glimpse of Heaven, perhaps while gazing up at the night sky full of stars and the Milky Way? Have you ever seen the Northern Lights or a double rainbow? They might not be chariots of fire but they give us a small glimpse of what awaits us!

3. Her hasty excursion in pursuit of the horseman had left Delain quite disheveled and unpresentable. Anyone glancing her way would think that she was no lady and perhaps even a servant girl coming in from working in the gardens. Looks can be deceiving! At first glance, no one would have assumed that this young bedraggled ragamuffin was the famous lady adventurer who had sailed the ocean blue as a stowaway, fired cannons in battle and helped capture an enemy ship. Long ago there was a young rabbi whose identity was also misread by first impressions. Who could it be?

Philippians 2:7 TLB ... but laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and

becoming like men.

Matthew 8:20 ESV And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

2 Corinthians 8:9 AMPC For you are becoming progressively acquainted with *and* recognizing more strongly *and* clearly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (His kindness, His gracious generosity, His undeserved favor and spiritual blessing), [in] that though He was [so very] rich, yet for your sakes He became [so very] poor, in order that by His poverty you might become enriched (abundantly supplied).

"God could have entered into this world as the Angel of the Lord, but He chose a much more humble way."

- David Wright

Why would He do this?

Why Did Christ Come in Such a Humble and Lowly Way? | Answers in Genesis

4. During her sleuthing in the library, Delain was able to find the bag that the rider hastily placed behind a large volume high up on the bookshelf. In addition to a large amount of cash and a small note was a letter written in a foreign language. What's a spy to do? Meticulously copy it, of course! Because she did not know the language, all she could do was reproduce each symbol and shape as painstakingly accurate as she could. Did you know that the scribes who reproduced the manuscripts of the Old Testament would burn a copy if there was even one small error? Read about how we can know that the Scripture we read in our Bibles today is the same as the original texts:

Has the Old Testament been corrupted? A question raised by skeptics. (carm.org)

"...let's look at the bibliographical test, which scholars employ to determine the historical reliability of any and all ancient literature, including the New Testament."

- Sheri Bell

Testing the Historical Reliability of the New Testament - Josh.org

REAL LIFE: Here's a couple of questions for you. Did you ever wonder what makes atheists tick? Is it an outright defiance of an accountable Supreme Being, ignorance, a hardened heart, love of sin or a combination of the above? Did you ever feel that inviting someone to church was an exercise in futility? Let's hear from a confirmed atheist turned believer who gives us some answers!

"I grew up in a Jewish home but was not very religious. In fact after a very short time in Hebrew School I told my dad I didn't want to go anymore and dropped out. It didn't take very long, but by the time I was 15 years old I realized that I didn't even believe in God."

- Curt Blattman

About Curt - Bible Apologetics - A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

APOLO-GET-ITS: Here is one of the many arguments used to question the validity of the Bible:

"While the Bible may be 'inspired,' by God, it's not 'inerrant' and parts of it are just myth."

Inerrant means infallible, truthful, without falsehood, accurate and without error. Watch the following for a flyover of the many reasons that let us know that we can trust the Bible:

Can we Trust the Bible? ("Debunking the 7 Myths that Deny Biblical Truth" Series) - YouTube

EXTRA CREDIT: Access the following link to watch videos on the six other myths!

- *Myth 1: "While the Bible may be 'inspired,' by God, it's not 'inerrant' and parts of it are just myth."*
- *Myth 2: "The Bible's account of Creation is only metaphorical, the six creation days were not ordinary days, and creation really unfolded over millions of years."*
- *Myth 3: "Genesis 1 and 2 provide two different accounts of creation."*
- *Myth 4: "Adam and Eve were not real people, only allegorical figures in the story of human evolution."*
- *Myth 5: "The Bible's account of Noah's Flood is just myth and was drawn from writings from the Ancient Near East."*
- *Myth 6: "Moses did not actually write the first five books of the Bible."*
- *Myth 7: "Dinosaurs died out millions of years ago, did not walk with man, and are not mentioned in the Bible."*

NOTE: please scroll down to the end of the page to access the videos.

sevenmyths | Genesis Apologetics

Guide for Chapter 11

The Echo Returns

1. After being scolded by Jonathan for his equatorial souvenir of a gold earring, Sean was astonished to learn that he was going to be a marine officer one day, which was an intriguing thought and a distinguished accomplishment, but the road ahead would be full of “some amount of responsibility that would certainly require substantial effort.” This had the inexperienced marine questioning his talents and abilities to earn the position. Long ago, another young man needed encouragement to complete his task also. In his letter written to Timothy, the apostle Paul encourages him to stay strong in the face of persecution and the evil of the world, using the metaphors of soldier, athlete and farmer. Like Timothy, Sean would need to be singularly focused:

2 Timothy 2:3-7 NLT Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.

2 Timothy 4:7 NLT I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.

Psalms 18:39 NLT You have armed me with strength for the battle; you have subdued my enemies under my feet.

2 Corinthians 5:9 TLB So our aim is to please him always in everything we do, whether we are here in this body or away from this body and with him in heaven.

Matthew 25:23 AMPC His master said to him, Well done, you upright (honorable, admirable) and faithful servant! You have been faithful *and* trustworthy over a little; I will put you in charge of much. Enter into *and* share the joy (the delight, the blessedness) which your master enjoys.

“To please our Commander is the great desire of every blood-bought soldier of the cross (2 Cor. 5:9), so that one day we will hear, ‘well done, good and faithful servant.’”

- Steven J. Cole

Listen and/or read more about this in the following commentary:

Lesson 10: Embracing Hardship for the Gospel (2 Tim. 2:3-7) | Bible.org

EXTRA CREDIT: Discuss the Application questions at the end of the above article.



Think Above the Box: Consider how someone can be a soldier of God with their life and not get bogged down with worldly things. How do they do it? How about you? What are some things that you could add or subtract in your daily routine to ‘please our Commander?’ As always, you can ask the Holy Spirit for help and guidance.

2. The damage to the gun-blasted foremast required a total replacement, however due to time constraints it would be impossible to correct while on layover in Gibraltar. Streen the carpenter was able to procure supplies to shore up and patch the damage using lumber, iron bands, brackets and bolts. This repair would allow a limited amount of sail to be let out on the mast, resulting in slower speed and subpar performance that would require vigilant observation on the crew's part. The resulting reinforcement looked as if the mast was covered in a giant cage. Our hearts can be like that cracked mast. If we choose to live without God and allow sin to be ever-present, we can cover up all resultant hurt and damage with the 'lumber' of avoidance, lies, alcohol, drugs, bad relationships, worldliness, etc. If our 'cage' gets too thick, we can become 'hard-hearted' and the Holy Spirit cannot get through. But all is not lost! Jesus can replace your damaged, caged mast with a new, strong one:

Proverbs 28:14 GW Blessed is the one who is always fearful of sin, but whoever is hard-hearted falls into disaster.

Romans 2:5 ESV But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Ephesians 4:18 NLT Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

As stated in the following link, just like encasing a damaged mast with a wooden cage, the

"...refusal to act on the truth time and time again will corrode the heart of man until nothing can melt the hardness. As we grow as Christians, sin should bother us more, not less. Yet every day we spend hours being entertained by the very sin Christ died for! We rent it at Red Box, view it online, watch it on television, and read it in books."

- Pastor Joe Quatrone, Jr.

Signs of a Hard Heart – Joe Quatrone, Jr. (wordpress.com)

Whoa!

Ezekiel 18:31 NLT Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O people of Israel?

Ezekiel 36:26 NLT And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.

Psalms 119:61 GW Though the ropes of wicked people are tied around me, I never forget your teachings.

2 Corinthians 5:17 AMP Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], *he is* a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].



Think Above the Box: Pastor Joe Quatrone, Jr. in the previous post lists "six signs to use as a checklist for a hard heart." They are stubbornness, lack of concern

over spiritual things, ignoring testimonies and evidence, recognizing your sin but refusing to deal with it, pride, and deal making with God over sins. Pick one warning sign that is an issue for you, concentrate on it this week and “*allow God to change your heart.*” How did it go?

REAL LIFE: [Psalm 107:24 ERV](#) They saw what the Lord can do. They saw the amazing things he did at sea.

Providence means God’s protection, guidance and direction. One recipient of God’s remarkable providence is Ernest Shackleton, an Anglo-Irish Antarctic explorer, who set out on a mission to cross the frozen continent in 1914, although he never accomplished that goal. Why is he famous then? How ‘bout a video interlude to tell the tale...but first a word from our Sponsor:

[Job 38:29-30 AMP](#) “Out of whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? “Water becomes like stone [and hides itself], and the surface of the deep is frozen *and* imprisoned.

28 Men Lost In Antarctica But What They Did to Survive Is Amazing - YouTube

Now for the Shackleton’s commentary of God’s remarkable Providence:

[Psalm 139:9-10 TLB](#) If I ride the morning winds to the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, your strength will support me.

“When I look back at those days, I have no doubt that Providence guided us, not only across those snowfields, but across the storm-strewn sea that separated Elephant Island from our landing place on South Georgia.

– Ernest Shackleton

The “fourth man” | Shackleton. ([eshackleton.com](#))

APOLO-GET-ITS: on the rocks! *Ice*, that is. In keeping with the various mentions of the Antarctic in this chapter’s study, let’s keep it going and discuss glaciers, prophets, uniformitarian geology and computer modeling! We did the work for you and found that the Encyclopedia Britannica says:

“Uniformitarianism, in geology, the doctrine suggesting that Earth’s geologic processes acted in the same manner and with essentially the same intensity in the past as they do in the present and that such uniformity is sufficient to account for all geologic change.”

- **[Uniformitarianism | Definition & Examples | Britannica](#)**

Check out this information on one of those omnipresent plaques brought to us by the National Park Service:

Signs of the Times: Glacier Meltdown | The Institute for Creation Research ([icr.org](#))

[Job 37:10 ESV](#) By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast.

[Psalm 147:16-17 ESV](#) He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold?

And how about a quick look at ice cores? Note: scroll down to the second video on the page:

“Secular scientists often say that thick ice sheets, like those in Greenland, took hundreds of thousands of years to form. They say each layer represents one year. So all you do is count the layers to get the age, right? Wrong! It’s not that simple.”

- The Institute for Creation Research (icr.org)

That's a Fact | The Institute for Creation Research (icr.org)

Guide for Chapter 12

The Bridge at Wapping

1. As Lupien escaped Gorman's two spies by plunging into the Thames River, Fairchild followed after him in hot pursuit. While unable to catch him, he was able to retrieve the little notebook full of details on all of the British ships in the harbor. Not wanting Lupien to know that they were on to him, the men decided to memorize the contents, repeating the details to each other and then tossing it back into the water. They would then share the recalled information to their boss. The skill of memorization is a talent all Christians should have too! God counsels us to hold His Word in our hearts for everyday living and for evil times.

Psalm 119:11 TPT I consider your prophecies to be my greatest treasure, and I memorize them and write them on my heart to keep me from committing sin's treason against you.

Psalm 119:16 ESV I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Proverbs 6:21-22 ERV Remember their words always. Tie them around your neck and keep them over your heart. Let this teaching lead you wherever you go. It will watch over you while you sleep. And when you wake up, it will give you good advice.

Deuteronomy 11:18 AMPC Therefore you shall lay up these My words in your [minds and] hearts and in your [entire] being, and bind them for a sign upon your hands and as forehead bands between your eyes.

"Bible memorization is a real benefit to born again Christians...You may not have a Bible with you at the time you need to make a decision, but if you have it memorized, you have the words right there. It is like a warrior having the sword in their hand, rather than back at camp."

- John Taylor

Let's explore in detail the reasons why we should memorize Scripture:

Ten Biblical Reasons to Memorize Scripture | Open the Bible

EXTRA CREDIT: Try tackling the verses suggested at the end of the article. You can do it! But how, you say?

Fun & Easy Way To Memorize Bible Verses (Step-By-Step) - (seedtime.com)

Let's take a walk down 'memory lane' in the following short video which shows the amazing capabilities our brains have and *"explores how it relates to the patterns and behaviors we live out day to day and how to renew our mind with the things of God."*

The Human Brain - God's Design - Inspirational Videos (godtube.com)



Think Above the Box: Living in a free country, we don't ever think about what we would do if our Bibles were ruled illegal and confiscated by the government. Sadly, this is the case in many countries even today. Possessing a Bible can result in imprisonment, torture and even execution. It is imperative

for Christians living in such places to store the Word in their hearts and memories, isn't it?

2 Timothy 3:12 AMP Indeed, all who delight in pursuing righteousness *and* are determined to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be hunted *and* persecuted [because of their faith].

"While as Christians we would never take the Bible for granted, many of us might not often register how fortunate we are just to be able to own our own Bibles or have access to one."

- Alannah Francis

6 countries where owning a Bible is dangerous (christiantoday.com)

2. Later that evening, Orvislat and his quilt-draped cohort sat before a fireplace in a pub debriefing after the fiasco with Fairchild and Frey. As they waited for Lupien's wet clothes to dry, they discussed their next steps. As spies on the run, the simple warmth of the flames had a calming effect on them both. In their world of ever-present danger and constant movement, the sweet contentment of basking in front of a fireplace was a little touch of Heaven. Sometimes in life, we can experience what these spies did when even the simplest pleasure brings us a glimpse of heavenly bliss. Could they have been feeling something akin to *joy*, the meaning of which is elation, extreme happiness, comfort, euphoria and wonder?

"Joy is the serious business of Heaven."

- C. S. Lewis

Psalm 16:11 GW You make the path of life known to me. Complete joy is in your presence. Pleasures are by your side forever.

"When little moments of life — like the way the light falls on a summer evening — stir you with a deep longing that's hard to define, don't look to earthly pursuits to fill the void. Instead, allow the ache to push you deeper into your relationship with God. Pursue Him. Allow that longing for Him to become the hottest fire in your heart... This idea of Joy is not a satisfied desire but an unsatisfied desire — a deep longing for God, a hungry pursuit of God's heart that never ends and is more satisfying than any earthly happiness."

- Kevin Ott

Read the devotional below for more insight into what joy really is. Note: This devotional is broken up into 5 day readings, which are short enough to complete at one sitting.

C. S. Lewis & Joy | The Bible App | Bible.com



Think Above the Box: While at the park one summer day, I commented to my friend's 10 year old daughter Emma that the clouds in the sky were amazingly beautiful to which she agreed and stated, "It's so beautiful, it hurts." Have you ever felt that sharp stab of longing after a moment of joy? How do you describe it?

3. The spies considered moving on to another country to steal ships if the British kept closing in on them, but Lucien pointed out that they have the added advantage of Orvislat's father being the Russian Ambassador and "we have created a relationship with an insider to do our bidding." Orvislat then exclaimed that he had a 'father' in every Russian Embassy in Europe as it suited him for the assignment given. Over human history, a father's reputation was attached to his children. Even today, offspring get judged by who their father is. While a child cannot pick their biological father, they can pick their spiritual one! In Scripture, Jesus lays it all out to the hateful, envious, uber-legal Pharisees who have been accusing him of blasphemy and fake healings.

John 8:44 TPT "You are the offspring of your father, the devil, and you serve your father very well, passionately carrying out his desires. He's been a murderer right from the start! He never stood with the One who is the true Prince, for he's full of nothing but lies—lying is his native tongue. He is a master of deception and the father of lies!"

Acts 13:7-10 AMPC He was closely associated with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent *and* sensible man of sound understanding; he summoned to him Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the Word of God [concerning salvation in the kingdom of God attained through Christ]. But Elymas the wise man—for that is the translation of his name [which he had given himself]—opposed them, seeking to keep the proconsul from accepting the faith. But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with *and* controlled by the Holy Spirit, looked steadily at [Elymas] and said, You master in every form of deception *and* recklessness, unscrupulousness, *and* wickedness, you son of the devil, you enemy of everything that is upright *and* good, will you never stop perverting *and* making crooked the straight paths of the Lord *and* plotting against His saving purposes?

Matthew 13:38 TLB The field is the world, and the seed represents the people of the Kingdom; the thistles are the people belonging to Satan.

1 John 3:10 TLB So now we can tell who is a child of God and who belongs to Satan. Whoever is living a life of sin and doesn't love his brother shows that he is not in God's family;

Let's explore this concept with a play-by-play report of Jesus' takedown of those nasty religious leaders (PS: give yourself **EXTRA CREDIT** for this one!)

You Are of Your Father the Devil | NeverThirsty



Think Above the Box: So, who's your 'Daddy'?

REAL LIFE: Someone once said, "Hell is the highest reward that the devil can offer you for being a servant of his." But what about God, our Father? What does He have for us?

Romans 8:28 TPT So we are convinced that every detail of our lives is continually woven together to fit into God's perfect plan of bringing good into our lives, for we are his lovers who have been called to fulfill his designed purpose.

Jeremiah 29:11 GW I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope.

Romans 8:38-39 ERV Yes, I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love—not death, life, angels, or ruling spirits. I am sure that nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us or nothing below us—nothing in the whole created world—will ever be able to separate us from the love God has shown us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read the following story about Hien Pham and how he lost faith in God but re-found his 'Daddy' in the most peculiar place, a latrine in a communist prison:

528) Finding Hope in a Latrine – EmailMeditations

APOLO-GET-ITS: Romans 1:20 NLT For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Here's a wager for you – a match between the fastest sports car on Earth vs. the cellular multifunctional nucleotide adenosine-5'-triphosphate! (listen and/or read)

A Marvel of (Intelligent) Design: A Biological Rotary Engine (christianheadlines.com)

VISUAL EXTRA CREDIT: Pull over for a pit stop into the cellular universe:

Molecular Machines - ATP Synthase: The power plant of the cell - YouTube

Guide for Chapter 13

The Cove at Telašćica

1. As the *Paladin* slowly and cautiously entered the small bay of the fishing village of Telašćica, Hudson, Hicks and Sean found themselves at the stern of the ship, tasked with looking for any trouble approaching from behind. They discussed the orders for the ship to back into the bay, and Hicks opined that the plan was harebrained. Sean replies that he and Jonathan had a rule during their residency in the alleys of London, “never get in an alley that has no back door.” Sounds like good advice! But what do you do when circumstances, events or choices put you there? Is all lost?

Exodus 14:13 GW Moses answered the people, “Don’t be afraid! Stand still, and see what the Lord will do to save you today. You will never see these Egyptians again.

Philippians 4:6-7 GW Never worry about anything. But in every situation let God know what you need in prayers and requests while giving thanks. Then God’s peace, which goes beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your thoughts and emotions through Christ Jesus.

Psalms 34:4-7 AMPC I sought (inquired of) the Lord *and* required Him [of necessity and on the authority of His Word], and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant; their faces shall never blush for shame *or* be confused. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him [who revere and worship Him with awe] and each of them He delivers.

Here’s what happened to the Israelites when they were backed against a wall (of water!)

When Your Back is Against the Wall - Exodus 14:1-31 - Logos Sermons

And just because we like this one too:

Are You Backed Into A Corner? – Drawing From The Well



Think Above the Box: Many situations will come up in our lives where we feel backed into a corner. The sensation of having no escape can indeed be stressful and frightening. Discuss an event where you or someone you know was in this position. How did it end? Did the person’s belief (or non-belief) affect the trial and outcome?

2. Quinn, assigned to the crow’s nest to watch for approaching ships, told Sean that he had seen only whitecaps. When advised that the men thought they had seen a sail, he sternly stated that there was “nothing to be seen.” He then proceeded to scan the shoreline instead of the sea as ordered, raising the suspicions of Sean, Hicks and Hudson. Even though he was the lower rank of marine sergeant and Quinn was a full lieutenant, the suspicious reaction and angry tone had Hudson heading to Captain Harrison to report the incident. This breach of military protocol would likely result in him “getting the short stick” but he did it anyway because it was the *right* thing to do.

Proverbs 11:19-21 ERV People who do what is right are on their way to life, but those who always want to do wrong are on their way to death. The Lord hates those who love to do evil, but he is pleased with those who try to do right. The truth is, evil people will be punished, and good people will be set free.

The word *integrity* can be defined as one who has strong morals, good character, virtue, honesty and honor. One could certainly say that Hudson put doing what was right ahead of any negative career consequences he might suffer as a result. God counsels us to always strive to do the right thing:

Galatians 6:9 TLB And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.

Deuteronomy 6:18 ESV And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers

2 Thessalonians 3:13 TPT Brothers and sisters, don't ever grow weary in doing what is right.

In today's culture, integrity is in very short supply. Let's investigate the Biblical teachings on this courageous character quality. The post below states *"In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated 'integrity' means 'the condition of being without blemish, completeness, perfection, sincerity, soundness, uprightness, wholeness.' Integrity in the New Testament means 'honesty and adherence to a pattern of good works.'"*

What does the Bible say about integrity? | GotQuestions.org



Think Above the Box: Name a famous person who demonstrates a total lack of integrity. Now, name one with integrity. Stir and discuss!

3. "I'd be a fool to go in there," stated the captain as he ordered the *Paladin* to reverse course and head back towards Telašćica. Jonathan, with his covert intelligence from Spears and Wilder at the forefront of his mind, challenged Harrison's decision, even going as far as not addressing him properly as *Captain*. His strenuous opposition to orders lead to an angry admonishment from his friend to never question him again. In our lives, there are times when we feel the need to question *our* Captain, God Himself. Sometimes because bad and evil things are happening and sometimes to gain understanding of what God wants from us. Is it wrong to do this? Will God react like Harrison or like a loving Father?

Psalms 10:1 TPT Lord, you seem so far away when evil is near! Why do you stand so far off as though you don't care? Why have you hidden yourself when I need you the most?

Romans 9:20-24 GW Who do you think you are to talk back to God like that? Can an object that was made say to its maker, "Why did you make me like this?" A potter has the right to do whatever he wants with his clay. He can make something for a special occasion or something for everyday use from the same lump of clay. If God wants to demonstrate his anger and reveal his power, he can do it. But can't he be extremely patient with people who are objects of his anger because they are headed for destruction? Can't God also reveal the riches of his glory to people who are objects of his mercy and who he had already prepared for glory? This is what God did for us whom he called — whether we are Jews or not.

1 John 5:14 AMPC And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to *and* hears us.

Read the following bookended posts that tackle if it is ok to question God and if it is ok to doubt God:

Is it ok to question God? - JesusAlive.cc

Is it ok to doubt God? - JesusAlive.cc

4. After the event of Quinn's peculiar behavior regarding neglecting his duty, the captain pondered why he was acting so odd. He thought about other crewmen he had known, including even Steward, who would have been considered weird, quirky, eccentric and different, concluding that all Quinn needed was "a little seasoning." Harrison's assessment of Quinn resulted in him giving the young man a second chance. One could suppose that the outcome of this choice was really in the hands of Quinn himself. As the captain and all of us know, in life we will run across all types of characters, including ourselves, who are good, bad, happy, sad, strange, wonderful, etc. Aren't all people on a journey heading to or away from God? What does God want us to do with them?

Ephesians 2:1-3 TLB Once you were under God's curse, doomed forever for your sins. You went along with the crowd and were just like all the others, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air, who is at work right now in the hearts of those who are against the Lord. All of us used to be just as they are, our lives expressing the evil within us, doing every wicked thing that our passions or our evil thoughts might lead us into. We started out bad, being born with evil natures, and were under God's anger just like everyone else.

Romans 15:7 TPT You will bring God glory when you accept and welcome one another as partners, just as the Anointed One has fully accepted you and received you as his partner.

The following post tells us, *"Therefore, the first step in helping us deal with difficult people is understanding that we are not better than such people by nature...We live in a fallen world filled with sinful people. We must remind ourselves of this fact so that we are not surprised when we encounter difficult people, or when we find ourselves being a difficult person."*

What does the Bible say about dealing with difficult people? (compellingtruth.org)



Think Above the Box: Name a time when you met someone new who was kind of strange and unappealing, but upon getting to know them, turned out to be a great friend of yours. If you had placed your confidence in first impressions and not gotten to know them, what would you have lost out on? How can we avoid these missed opportunities for relationships?

REAL LIFE: Some of the arguments used by the pro-choice movement to justify abortion include in the cases of rape and incest or deformity of the baby. But is this really the best solution? What does God have to say about it?

Psalm 127:3 AMP Behold, children are a heritage and gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.

"I told her – and I believe this with everything in me – that she was not a mistake, because God doesn't make mistakes.... I told her that she was a gift to me, coming out of [a] really bad place, so that I could get through what happened. I really believe that's why He gave her to me, because when I see her, I just see beauty. I see love. I see hope."

- Ruby Westmoorland

Read her story here:

Woman who gave birth to daughter conceived in rape: 'When I see her, I just see beauty' (liveaction.org)

EXTRA CREDIT: Watch the video *Pro-Life Without Exception!* embedded within the above article.

EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: *"God gives you this child as a blessing out of something horrible, it's your beauty from your ashes...I can see each and every choice I made and each and every step I took was guided by God. He's the one that got me through it. He held me up when I couldn't stand anymore. He held my hand and walked me through it when I was just about to break down. He's the one that gave me Josie so that I could live through this and heal from this."*

- a mother who conceived a child in rape

The following post explores the age-old question, "Can God bring beauty from ashes?"

Isaiah 61:3 NLT To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

Beauty for Ashes: What God's Promise Really Means (crosswalk.com)

Check out the following song:

"You keep every promise, every word is true / There's beauty from the ashes in everything You do / Even in the valley, I still believe You're good."

- Newsboys

🎵 **'I Still Believe You're Good' Newsboys Official Music Video - Christian Music Video (crosswalk.com)**

APOLO-GET-ITS: Have you given much thought to the Laws of Nature lately?

Psalm 19:1 TPT God's splendor is a tale that is told; his testament is written in the stars. Space itself speaks his story every day through the marvels of the heavens. His truth is on tour in the starry vault of the sky, showing his skill in creation's craftsmanship.

Colossians 1:16-17 AMP For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, [things] visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created *and* exist through Him [that is, by His activity] and for Him. And He Himself existed *and* is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. [His is the controlling, cohesive force of the universe.]

The following post discusses how *“All of science is based on what author James Trefil calls the principle of universality: ‘It says that the laws of nature we discover here and now in our laboratories are true everywhere in the universe and have been in force for all time.’”*

[See Why Scientists Are Baffled by the Laws of Nature \(everystudent.com\)](#)

Wanna be humbled? Take a look at this!

[Voyager 1's Pale Blue Dot | NASA Solar System Exploration](#)

Guide for Chapter 14

Two Letters

1. The Dowdeswell sisters were in a state of euphoria upon the receipt of the three letters from Harrison, Jonathan and Sean, that had taken a circuitous journey starting from the confines of the *Paladin*, through Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, Chatham, the Admiralty and finally to the Bracknell estate. Correspondence between parties often took weeks, months, and even years depending on how far the writer was from the recipient. No texts, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok or email! Oh, the horror! How did they ever survive?!?

Did you know that many books of the Bible are actually composed in the form of letters which were passed from the original recipients on to other locations, groups and churches? There are 21 *epistles* in the New Testament with the most prolific letter-writer being Paul, who penned a total of 13 epistles (14 if you count the unsigned book of Hebrews.) Whereas Delain wanted the sisters to keep their letters to themselves, these Biblical dispatches were circulated far and wide.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 GW Then, brothers and sisters, firmly hold on to the traditions we taught you either when we spoke to you or in our letter.

Colossians 4:16 ESV And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

1 Thessalonians 5:27 ERV I tell you by the authority of the Lord to read this letter to all the believers there.

But what's an *epistle*? Here's a quick overview:

What Is an Epistle? What Are the Epistles in the Bible? (christianity.com)



Think Above the Box: This week, try communicating the old-school way! Write a letter to someone you haven't connected to in a while. Maybe tell them about this Bible study you are doing! Grandparents come to mind...

2. In her quest to decipher the cryptic letter procured from the Wilders' bookshelf, Delain used the talents of her language and history professor, Master Franklin, to translate the strange foreign words. His Russian abilities did not really open any doors for her as to what the letter meant. But then she recalled Mister Tupper telling her, "to find the true answer to a problem, one must get as close to the evidence as possible - not to settle for hearsay or conjecture. One must add new evidence and facts until the only conclusion had to be the right one."

2 Peter 1:16 AMP For we did not follow cleverly devised stories *or* myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty [His grandeur, His authority, His sovereignty].

1 John 1:1-3 AMPC [We are writing] about the Word of Life [in] Him Who existed from the beginning, Whom we have heard, Whom we have seen with our [own] eyes, Whom we have gazed upon [for ourselves]

and have touched with our [own] hands. And the Life [an aspect of His being] was revealed (made manifest, demonstrated), and we saw [as eyewitnesses] and are testifying to and declare to you the Life, the eternal Life [in Him] Who already existed with the Father and Who [actually] was made visible (was revealed) to us [His followers].

Proverbs 25:2 GW It is the glory of God to hide things but the glory of kings to investigate them.

Mister Tupper's advice applies to searching for evidence that the Bible is truthful too.

"These days, many Christians, especially college-age students, face having their faith in God and the Bible questioned if not downright assaulted."

- Paul Strand

Incredible Proof for Why You Should Have Faith in the Bible | CBN News

EXTRA CREDIT: Scroll down to the bottom of the page and watch more videos on the evidence for the truth of the Bible. Don't miss "Josh McDowell's Startling Evidence for the Bible" including his personal testimony in the first video.

REAL LIFE: **Luke 22:20** TLB After supper he gave them another glass of wine, saying, "This wine is the token of God's new agreement to save you—an agreement sealed with the blood I shall pour out to purchase back your souls."

Since letters are the subject of this chapter, let's explore why some Bibles show Jesus' words in red ink (the publisher's term for this is *rubricating*.) Louis Klopsch in 1899 came up with the idea of highlighting the quotations from Jesus in red. Why, you ask? Read this post to find out:

The Origins of the Red-Letter Bible | Crossway Articles

Christian artist David Crowder has written a song called *Red Letters* including these lyrics:

"When I read the red letters and the ground began to shake, the prison walls started falling and I became a free man that day."

This site features Crowder explaining the meaning of the song plus the *Red Letters* music video:

🎵 **Behind The Song: Crowder Shares The Heart Behind His Song "Red Letters" | Freeccm.com**

APOLO-GET-ITS: **Genesis 1:1** ESV In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Hopefully you were humbled by that photo of our planetary home in the last chapter. But is Earth really *just* a pale blue dot as the late astronomer Carl Sagan declared in the post below?

"Because of the reflection of sunlight...Earth seems to be sitting in a beam of light as if there were some special significance to this small world. But it's just an accident of geometry and optics...Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves."

Wow, way to go all *Debbie Downer* on us, dude! But there's hope!

Is Earth Just A Pale Blue Dot? - Cross Examined

Guide for Chapter 15

A Charming Scar

1. This chapter opens with a mini-tutorial on the various methods of stealing a ship: engaging a 'chase'—a ship at sea—and winning a battle, forcing a surrender of an unarmed or lesser-powered ship, or using an overpowering force of men to sneak up on a moored ship to attack and take it—called 'cutting out.' Like the Russian leader Nikomed Aggar, our culture today uses different means to convince young (and old) Christians to doubt their faith and join the ranks of unbelievers. The techniques applied include subtle anti-Christian references and mocking remarks in movies, television shows, newscasts and literature to outright hatred and discrimination (think anti-creationism in science classes and revisionist history.)

Psalm 1:1 ESV Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners.

Jeremiah 5:26-28 ERV There are evil men among my people. They are like men who make nets for catching birds. They set their traps, but they catch people instead of birds. Their houses are full of lies, like a cage full of birds. Their lies made them rich and powerful from the evil they have done. There is no end to the evil they do. They will not plead the case of children who have no parents. They will not help these orphans. They will not let the poor be judged fairly.

"Why would God bless America when America doesn't want God, it wants Satan?"

-Fritz Chery

The above author does not hold back in his statements on the current status of America:

25 Scary Bible Verses About America (Our Sinful Country) (bibleasons.com)



Think Above the Box: The above "in your face" article comes down really hard on our country in regards to how we have let our culture push God out, resulting in the evil, confusion, and destruction of individuals and families that we have today. In view of the Scriptures cited, God sounds maaaaad! What are your thoughts on this? Too severe, too mild or just right? Provide some examples that you have run across personally. How can we as believers help to overcome the obvious anti-God themes of our society's culture?

2. After observing and counting the *Paladin* crews' whereabouts and noting that her officers were departing, Aggar decided to implement his plan of attacking the moored ship. Chances were that the next in command would not be as battle-ready as a ship's original commander and his top officers. An attack will always be successful if the prey is weakened. Just as an enemy force can easily overwhelm and conquer an inexperienced crew, Satan would love nothing better than to break you down and do the same to you!

Ephesians 6:12 ESV For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

John 10:10 TLB The thief's purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 AMP But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you [setting you on a firm foundation] and will protect *and* guard you from the evil *one*.

"Satan wants nothing more than to enter certain areas of your life so he can gain a stronghold. He'll try anything to throw you off center, distract you from your focus, and render you ineffective for the Kingdom of God."

- Cindi McMEnamin

But how does one become prepared for battle spiritually?

5 Areas of Your Life Satan Wants to Enter (crosswalk.com)



Think Above the Box: Of the five areas of your life listed in the article (heart, worrying, thinking, speech and body,) which one poses the hardest battle for you? What's your plan of action to keep Satan out? Ask the Holy Spirit for help!

3. While below deck, Jonathan had a cryptic conversation with Jenkins that told him that the old sailor was well aware of his meeting with Wilder and Spears on the docks at Wapping, his dishonesty towards Captain Harrison and the other officers, and his presenting of peculiar strategies in meetings. His tale of being deceitful and stealing a bottle of wine for a lieutenant, resulting in Jenkin's naval advancement being derailed was lovingly given to the young man as an object lesson. Fortunately, Jonathan figures this out and resolves to clear the air and confess his mysterious "assignment" with the captain. One could assume that Jenkins understood that the two men from the Admiralty used Jonathan as a pawn, putting him somewhat between a rock and a hard place. The older man had found a gentle, non-accusatory way to get across to the midshipman what he needed to do to make things right.

Proverbs 14:25 NLT A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is a traitor.

Psalms 116:11 AMPC I said in my haste, all men are deceitful *and* liars.

Proverbs 27:6 TPT You can trust a friend who wounds you with his honesty, but your enemy's pretended flattery comes from insincerity.

Ephesians 4:29 ERV When you talk, don't say anything bad. But say the good things that people need—whatever will help them grow stronger. Then what you say will be a blessing to those who hear you.

Just as Jenkins was kindly prodding Jonathan to see that he had to come clean to Harrison, the Apostle Paul wrote this to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 TLB Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you but because the pain turned you to God. It was a good kind of sorrow you felt, the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so that I need not come to you with harshness. For God sometimes uses sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek eternal life. We should never regret his sending it. But the sorrow of the man who is not a Christian

is not the sorrow of true repentance and does not prevent eternal death.

Secrets seem to be a part of life, although what we do with them is up to us. How to decide?

What does the Bible say about keeping secrets? | 412teens.org

Jonathan's nagging anxiety was his conscience tipping him off that he needed to rectify the situation. Perhaps the Holy Spirit was nudging him?

What's the difference between my conscience and conviction from the Holy Spirit? | 412teens.org



Think Above the Box: Let's get personal! How do you decide when a secret should be kept or brought out in the open? Do you take the Holy Spirit's conviction into account? Have you ever had a secret of yours exposed against your wishes? How did that feel? Now on the flip side, have you ever told a secret that hurt someone? Or told one that helped someone? Was God involved in your decision of what action to take?

4. As Russian Captain Aggar and his men ambushed the *Paladin*, an amazingly swift sequence of daunting events found Jonathan in command. The young man had progressed from an orphan living on the streets of London to the captain (if only for a moment) of a British warship! How did he get so far, so fast? He *chose* to by learning all he could from everyone he could and *applying* what he learned when the opportunities presented themselves, earning the crew's acclaim and the title of "a sparky lit'le flame."

1 Samuel 2:26 GW The boy Samuel continued to grow and gained the favor of the Lord and the people.

1 Timothy 4:12 NLT Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

1 Corinthians 13:11 TPT When I was a child, I spoke about childish matters, for I saw things like a child and reasoned like a child. But the day came when I matured, and I set aside my childish ways.

Hebrews 5:14 AMPC But solid food is for full-grown men, for those whose senses *and* mental faculties are trained by practice to discriminate *and* distinguish between what is morally good *and* noble and what is evil *and* contrary either to divine or human law.

We can go from a timid, scared person to one of God's 'captains' by continually increasing our spiritual growth.

"Why is it that some people succeed spiritually, while others fail? Answer: because they choose to."

- Greg Laurie

Here's a handy how-to guide:

The Key to Spiritual Growth - A New Beginning with Greg Laurie (oneplace.com)



Think Above the Box: Even though 14-year-old Jonathan was the current ranking officer on board the *Paladin* following the battle, he argued that he was *only* a midshipman and that his older, more experienced teacher should have taken control. Jenkins replied, “But you are *our* midshipman,” and therefore, by rank, that placed the young man correctly in command. Every day we encounter all types of people, including family, friends, random strangers and acquaintances. Do you realize that you are *their* Christian? Discuss a time that your spiritual maturity helped you aid and comfort someone.

REAL LIFE: Have you seen the film *Unbroken*? Watch the following video about a rough, tough, cigarette-smokin’ five-year-old who as a young man just happened to: run in the Olympics, shake Hitler’s hand, get shot down and marooned at sea, endure torture and depravation at a prison camp, return home a hero, become an alcoholic suffering from PTSD and accept Jesus Christ as his Savior. Whew! Louis Zamparini attributes it all to the following Scripture:

Romans 8:28 AMP And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose.

"Unbroken's" Louis Zamperini: The Rest of the Story - YouTube

EXTRA CREDIT: Watch the film about Zamparini’s life, *Unbroken* (2014)

Unbroken Official Trailer #1 (2014) - Angelina Jolie Directed Movie HD - YouTube

EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: Follow up with *Unbroken: Path to Redemption* (2018)

Unbroken: Path Redemption | Trailer | In Theaters September 14 - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: **Psalm 14:1 ESV** The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”

“So why do skeptics, like Bertrand Russell, say there isn’t enough evidence? I submit to you that they’re looking in the wrong places. They’re looking for God to do something inside the creation – like do a miracle, appear to them, or give them a special message -when all they need to do is consider the origin and design of the universe.”

- Ryan Leasure

Let’s explore some arguments for God’s existence that atheists overlook:

Is there Evidence for God's Existence? - RYAN LEASURE

Listen to the following song, *What If*, by Nicole Nordeman. Now imagine her singing it to Bertrand Russell.

“But what if you’re wrong? What if there’s more? What if there’s hope you never dreamed of hoping for?”

♪ **Nichole Nordeman What If Passion - YouTube**

Guide for Chapter 16

Abduction

1. *Clandestine* is an adjective that means actions that are covert, illicit, secret, subversive and deceptive. There was a reason why Orvislat and Wilder rendezvoused at 3:00 a.m. in the pitch dark of the moonless night. Evil, sinful, lawless acts are usually conducted best in darkness, not the bright light of high noon. God explains why sinful mankind loves the dark:

John 11:10 GW “However, those who walk at night stumble because they have no light in themselves.”

Proverbs 2:13-14 TPT For they have left the highway of holiness and walk in the ways of darkness. They take pleasure when evil prospers and thoroughly enjoy a lifestyle of sin.

John 3:19-20 GW This is why people are condemned: The light came into the world. Yet, people loved the dark rather than the light because their actions were evil. People who do what is wrong hate the light and don't come to the light. They don't want their actions to be exposed.

Let's explore this concept a little more by reading a blogpost about darkness with a bonus apologetic flair:

“...And when it comes to believing in the creation account of our universe and mankind, the veracity of the resurrection of Jesus, and even the question of is there really a God in the first place, I believe, it's man's inherent love of sin and darkness that blinds him to the truth in these areas.”

-Curt Blattman

Men Love Darkness Rather Than Light - Bible Apologetics - A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

2. The argument between Orvislat and Wilder was conducted initially by whispers, but as the animosity between them progressed, their hushed tones became so loud that the driver sitting outside atop the coach could hear them! Their murmurings escalated to the volume of roars. Sometimes, when all is well, our perception of God is but a whisper to us but when we are in a storm, He shouts!

1 Kings 19:11-12 ESV And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.

Job 26:14 AMPC Yet these are but [a small part of His doings] the outskirts of His ways *or* the mere fringes of His force, the faintest whisper of His voice! Who dares contemplate *or* who can understand the thunders of His full, magnificent power?

Matthew 10:27 NLT What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

- C.S. Lewis

Daniel Ritchie gives us his perspective below:

God Shouts to Us in Our Pain | Desiring God

Take a little time to enjoy the insightful *God Whispers* video poem:

God Whispers yt.wmv - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Many times an ignored whisper from God will eventually turn into a shout. When in your life have you sensed God whispering to you? Speaking in your conscience? Shouting in your pain?

3. As the two men bickered about the order for a new treaty, Wilder believed that too many changes would arouse suspicions and draw attention while Orvislat contended that, “these treaties are living documents, each side changing and rearranging words and conditions.” What does *that* mean? Some Americans say the same about our Constitution (which the founding fathers based on God’s law as written in the Bible) and that it should be open to new analysis and meanings. But wait a minute - I’ve heard people refer to the *Bible* as a living document too! Uh, oh! But I don’t think ‘living’ means the same thing in reference to Scripture as to the U.S. Constitution. Perhaps it refers to the fact that this ancient book can open hearts, influence and change people even in our modern age?

Hebrews 4:12 AMPC For the word of God is living and active *and* full of power [making it operative, energizing, and effective]. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as the division of the soul and spirit [the completeness of a person], and of both joints and marrow [the deepest parts of our nature], exposing *and* judging the very thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Psalms 119:89 NLT Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven.

2 Timothy 3:16 TLB The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right.

“The description of the Bible as “living” means that it has a vital power inherent to itself. The written Word of God accomplishes God’s purposes (Isaiah 55:11); the preaching of the Holy Scriptures brings about God’s desired effects. The Bible is unlike other books, whatever emotional or social effects they may produce, in that it brings about lasting, supernatural change within a person.”

– gotquestions.org

What is the living Word? | GotQuestions.org



Think Above the Box: Has a Bible passage ever grabbed at you and warmed your heart or offered new insight into your understanding of God or a situation in your life? Discuss!

4. Delain was most pleased with her literal alley cat imitation that threw Orvislat off her trail and kept him from shooting her. Then, in haste to return to safety and warmth, she became overconfident and sloppy in her spy-craft, ending up being caught and kidnapped by two of the Russian's henchmen. Satan is also lurking in the shadows, hoping to abduct any unwary souls, imprison them as enslaved captives and prevent them from reaching out and believing in God and His salvation.

John 8:34 GW Jesus answered them, "I can guarantee this truth: Whoever lives a sinful life is a slave to sin."

Acts 8:22-23 NLT "Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin."

2 Peter 2:19 AMP They promise them liberty, when they themselves are the slaves of depravity—for by whatever anyone is defeated *and* overcome, to that [person, thing, philosophy, or concept] he is *continually* enslaved.

2 Timothy 2:25-26 NLT Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

Even believers are not immune to being abducted and held captive by sin, if they let their guard down.

"It is your choice to what and to whom you are going to yield yourself. And it is an intelligent decision to base your actions on what God has said in His Word."

- Greg Laurie

Captive No More (christianity.com)

Watch the following music video of the hymn from the post above.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

- Helen Lemmel

🎵 **'Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus' Natalie Grant And The Belonging Co. - Christian Music Videos (godtube.com)**



Think Above the Box: Is there a sin that you feel is holding you captive? Pray to the Holy Spirit to help you *know, reckon and yield!*

REAL LIFE: Psalm 139:15-17 AMP My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being formed in secret, and intricately *and* skillfully formed [as if embroidered with many colors] in the depths of the earth. Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were appointed *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them [even taking shape]. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

"Do you want us to let him go?" Those were the first words spoken over a non-breathing, armless baby boy (the author of the post in Question 2 above) by the obstetrician within the first moments of his birth!

"I was born without arms and spent the majority of my life being told that I was a hopeless mistake and woefully insufficient to lead a full life."

- Daniel Ritchie

Daniel Ritchie's Story | He was born without arms... but that doesn't stop him from preaching the Gospel. This is Daniel Ritchie's story. | By 700 Club Interactive | Facebook

APOLO-GET-ITS: Non-believers like to discredit Bible prophecy as mere myths and wishful thinking. In regards to the Old Testament prophet Daniel, J. Warner Wallace writes: *"The ancient authors recognized only God could 'declare the end from the beginning' and forecast to the very day' things that are not yet done' (Isaiah 46:10)."*

Isaiah 46:8-10 ERV "Sinners, change your heart and mind. Think about this again. Remember it and be strong. Remember what happened long ago. Remember, I am God and there is no other God. There is no other like me. In the beginning, I told you what would happen in the end. A long time ago, I told you things that have not happened yet. When I plan something, it happens. I do whatever I want to do."

The following post breaks down the math (you might want pencil and paper for this one!)

Perhaps the Greatest Old Testament Prophecy of All | Cold Case Christianity

Guide for Chapter 17

Cursed Captains

1. Upon his arrival on deck, Harrison surveyed his ship and the carnage wrought by Aggar and his forces. Searching for Jonathan, he was horrified at the sight of the shirtless young man covered in blood. The captain's first thought was probably that he had suffered a mortal wound judging by the amount of crimson he saw. Providentially, most of it was someone else's! Why is it that we get all squeamish at the sight of blood? Perhaps deep down, we know the loss of too much of it can end a life.

Genesis 4:8-11 TLB One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were together there, Cain attacked and killed his brother. But afterwards the Lord asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "How should I know?" Cain retorted. "Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?" But the Lord said, "Your brother's blood calls to me from the ground. What have you done? You are hereby banished from this ground which you have defiled with your brother's blood."

Genesis 9:6 ESV "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."

In regards to Jesus Christ, the loss of almost all of His led to the gaining of eternal life for those who believe:

Leviticus 17:11 TLB For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given you the blood to sprinkle upon the altar as an atonement for your souls; it is the blood that makes *atonement* because it is the life.

Hebrews 9:22 ESV Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Romans 5:9 TPT And there is still much more to say of his unfailing love for us! For through the blood of Jesus we have heard the powerful declaration, "You are now righteous in my sight." And because of the sacrifice of Jesus, you will never experience the wrath of God.

Ephesians 1:7 ERV In Christ we are made free by his blood sacrifice. We have forgiveness of sins because of God's rich grace.

"Atonement is one of those words you'll likely hear in church or see on Christian blogs. But what does it mean?"

- Mike Leake

Find out here:

What is Atonement and Why Is it Necessary? Biblical Meaning (crosswalk.com)

Musical Interlude Time!

"We were the joy set before your eyes / Before you ever came to split the skies / Took all the blame and paid our ransom price / By Your Love and Your Blood."

- RICHLIN

♪ **RICHLIN - Royal Blood (Official Music Video) - YouTube**

2. Upon learning of the dire events that transpired during his absence, Harrison interrupted the midshipman's lack of confidence in himself by saying, "It was **leadership**. It was putting to action what you have learned." Jonathan could never have *planned* ahead how he would react when the Russians took over the ship with the exact maneuver they used but because he was *prepared*, he was able to use his knowledge and skills to execute a plan.

1 Corinthians 16:13 TLB Keep your eyes open for spiritual danger; stand true to the Lord; act like men; be strong;

Matthew 25:13 TLB "So stay awake and be prepared, for you do not know the date or moment of my return."

Luke 21:36 AMPC Keep awake then *and* watch at all times [be discreet, attentive, and ready], praying that you may have the full strength *and* ability *and* be accounted worthy to escape all these things [taken together] that will take place, and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man.

Can God's Word help us prepare for leadership?

"Whether you find yourself confused by the actions of those in charge or coming into in a new leadership position yourself, the Bible is full of insight about the kind of leaders God calls us to be and the responsibilities we have even when we're not in charge."

-Jennifer DeWeil

What the Bible says about leadership | Articles | NewSpring Church



Think Above the Box: List some ways that Jonathan displayed leadership for the crew to emulate. Now list *your* leadership skills that Jesus would approve of! What areas do you need to pray about and work on?

3. While finally coming clean to Harrison about his secret mission ordered by Spears and Wilder, Jonathan hesitated when the captain pressed for him to state the admirals' opinions of him because they felt he was cursed for being aboard two British ships that were lost. But Harrison was in good company as even Jesus Himself was also considered cursed:

Galatians 3:13 NLT But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

1 Peter 2:24 AMP He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross [willingly offering Himself on it, as on an altar of sacrifice], so that we might die to sin [becoming immune from the penalty and power of sin] and live for righteousness; for by His wounds you [who believe] have been healed.

Let's take a deeper look at this whole "cursed" concept:

How can Jesus be a curse? | NeverThirsty

EXTRA CREDIT: Read the article “Searching for God” in the conclusion section of the above:

Searching for God — In Search of God — Go To Heaven | NeverThirsty

4. At sunset, the Paladin’s survivors of the attack stood in a solemn ceremony to bury their departed shipmates. Commander Harrison recited the familiar “ashes to ashes, dust to dust” refrain so often associated with funerals. Most people believe that this phrase is from Scripture, but it isn't!

It does relate to these verses though:

Genesis 3:19 ESV “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

Job 34:15 ESV ...all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

“The phrase is derived from The Book of Common Prayer, a compilation of morning & evening prayers, communion prayers, and service orders for baptisms, confirmations, and other events in the Church of England.”

- Aaron Berry

Is 'Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust' a Bible Verse? - Topical Studies (biblestudytools.com)

“God’s declaration to Adam that ‘to dust you shall return’ still rings true for every person today. We all come from dust, and we will all return back to it. What happens in between matters.”

- from **What does it mean when God tells Adam, “For dust you are and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19)? | GotQuestions.org**

For more insight, read the above link!



Think Above the Box: Seems we all have a choice to make before it's our time to go...

John 8:24 AMPC That is why I told you that you will die in (under the curse of) your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He [Whom I claim to be—if you do not adhere to, trust in, and rely on Me], you will die in your sins.

Philippians 3:20-21 NLT But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

According to the above, how does the fact that we *start* as ashes and dust and *return* to ashes and dust help us to keep an eternal perspective? How does this remind us that “*The world is not our home?*”

5. Aggar and his crew waited in dread and trepidation as the small boat from the *Navarkhia* containing a very angry commodore made its way to the *Echo*. Even though he was a very large man, Kharitonov was able to scale the *Jacob's ladder* with dexterity and adroitness. One wonders, where did that term 'Jacob's ladder' come from? If you guessed the Bible, you are correct!

Genesis 28:10-12 GW Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. When he came to a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had gone down. He took one of the stones from that place, put it under his head, and lay down there. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway set up on the earth with its top reaching up to heaven. He saw the angels of God going up and coming down on it.

Time to learn some interesting facts:

What is Jacob's Ladder? | GotQuestions.org

REAL LIFE: *"I once thought I was too smart to believe in God. Now I know I was an arrogant fool who snubbed the greatest Mind in the cosmos—the Author of all science, mathematics, art, and everything else there is to know."*

- Rosalind Picard

Read about her search for the Truth:

An MIT Professor Meets the Author of All Knowledge

APOLO-GET-ITS: Psalm 139:14 GW I will give thanks to you because I have been so amazingly and miraculously made. Your works are miraculous, and my soul is fully aware of this.

Let's learn some facts about our blood. Did you know that 90 percent of the total *cells* in your body consist of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets? I didn't!

"Blood reveals much about the majesty of our Creator and Master Craftsman, irreducible complexity, and the health or disease state of the human body"

- Dr. Alan L Gillen and Jason Conrad

Read the following to learn more about why "Life is in the Blood":

Life Is in the Blood | Answers in Genesis

EXTRA EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: Give yourself *triple* points for reading the entire article!



Think Above the Box: The above article states, *"Anyone looking at this rich tapestry would immediately praise the body of its intricate and complex design. Yet the very same people will claim that the complex human body happened by chance."* What say you? Watch Matt Redman's music video based on **Psalm 139** first!

🎵 **Fearfully and Wonderfully made - YouTube**

Guide for Chapter 18

The Viscount of Zadar

1. As the *Paladin* entered the bay of Zadar, Captain Harrison, along with Jonathan and Quinn, stood on the bow observing their new surroundings to assess the most secure location to put down the anchor. After Quinn challenged his superior's plan of mooring at the mouth of the bay instead of docking (and perhaps setting themselves up for another attack,) the captain was having none of his argument and told him, "But our weapon is our speed. I will not lose that advantage." Sometimes when facing an adversary, rather than engaging them in battle, the best tactic is to flee as fast as you can. This was the strategy that Harrison saw as the best plan for the current situation. There were different circumstances in which he would engage any foe head-on, but this was not the time.

2 Timothy 2:22 TPT Run as fast as you can from all the ambitions and lusts of youth; and chase after all that is pure. Whatever builds up your faith and deepens your love must become your holy pursuit. And live in peace with all those who worship our Lord Jesus with pure hearts.

Proverbs 4:14-15 ESV Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

Scripture also counsels us to flee as fast as we can from temptation when that is the only avenue available to us! You might recall the Old Testament account regarding Joseph (of the technicolor dreamcoat fame) and how he was almost...well, let's let God give the account:

Genesis 39:5-12 GW From that time on the Lord blessed the Egyptian's household because of Joseph. Therefore, the Lord's blessing was on everything Potiphar owned in his house and in his fields. So he left all that he owned in Joseph's care. He wasn't concerned about anything except the food he ate. Joseph was well-built and handsome. After a while his master's wife began to desire Joseph, so she said, "Come to bed with me." But Joseph refused and said to her, "My master doesn't concern himself with anything in the house. He trusts me with everything he owns. No one in this house is greater than I. He's kept nothing back from me except you, because you're his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Although she kept asking Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or be with her. One day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there. She grabbed him by his clothes and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he ran outside and left his clothes in her hand.

"Fleeing from temptation means we recognize it as an enemy and we go the other way, with no hesitation and no compromise."

- from **What does it mean to flee from temptation? | GotQuestions.org**

Run to the above link to learn how to take a hike (in a good way!)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever had to flee a temptation? And on the flip side, have you ever *not* fled? What do you think was the better plan?

2. Once again, Lieutenant Quinn erupted with more disrespect towards the head of command when he exclaimed that *he* should be in charge of the ship during the captain's absence, not lowly Midshipman

Moore. You almost expect him to whine, "It's not fair!" Quick, someone call the 'waaambulance!' Reminds me of a certain sibling who thought his father was letting his wayward brat of a younger brother be honored ahead of him, the oldest and superior son by far...

Use this link to read [Luke 15:11-32 AMP](#):

Luke 15:11-32 AMP - The Prodigal Son - Then He said, "A - Bible Gateway

A *prodigal* can be defined as a person who is very wasteful with their resources, immoral, reckless, one who squanders his or others' assets and a spendthrift.

"Our Home is with our Father. And He saw us a long way, far off down the road, and gathered us up when we came running to Him. And He will do the same for all of us, prodigal or steadfast."

- John Lemmon

Let's investigate the elder bro further:

The Prodigal Sons Big Brother : Free Gift From God - Teachings of Jesus



Think Above the Box: Have you ever been upstaged by someone of 'lower rank?' Did you graciously accept authority regarding the decision or did you, like the elder bro, bellyache about not getting a goat for dinner?

EXTRA CREDIT: Want to become an expert on this most well-known parable? Read the above author's prequel on the lil' bro:

The Prodigal Son : Free Gift From God - Teachings of Jesus

3. The many services that Baron Ragusa provided as the Viscount of Zadar were quite varied, including murder, theft, kidnapping and an assortment of other nefarious deeds. This enabled him to live like a king in a beautiful stone villa in his vast estate high above the bay. Looks like crime *does* pay! At least on earth, perhaps. Doesn't seem fair, does it? Lawlessness due to *avarice* (greed) is one of Satan's most treasured traps. God addresses this topic throughout Scripture and it doesn't bode well for the viscount:

Jeremiah 17:11 AMPC Like the partridge that gathers a brood which she did not hatch *and* sits on eggs which she has not laid, so is he who gets riches by unjust means *and* not by right. He will leave them, *or* they will leave him, in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool.

Luke 12:15 ERV Then Jesus said to them, "Be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. People do not get life from the many things they own."

Luke 12:20 TPT God said to him, 'What a fool you are to trust in your riches and not in me. This very night the messengers of death are demanding to take your life. Then who will get all the wealth you have stored up for yourself?'

Psalm 37:7 TLB Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for him to act. Don't be envious of evil men who prosper.

Psalm 37:20 ERV But evil people are the Lord's enemies, and they will be destroyed. Their valleys will dry up and burn. They will be destroyed completely.

"Those who are rich by ill-gotten gains will meet their due justice," declares the following post on greed, which is the catalyst for so much evil in this life, isn't it?

Greed | Bibleinfo.com



Think Above the Box: As a Christian, what can help you keep an eternal perspective on dealing with evil people who commit crimes to further themselves?

4. Jonathan shared his thoughts on being handed temporary command of the *Paladin* with Jenkins, who tells him that it wasn't totally unexpected due to the fact that higher-ranking Quinn had proven untrustworthy and the Captain respected his midshipman's judgement. The young man then listed all the errors he had made on this mission, concluding that he didn't even have a proper uniform to wear. The old seaman asserted that, "It's not the uniform, my dear departed pappy used to say, but the man inside it!" Wow, that sounds like it's right out of the first book of Samuel!

1 Samuel 16:7 ESV But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

What does it mean that God looks at the heart? Read on.

"Appearances can be deceiving. The outward appearance doesn't reveal what people are really like. Physical looks don't show us a person's value or character or integrity or faithfulness to God. Outward qualities are, by definition, superficial. Moral and spiritual considerations are far more important to God."

- GotQuestions.org

What does it mean that God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7)? | GotQuestions.org

5. As the crew in the villa exchanged discourse with the viscount, two explosions literally and figuratively shook them. Looking through the telescope on the loggia, Harrison watched in horror as a battle ensued between the Turkish ship, the *Echo* and the *Paladin*. As it became evident that their beloved ship had just been lost, Sean and Hudson dropped to the ground in dread and fear for their friends. "J-jonny. M-my brother..." was all that Sean could utter. Right after Jesus' arrest, the apostles, like Sean fearing the death of Jonathan, reacted in fear, disappointment, despair, shock and disbelief.

Before the Crucifixion:

Matthew 26:31 AMP Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night [disillusioned

about Me, confused, and some even ashamed of Me], 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"

Mark 14:48-50 TPT Jesus said to the mob, "Why would you arrest me with swords and clubs as though I were an outlaw? Day after day I sat with you in the temple courts, teaching the people, yet you didn't arrest me then. But all of this fulfills the prophecies of the Scriptures." At that point all of his disciples ran away and abandoned him.

"It's easy to condemn those disciples—but how often does this happen to us? How often do we doubt God's Word and act as if it isn't true?"

- Billy Graham

Why were Jesus' disciples so frightened after He was arrested and crucified? (billygraham.org)

After the Resurrection:

John 20:19-20 TPT That evening, the disciples gathered together. And because they were afraid of reprisals from the Jewish leaders, they had locked the doors to the place where they met. But suddenly Jesus appeared among them and said, "Peace to you!" Then he showed them the wounds of his hands and his side—they were overjoyed to see the Lord with their own eyes!



Think Above the Box: Imagine you were one of the Apostles going from total fright and disillusionment to amazing relief and absolute joy. Do you think that, in addition to the Holy Spirit guiding them, this experience spurred them on to spread the Gospel to the world, even knowing that suffering and dying awaited them?

REAL LIFE: Does God really have a plan for our lives? What about when an unimaginable tragedy strikes? How do you pull out of it and regain hope?

Psalm 130:5 NLT I am counting on the Lord; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word.

1 Peter 5:10 ERV Yes, you will suffer for a short time. But after that, God will make everything right. He will make you strong. He will support you and keep you from falling. He is the God who gives all grace. He chose you to share in his glory in Christ. That glory will continue forever.

Isaiah 40:31 AMPC But those who wait for the Lord [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up [close to God] as eagles [mount up to the sun]; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired.

Jeremiah 29:11 GW I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope.

Watch Danny Gokey's testimony of how the heartbreaking loss of his young wife led to millions hearing about his Christian faith and testimony through the platform of *American Idol* and beyond:

Danny Gokey - Why did God let the love of my life die? - Come on let's go - YouTube

We should at least watch his audition, don't you think?

🎵 VIDEO Danny Gokey Audition American Idol 2009 - YouTube

Here's his video of the song, *Hope in Front of Me*:

"There's hope in front of me / There's a light, I still see it / There's a hand still holding me / Even when I don't believe it."

🎵 Danny Gokey - Hope In Front of Me - Official Music Video - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Captain Harrison cautiously reviewed their mission with his officers and stated, "I do not trust the information we have received," and in regards to the believability of the viscount, "I will test him. If he seems to fit all the criteria and knows all the code words..." then the operation would proceed. Sounds like a good plan! We should do the same in regards to the truth of the Bible. The proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our faith. How can we know that it is true, being that we are staking our eternal life on it?

Luke 24:6-7 NLT He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day."

Acts 17:31 TPT "For the appointed day has risen, in which he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the Man he has designated. And the proof given to the world that God has chosen this Man is this: he resurrected him from among the dead!"

Just as Captain Harrison tested the viscount's story, we too can verify the evidence of the Resurrection. Here is a nugget from the article below:

*"Luke Johnson, a New Testament scholar from Emory University, muses that, 'some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was...'
N.T. Wright, an eminent British scholar, concludes, 'that is why, as a historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him.'"*

- William Lane Craig

Now read the whole article:

The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics on CBN.com

EXTRA CREDIT: Take some time to peruse Dr. Craig's informative website!

"Reasonable Faith aims to provide in the public arena an intelligent, articulate, and uncompromising yet gracious Christian perspective on the most important issues concerning the truth of the Christian faith today, such as: the existence of God, the meaning of life, the objectivity of truth, the foundation of moral values, the creation of the universe, intelligent design, the reliability of the Gospels, the uniqueness of Jesus, the historicity of the resurrection and the challenge of religious pluralism."

Reasonable Faith

Guide for Chapter 19

Interrogation

1. Following her kidnapping by two men in an alley by the Log and Loaf, Delain found herself in a bit of a bind, restrained by a large sack over her head, her mouth gagged, her eyes blindfolded and her ears plugged. Seems many are spiritually in the same boat:

2 Corinthians 4:4 NLT Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

After spending about an hour in this makeshift sensory deprivation tank, her bonds were finally removed. After being totally terrified of her situation, the familiar, friendly voice of Captain Gorman gave her instant relief and hope. Relief is actually one of the best feelings there is, if you think about it. One could imagine that the relief of spending eternity with God Himself in Heaven rather than hell would qualify!

Isaiah 35:5-6 ERV Then the eyes of the blind will be opened so that they can see, and the ears of the deaf will be opened so that they can hear. Crippled people will dance like deer, and those who cannot speak now will use their voices to sing happy songs. This will happen when springs of water begin to flow in the dry desert.

Matthew 11:2-6 TPT Now, while John the Baptizer was in prison, he heard about what Christ was doing among the people, so he sent his disciples to ask him this question: "Are you really the one prophesied would come, or should we still wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Give John this report: 'The blind see again, the crippled walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised back to life, and the poor and broken now hear of the hope of salvation!' And tell John that the blessing of heaven comes upon those who never lose their faith in me—no matter what happens!"

"How does someone who is blind to the glory of God come to see Him for who he really is?"

- John Piper

The answer is in the link below:

How God Opens the Eyes of the Heart | Desiring God

2. The ever-independent, self-taught and intrepid Delain Dowdeswell was, perhaps, finally at the end of her rope. Being totally restrained had her actually thinking that this time, she might not be able to pull herself out of the pit she was in. She found herself wishing that Jonathan was able to come and rescue her. We can spiritually be like that. Many people are so self-sufficient that they feel no need for God or a Savior. Sometimes it takes them finding themselves at rock bottom to even consider needing Him. As they say, there are no atheists in foxholes! Jesus describes this as being spiritually bankrupt and to Him, it's a good thing! What??

Matthew 5:3 NLT God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

The link below states, *"Being poor in spirit is admitting that, because of your sin, you are completely destitute spiritually and can do nothing to deliver yourself from your dire situation."*

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? | GotQuestions.org



Think Above the Box: Some people have to experience being at the bottom of a pit to grasp their need for a Savior. The post above states, *“Jesus is saying that, no matter your status in life, you must recognize your spiritual poverty before you can come to God in faith to receive the salvation He offers.”* What does this mean?

3. As Gorman, Fairchild, Frey and Delain carefully pieced together the clues that each one possessed, it became evident that the *Echo* and the *Paladin* were most likely lost and their friends were dead or in grave danger. The young spy was beside herself with grief and worry. She was hit with the memory of her last words to Jonathan in parting and lamented not telling him how much he really meant to her. Regret is a heavy, horrible feeling that can overshadow your life if you are not careful.

2 Corinthians 7:10 TPT God designed us to feel remorse over sin in order to produce repentance that leads to victory. This leaves us with no regrets. But the sorrow of the world works death.

Philippians 3:13 ERV Brothers and sisters, I know that I still have a long way to go. But there is one thing I do: I forget what is in the past and try as hard as I can to reach the goal before me.

Acts 3:19 AMP So repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins] and return [to God—seek His purpose for your life], so that your sins may be wiped away [blotted out, completely erased], so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord [restoring you like a cool wind on a hot day];

Ecclesiastes 5:20 TLB And, of course, it is very good if a man has received wealth from the Lord and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and to accept your lot in life—that is indeed a gift from God. The person who does that will not need to look back with sorrow on his past, for God gives him joy.

1 John 1:9 GW God is faithful and reliable. If we confess our sins, he forgives them and cleanses us from everything we’ve done wrong.

What does God want us to do with it?

What does the Bible say about shame and regret? | 412teens.org

And from a teen’s point of view:

“Never look back, never regret. Always forgive and always forget.”

- Sparky

No Regrets | 412teens.org Blog

“My biggest fear is waking up to find what matters / is miles away from what I spent my life chasing after / Is my story gonna have the same two words in every chapter? What if, what if...”

- Matthew West

♪ **Matthew West - What If (Official Music Video) - YouTube**



Think Above the Box: Are there any regrets in your life that you need to let go of? Here's a bonus track for you!

"So if I fall and if I fail, I will trust your mercy is greater than all of this / And if I bend and if I break, I'll trust the hands that hold me are greater than all my regrets. / You are greater than all my regrets."

♪ **Tenth Avenue North - Greater Than All My Regrets (Official Music Video) - YouTube**

REAL LIFE: Spiritual blindness is worse than physical blindness!

"What a joy and what a prophecy that God gave us, that these tears would come and they come out of great joy and when Christopher sings Open the Eyes of My Heart he teaches us to not see everything with our eyes, but to see things the way God sees things, through our heart."

- Christine Duffley

Watch the video about her son Christopher below:

♪ **Open the Eyes of My Heart (Duffley) - YouTube**

APOLO-GET-ITS: Just a quick video about colonnades, an ossuary box, an inscription at Caesarea Maritima and Yehohanan's iron spikes...

The Best Archaeological Finds Supporting the New Testament (SeanMcDowell.org) - YouTube

Guide for Chapter 20

Flotsam and Jetsam

1. As Harrison and the shore party commandeered the use of the viscount's yacht to investigate the aftermath of the *Paladin's* explosion, Sean found himself "numb to the entire affair." The thought of the almost certain death of his dear friend Jonathan was too much for him to bear. Sadly, we all can probably name a time that this feeling of disconnection happened to us. Not feeling anything is a way to escape whatever pain and worry are in our lives. As David stated in the Psalms:

Psalm 38:8 GW I am numb and completely devastated. I roar because my heart's in turmoil.

Psalm 143:4 AMP Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed *and* weak within me [wrapped in darkness]; my heart grows numb within me.

What a horrible feeling that is! Fortunately for Sean, the crew pieced together the puzzle and determined that Jonathan was indeed alive, lifting the crushing numbness from Sean's heart. But how can we deal with the times when we feel *spiritually* numb in our lives, when we can't seem to find any good news to alleviate our pain?

Ephesians 1:18 AMP And [I pray] that the eyes of your heart [the very center and core of your being] may be enlightened [flooded with light by the Holy Spirit], so that you will know *and* cherish the hope [the divine guarantee, the confident expectation] to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (God's people),

"Trials can be a blessing in disguise when they bring us to God, but we don't need a disaster to begin removing obstacles to our spiritual health."

- Christel Humfrey

Read her post below to find out how to thaw out a spiritually numb heart:

Is Your Heart Spiritually Numb? - iDisciple

Listen to the following track, *Numb*, by LoveCollide:

"You wanna cry, but the tears just won't come. / You wanna yell, but not at anyone. / You wanna hide, but there's nothing to hide from. / You sit here silently while you go numb."

🎵 **Numb by LOVECOLLIDE | ReverbNation**



Think Above the Box: Have you ever felt like Sean or the person in the above song due to a frightening event? How about feeling spiritually numb? How did you get back on track with God?

2. After the men recovered the bodies of their lost crewmates, Harrison studied the wreckage in the water and declared, "This is not right..." There was a definite difference in the condition of many items in the

water and those washed up on shore. Some were in a very sorry state while others seemed intact and almost placed there deliberately. He and Sean discussed the differences in the various marine debris they surveyed. *Flotsam* refers to items that were destroyed in a shipwreck while *jetsam* (think *jettisoned*) are items deliberately tossed overboard to lighten the ship's load. The evidence of both leads them to hope that the *Paladin* and her remaining crew were stolen, not destroyed. All was not lost! These two terms can also apply spiritually. *Flotsam* could represent the good blessings in our life:

James 1:17 TLB But whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God, the Creator of all light, and he shines forever without change or shadow.

Psalm 37:3 TPT Keep trusting in the Lord and do what is right in his eyes. Fix your heart on the promises of God and you will be secure, feasting on his faithfulness.

Jetsam are the things that are detrimental:

1 Corinthians 7:35 GW I'm saying this for your benefit, not to restrict you. I'm showing you how to live a noble life of devotion to the Lord without being distracted by other things.

Mark 4:19 AMPC Then the cares *and* anxieties of the world *and* distractions of the age, and the pleasure *and* delight *and* false glamour *and* deceitfulness of riches, and the craving *and* passionate desire for other things creep in and choke *and* suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless.

The following post discusses how we need to be able to distinguish between the two:

Of Flotsam and Jetsam – Pursuing Prayer

The next post says: *“As believers we believe that God is the captain of our ship. When you start losing sight of your captain, you start trying to steer your own ship. Not only does this lead to going the wrong way, but it can lead you in the direction of trials, sin, missed opportunities, and missed blessings:”*

25 Important Bible Verses About Distractions Of The World (biblereasons.com)



Think Above the Box: Can you name some examples of spiritual flotsam and jetsam in your life? How can you refurbish the flotsam and jettison the jetsam?

REAL LIFE: *“Have you ever felt there must be something more? Something beyond merely existing? The following are some straightforward accounts that offer opinions about life and God's role in it.”*

- everystudent.com

What Is the Real Meaning of Life? Here's How to Experience It (everystudent.com)

APOLO-GET-ITS: Okay, so there you are, sitting in math class and your teacher states, “ $0 + 0 = 0$.” You and your fellow captives all reply, “Correct!” Then the bell rings and it's off to science class. Your lab-coated teacher states, “Nothing + nothing = everything.” Wait, what?

Was There Ever Nothing? What If Nothing Existed? (everystudent.com)

To sum it all up:

Acts 17:24-27 NLT “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us.”

Guide for Chapter 21

Southcott's Twin

1. Both the Russians and the British used the art of deception to aid their side, with Aggar masquerading as an English captain on the seized *Echo* and Jonathan using the body of Southcott dressed as 'Midshipman Moore' to make his foe believe he had been killed in the battle. Just as both combatants didn't directly confront each other as themselves, Satan, our adversary, also disguises himself and others to lead us into sin.

2 Corinthians 11:13-16 AMPC For such men are false apostles [spurious, counterfeits], deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles (special messengers) of Christ (the Messiah). And it is no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light; So it is not surprising if his servants also masquerade as ministers of righteousness. [But] their end will correspond with their deeds.

1 John 4:1-2 TLB Dearly loved friends, don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God: test it first to see if it really is. For there are many false teachers around, and the way to find out if their message is from the Holy Spirit is to ask: Does it really agree that Jesus Christ, God's Son, actually became man with a human body? If so, then the message is from God.

"The devil is very crafty, he will use people or mask things to make it look like it is from God."

- Corine Gatti

But how does he do this?

How is Satan Disguised as an Angel of Light Today? - Beliefnet



Think Above the Box: Have you ever encountered someone being "angelic" who was actually trying to entice you into sinning? How did you discern their masquerade? If you fell for it, how can you avoid this trap in the future?

2. The discovery of Quinn, Crump and Crystal's murderous sabotage necessitated the suggestion by Jenkins that the men had to be killed. As commanding officer, the decision and actual executions fell upon Jonathan's shoulders. After the three were dispensed with, the young midshipman was unnerved because, "These deaths were on his hands, and it shook him deeply." In the heat of battle, the killing of fellow human beings is often inevitable, hence Jonathan's sense of horror at the act. What does God say about this? Are killing and murder the same thing?

Exodus 21:14 GW But whenever someone becomes so angry that he *plans* to kill his neighbor, you must take him away from my altar and put him to death.

Deuteronomy 19:4-5 GW A person who *unintentionally* kills someone he never hated in the past may run to one of these cities to save his life. Suppose two people go into the woods to cut wood. As one of them swings the ax to cut down a tree, the head flies off the handle, hits, and kills the other person. The one who accidentally killed the other person may run to one of these cities and save his life.

*"The difference between the legal or illegal use of deadly force is really a matter of **motive, intent**"*

and justification, and these distinctions come straight from the pages of Scripture”

- J. Warner Wallace

Let's hear more of what this Christian cold-case homicide detective has to say on the subject:

The Difference Between Killing and Murdering | Cold Case Christianity



Think Above the Box: Does there seem to be a clear-cut distinction between the two terms as far as God is concerned? Was the killing of the three traitors justifiable or cold-blooded murder? Explain your choice. What about capital punishment and abortion? Why do you think this debate is so controversial in our culture? (We will revisit this serious subject in Chapter 23, question 3.)

3. As Lieutenant Gray and the beleaguered survivors of the *Echo* sought salvation on the shores of Dugi Otok, they hoped to spot a friendly vessel to take them to British-controlled Malta. Their patience seemed to be rewarded when the *Paladin* was spotted. Some of the crew rushed to the water, trying to signal the ship only to be told by Gray to take cover. Wilson said, "But sir, it could be our savior!" to which the captain replied, "And it also could be an enemy!" They realized that even though it was the *Paladin*, it was now under enemy control. As a Christian, we may run into Christian leaders who seem to be great teachers, but upon closer inspection, they end up being false prophets. How can we know?

Matthew 7:15-20 TPT "Constantly be on your guard against phony prophets. They come disguised as lambs, appearing to be genuine, but on the inside they are like wild, ravenous wolves! You can spot them by their actions, for the fruits of their character will be obvious. You won't find sweet grapes hanging on a thorn bush, and you'll never pick good fruit from a tumbleweed. So if the tree is good, it will produce good fruit; but if the tree is bad, it will bear only rotten fruit and it deserves to be cut down and burned. Look at the obvious fruit of their lives and ministries, *and then you'll know whether they are true or false.*"

How can we keep ourselves from being fooled by such charlatans?

How to Spot a False Prophet - David Jeremiah Blog



Think Above the Box: Can you name any false teachers in our culture? What were some signs that they were not preaching the Truth? Was it in their beliefs, finances, lifestyle, etc.? How can you discern when someone is teaching falsehoods about God? Like the marooned sailors on the beach, why do people run to these guys (and gals?)

REAL LIFE: "...I want to post the moment I met Ron on Zoom and heard his story that would eventually inspire the song "Wonderful Life". I was planning on encouraging Ron that day, but Ron ended up encouraging me. Even while

battling such a devastating disease [Lou Gehring's disease], he found peace in knowing that this life wasn't his final destination – it was just the airport."

- Matthew West

Rom 12:12 AMP Rejoice *and* exult in hope; be steadfast and patient in suffering *and* tribulation; be constant in prayer.

John 16:33 ESV "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

James 1:12 NLT God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Matthew West - Wonderful Life (Behind The Story) - YouTube

Listen to the song:

♪ Matthew West - Wonderful Life (Official Director's Cut) - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Romans 1:20 ESV For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Genesis 1:24-25 NLT Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

Roy Comfort has an incredible gift for presenting the gospel to unbelievers on the street. In the video below, he does it again, this time with university students and professors. As the synopsis states, "*A study of the evidence of vestigial organs, natural selection, the fifth digit, the relevance of the stickleback, Darwin's finches and Lenski's bacteria—all under the microscope of the Scientific Method—observable evidence from the minds of experts. Prepare to have your faith shaken.*" Wowza! Can Comfort show them the Light? Watch below and give yourselves **EXTRA CREDIT** due to an almost 35 minute run time:

"Evolution vs. God" (Movie) - Shaking the Foundations of Faith (livingwaters.com)

Guide for Chapter 22

Snakes and Guttersnipes

1. Right in the midst of the Wilder's extremely satisfying shopping spree in Piccadilly, a worthless guttersnipe broke the spell by accosting the couple and begging for a few tuppence. While Lord Wilder had a smidgeon of compassion in him, the *Lady* Wilder displayed mostly disgust, revulsion, impatience, annoyance...shall I go on? While her behavior was merely manifesting the culture and class system of her time, what would Jesus have said to her?

Luke 18:9-14 AMP He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves *and* were confident that they were righteous [posing outwardly as upright and in right standing with God], and who viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple [enclosure] to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood [ostentatiously] and began praying to himself [in a self-righteous way, saying]: 'God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men—swindlers, unjust (dishonest), adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even raise his eyes toward heaven, but was striking his chest [in humility and repentance], saying, 'God, be merciful *and* gracious to me, the [especially wicked] sinner [that I am]!' I tell you, this man went to his home justified [forgiven of the guilt of sin and placed in right standing with God] rather than the other man; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself [forsaking self-righteous pride] will be exalted."

Matthew 23:27 AMPC Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you are like tombs that have been whitewashed, which look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything impure.

Matthew 5:3 ERV Great blessings belong to those who know they are spiritually in need. God's kingdom belongs to them.

"The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in the Temple is rich with spiritual truth. In fact, it contains the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ," says the following post:

What is the meaning of the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector? | GotQuestions.org



Think Above the Box: Have you ever played the part of the Pharisee? How can we keep from becoming so self-righteous? How about the tax collector? Which attitude felt better deep in your heart?

2. Delain's clever street urchin disguise worked perfectly to fool the Wilders. She was so filthy, odiferous and unkempt that they couldn't even determine if she was a girl or boy! "You are so ragged I cannot tell!" spouted the superior woman to the young teen. Did you know that just as the grungy sight of Delain was unbearable to the haughty couple, the self-righteous deeds performed by religious hypocrites are referred to by God as "filthy rags?"

Isaiah 64:6 TLB We are all infected and impure with sin. When we put on our prized robes of righteousness,

we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves we fade, wither, and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away.

But let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater!

"They looked good but were a sham, a literal smokescreen to cover their unbelief and disobedience...The 'righteous deeds' Isaiah has in mind are most likely the perfunctory rituals offered by Israel without sincere faith and without wholehearted obedience."

- Kevin DeYoung

So how do we know if our deeds are dirty or clean? Laundering instructions here:

Filthy Rags or Fully Pleasing? | Crossway Articles



Think Above the Box: Based on the following Scripture, can you name some 'filthy rag' acts that people do under the guise of holiness and spirituality? Do you think that where someone's heart is at the time will determine if their offering pleases or disappoints God?

Matthew 6:1-6 ESV "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

3. As a result of his exasperating conversation with the glum and petulant serpent, Captain Spears, Gorman was able to assemble all the puzzle pieces together regarding the fates of the two British ships, the *Echo* and the *Paladin*. Each thread of information was woven together to form a tapestry of facts and conclusions. In our lives, every event, no matter how small or large, good or bad, could appear to resemble the underside of an elaborate tapestry, full of bumps and hanging strands. Only when we are finally with Jesus, will all the threads come together and we will see the clear "top" side of the picture!

Colossians 2:2-4 TPT I am contending for you that your hearts will be wrapped in the comfort of heaven and woven together into love's fabric. This will give you access to all the riches of God as you experience the revelation of God's great mystery—Christ. For our spiritual wealth is in him, like hidden treasure waiting to be discovered—heaven's wisdom and endless riches of revelation knowledge.

Matthew 25:21 GW His master replied, 'Good job! You're a good and faithful servant! You proved that you

could be trusted with a small amount. I will put you in charge of a large amount. Come and share your master's happiness.'

"We can't possibly look at the pieces of our lives right now and understand the important role that each one of them plays, there are too many holes and the picture isn't clear. But I know that when my journey in this life comes to an end, and that final piece is put into place, I'm going to look back and understand."

- Amy Toohill

We can look at our lives as one giant jigsaw puzzle that won't make total sense until our lives are completed:

The Puzzle of Life (sermonillustrator.org)

REAL LIFE: *"I am not the man I ought to be, I am not the man I wish to be, and I am not the man I hope to be, but by the grace of God, I am not the man I used to be."*

- John Newton

Ephesians 2:8 TPT For it was only through this wonderful grace that we believed in him. Nothing we did could ever earn this salvation, for it was the gracious gift from God that brought us to Christ!

Grace is unmerited favor that God gives to us along with His love and mercy. The man quoted above started out life much like Jonathan as an 11-year-old boy working on a ship, but unlike *our* midshipman, he chose the way of sin and debauchery for much of his young life. In fact, you could consider him Jonathan's evil twin! Watch the incredible story of how he was saved by God's *Amazing Grace*:

"How many times have you heard the hymn "Amazing Grace?" It's the most popular song in history, sung over 10 million times each year. Ever wondered where it came from? Hear the incredible story in our program, "The Slave Trader – Amazing Grace." It was written by a notorious blasphemer, a rebellious shipman, a slave trader, who later became a church minister, and an abolitionist who fought publicly to end slavery."

- The Incredible Journey

The Slave Trader – Amazing Grace (John Newton) - YouTube

And now for Chris Tomlin's modern rendition of the song performed over 10 million times a year:

♪ Chris Tomlin - Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) - YouTube

EXTRA CREDIT: Watch the movie that goes with this official trailer for Michael Apted's *Amazing Grace*, starring Ioan Gruffudd, Michael Gambon, and Albert Finney:

Amazing Grace movie trailer - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Just as newly converted Newton didn't give up on the legal slave trade right away, many Christians support organizations and politicians that are pro-choice in regards to abortion. Why do you think that is?

APOLO-GET-ITS: Genesis 1:20 ESV And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.”

“Picture yourself relaxing in the floral bouquet of a butterfly garden when suddenly the buzz of a gigantic bee tingles your ears, followed by an explosion of brilliant color. Then, as quickly as it disrupts your peaceful world, the UFO vanishes without a trace. After the shock passes, it dawns on you. You’ve just witnessed one of the greatest shows on earth.”

- Tom Hennigan

Listen/read about one of God’s most amazing flying machines:

Hummingbirds—Avian Acrobats of the Americas | Answers in Genesis

EXTRA CREDIT: From the above post, *“May the complexity and the mystery of the hummingbird be a reminder to all that God exists, that he wishes to be known, and that he offers eternal life to everyone who calls upon the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.”* Watch *Flight: the Genius of Birds* video at the end of the article!

Guide for Chapter 23

Kérata Vátrachos Gunfight

1. In an unorthodox move, Captain Harrison presented two options for his men going forward: return to England or save Jonathan and the crew. His sense of failure in not acting on his earlier suspicions leading up to the present events of the loss of the *Paladin* left him saddled with guilt and remorse. "He had to admit, he didn't feel like a captain anymore." In the midst of this anguish, the young leader appreciated what a blessing and honor it was to command such great men and he was determined to move forward and pursue a rescue mission. In the life of a believer, there are certainly times that we could identify with Harrison and his feelings of dereliction, even coming to the point of not feeling like a *Christian* anymore. Can we fail Jesus? Is there any coming back to Him?

Psalm 37:23-24 ERV The Lord shows us how we should live, and he is pleased when he sees people living that way. If they stumble, they will not fall, because the Lord reaches out to steady them.

John 10:27-28 AMPC The sheep that are My own hear *and* are listening to My voice; and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never lose it *or* perish throughout the ages. [To all eternity they shall never by any means be destroyed.] And no one is able to snatch them out of My hand.

Proverbs 24:16 NLT The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again. But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked.

Thomas Edison once said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." He also asserted, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

"True failure is not even trying to get back up, but just quitting. You could have been so close, but you say it's not going to work. God is always near and if you fall He'll pick you up and dust you off."

- Fritz Chery

25 Powerful Bible Verses About Failure And Success (biblereasons.com)



Think Above the Box: Have you had an experience like Captain Harrison? How did you reconnect with God? Check out the following song by Cory Asbury who stated,

"When you mess up, don't hide and sin. Don't hide in shame. Run to God and give Him back your heart."

🎵 **Cory Asbury ~ The Father's House (lyrics) - YouTube**

2. In preparation for the "borrowing" of Viscount Ragusa's yacht, the crew was dispatched to procure supplies. Sean and two marines were charged with getting fresh water, limes and lemon. After two failed attempts, they were able to purchase a cart and haul back three large barrels of fresh water collected from a stream. Did you know that Jesus' first miracle also involved six large vessels, each holding almost 30 gallons

of water?

John 2:1-11 GW Three days later a wedding took place in the city of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus and his disciples had been invited too. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They're out of wine." Jesus said to her, "Why did you come to me? My time has not yet come." His mother told the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Six stone water jars were there. They were used for Jewish purification rituals. Each jar held 18 to 27 gallons. Jesus told the servers, "Fill the jars with water." The servers filled the jars to the brim. Jesus said to them, "Pour some, and take it to the person in charge." The servers did as they were told. The person in charge tasted the water that had become wine. He didn't know where it had come from, although the servers who had poured the water knew. The person in charge called the groom and said to him, "Everyone serves the best wine first. When people are drunk, the host serves cheap wine. But you have saved the best wine for now." Cana in Galilee was the place where Jesus began to perform miracles. He made his glory public there, and his disciples believed in him.

Just as Sean's first attempt resulted in spoiled water, the second in an insufficient supply, and the third in the freshest water he could have found, Jesus' miracle had the master of ceremonies declaring the last wine the very best!

Why did Jesus choose the wedding at Cana for His first miracle? | GotQuestions.org

3. When the viscount and his gang surprised the British on the pier, Sean was faced with having to actually shoot someone in order to save his captain's life. As Ragusa pointed his pistol at Harrison, the young marine hesitated but pulled the trigger on his musket, killing the viscount instantly and receiving a pistol shot to the thigh for his trouble. Even in his delirium, Sean knew that he had taken a human life and sought absolution from his captain. "But I killed the viscount. In cold blood!" cried Sean. "No, not in cold blood," said Harrison. "In battle!" So, which is it?

Ecclesiastes 3:8 ESV a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

"Throughout the Bible, warfare is presented as a grim reality in a cursed world. There are forces of evil that must be stopped, and bloodshed is sometimes the result. Whether a Christian should serve in the military is a matter of one's own conscience, but killing an armed combatant in the context of warfare is not sinful in itself. There is a time and season for everything, including war:"

- from **What does the Bible say about killing in war? Is killing in war a sin? | GotQuestions.org**



Think Above the Box: After reading the above post, describe a scenario where killing another human being is justifiable in God's eyes.

REAL LIFE: Read the story of Sergeant York, who, as a draftee during World War 1, went from wanting an exemption from combat to becoming the most decorated soldier in American history!

"When I die, I had rather it be said about me that I gave my life toward aiding my fellow man than for it to be said that I became a millionaire through capitalizing on my fame as a fighter. I do

not care to be remembered as a warrior, but as one who helped others to Christ."

- Sgt. Alvin Cullum York

Matthew 5:16 TPT So don't hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others, so that the commendable things you do will shine as light upon them, and then they will give their praise to your Father in heaven."

Like our friend Sean, York learned that killing in war was not murder.

"But on that day, seeing enemy guns killing hundreds of good men, he felt that stopping those guns was, in turn, saving lives."

- Larry Petton

PATRIOTIC TESTIMONY - SGT. YORK, CHRISTIAN SOLDIER - Shared by Dr. Larry Petton - Sermon Illustrations - SermonCentral.com

EXTRA CREDIT: **Matthew 22:19-21** AMPC Show me the money *used* for the tribute. And they brought Him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, Whose likeness and title are these? They said, Caesar's. Then He said to them, Pay therefore to Caesar the things that are due to Caesar, and pay to God the things that are due to God.

Watch the following video on Sergeant Alvin York:

Sergeant Alvin York - Oct. 8th 1918 Medal Of Honor Moment - YouTube

EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: Grab some popcorn, do something old-school and start watching the 1941 movie *Sergeant York*. You won't regret it! Here's the original trailer:

Sergeant York Movie Trailer Re-Release Version - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Wow, classic movies sure are different than what Hollywood puts out today! Discuss your thoughts on this. Were you surprised that the Christian worldview and the quoting of Scripture were presented in the story? This was fairly common in the films of yesteryear. How can Christians have a bigger voice in today's culture in regards to moviemaking?

APOLO-GET-ITS: **1 Corinthians 15:12-14** AMPC But now if Christ (the Messiah) is preached as raised from the dead, how is it that some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not risen; and if Christ has not risen, then our preaching is in vain [it amounts to nothing] and your faith is devoid of truth and is fruitless (without effect, empty, imaginary, and unfounded).

As Christians, we are often bombarded by unbelievers and skeptics about the inability to prove that Jesus really is the Son of God and that the Gospels are true. Gee, wouldn't it be great to have a list of nine ways to know that the Gospel of Christ is true? Well, here it is!

Nine Ways to Know That the Gospel of Christ Is True | Desiring God

Guide for Chapter 24

Turning a Spy

1. As Wilder waited apprehensively for the interrogation to begin, Gorman noted to himself that the man had never been considered by his superiors to be a possible traitor. His record was impressive, although it was common knowledge that his was a “purely ornamental position” holding no real power and “one with no teeth.” Sadly, many Christian churches contain ‘ornamental believers’ who do all the right things, but never really follow Jesus! They could be referred to as CINOs (Christian in Name Only.)

Matthew 7:20-23 TLB “Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit produced. Not all who sound religious are really godly people. They may refer to me as ‘Lord,’ but still won’t get to heaven. For the decisive question is whether they obey my Father in heaven. At the Judgment many will tell me, ‘Lord, Lord, we told others about you and used your name to cast out demons and to do many other great miracles.’ But I will reply, ‘You have never been mine. Go away, for your deeds are evil.’”

Revelation 3:1 TPT Write the following to the messenger of the congregation in Sardis, for these are the words of the one who holds the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know all that you do and I know that you have a reputation for being really “alive,” but you’re actually dead!

“Those who are Christians in name only will try to blend in with other Christians (at least when it is convenient or advantageous for them to do so). They will make the claim to be Christians, though we know that it is possible to claim the proper name, but in reality be spiritually dead.”

- Andy Sochor

Learn how to spot fake Christians and how to avoid becoming one:

Christians In Name Only - Plain Bible Teaching



Think Above the Box: 2 Corinthians 13:5 GW Examine yourselves to see whether you are still in the Christian faith. Test yourselves! Don’t you recognize that you are people in whom Jesus Christ lives? Could it be that you’re failing the test?

So, how about it? Did you pass?

2. Through the course of Wilder’s cross-examination, it was slowly becoming apparent to the poor man that he had been deceived, used, betrayed and double crossed by Orvislat and to make matters worse, by his own wife, Lady Wilder! It was so obvious that even Delain felt some pity towards him. The feelings going through Wilder’s head must have been immense. How can someone deal with betrayal without going insane?

Psalms 55:20-23 AMPC [My companion] has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; he has broken *and* profaned his agreement [of friendship and loyalty]. The words of his mouth were smoother than cream *or* butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and He will sustain you; He will never

allow the [consistently] righteous to be moved (made to slip, fall, or fail). But You, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in, lean on, *and* confidently rely on You.

"We overcome the heartache it causes by giving our pain to God."

- from **How can I heal from the pain of betrayal? (compellingtruth.org)**



Think Above the Box: An interesting point made in the article above is that God Himself was betrayed by mankind (His creation.) *"Instead of fellowshiping with Him, we sinned against Him, and He had to redeem us."* This gave us a model to use when we are betrayed by others. *"When we forgive someone, we are really giving ourselves a gift. Especially when people intentionally inflict pain on us, our withholding of forgiveness hurts us more than it does them. To forgive someone is to give up our right to vengeance."* Stir and discuss!

REAL LIFE: At the end of this chapter, we see the hapless Lord Wilder enthusiastically joining Gorman and his team in plotting how to right the wrongs that had been enabled by treachery and duplicity. He had completely switched sides upon learning the truth. In a similar way, Mitsuo Fuchida, the man who led Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, switched from thoughts of hatred and revenge to those of Jesus, forgiveness and evangelism:

Luke 23:34 ESV And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do..."

"Fuchida died on May 30, 1976. His biographers write of him, 'Undoubtedly, Fuchida would have considered his whole life worthwhile if he had recruited just one soul for Christ. And he counted his converts in the hundreds.' He had gone from being a vital part of Japan's attack on the United States to a vital part of God's offensive into the hearts and minds of Japanese. To God Alone Be Glory."

- David Smith

Baptism by Fire: Pearl Harbor, Hand of God, Mitsuo Fuchida – Providence Foundation

EXTRA CREDIT: Keep scrolling down on the above page to the next article and learn about Chiune Sugihara, a courageous Japanese diplomat in Kaunas, Lithuania during World War 2 who is credited with saving the lives of over 10,000 Jewish people! *"In 1985, shortly before his death, he received Israel's highest award, 'Righteous Among Nations,' which other Gentiles who rescued Jews during the Holocaust have also received, including Oskar Schindler and the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg."*

1 Chronicles 28:20 TLB Then he continued, "Be strong and courageous and get to work. Don't be frightened by the size of the task, for the Lord my God is with you; he will not forsake you. He will see to it that everything is finished correctly."

APOLO-GET-ITS: Science and Scripture - can a Christian believe both? Most modern museums glorify the theory of evolution and mankind's incredible accomplishments and inventions. But how can a coal mine, a German U-505 submarine, the Wright brothers and the command module of Apollo 8 shout *creation* to the

discerning mind? Let's explore some exhibits at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry to find out that, as stated in the video below, *"You don't have to throw away your brain to be a Christian."*

Science and Scripture - Can a Christian Believe Both? | InGrace TV - YouTube

Speaking of inventions...

EXTRA CREDIT for under two minutes of your time - such a deal! Do you know what the first intercity message sent through Samuel Morse's telegraph was? You will if you watch this:

Samuel F. B. Morse - The Inventor of the Telegraph - YouTube

Guide for Chapter 25

The Sea of Marmara

1. After deducing that there were three times more British captives aboard the *Echo* and the *Paladin* than there were Russian captors, Jonathan happily concluded that even though all the weapons were locked up, “an advantage in numbers was an advantage.” This surely makes sense that the chances of overtaking an enemy are greatly increased when your side holds the superior volume of soldiers. But what if your side is entering the battle with 450 to 1 odds against you? It happened to a guy named Gideon from the Old Testament.

Luke 18:27 TPT Jesus responded, “What appears humanly impossible is more than possible with God. For God can do what man cannot.”

Please access and read Judges 6 and 7 from the following link in the Amplified version. Note: you can also check out other versions by clicking the arrow to the right of “(AMP)”

Judges 6-7 AMP - Israel Oppressed by Midian - Then the - Bible Gateway

As stated in the article below by Lloyd Stilley, “Learn this from Gideon: every experience in life is a test. And every trial in the lives of God’s people is tailored to draw us closer to God.”

Sermon on Six Trust Lessons from Gideon | Judges 5-6 (lifeway.com)



Think Above the Box: Looking at the current state of our country and culture, do you think God is ‘shaking’ us up? Have we forgotten Him? Talk it out with some people you know!

2. In the attempt to outrun the two Turkish frigates, Jonathan instinctively took command, dropping all vestiges of Southcott’s stammer and timidity, encouraging his British comrades to fight for their lives. As the Russian captain Aggar observes this behavior, he stated, “That is no powder monkey.” In the heat of battle, the young midshipman’s true identity came through. Just as the Russian captain saw a meek mouse transform into a roaring lion, there once was a Roman centurion and his men who saw something similar in a beaten, bloody prisoner.

Matthew 27:54 ESV When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

“A man who watched Jesus be scourged, who watched his soldiers mock and abuse Him and who probably enjoyed every minute of it, suddenly cries out in terror, realizing that He has killed an innocent man. His cry of terror is also an expression of faith as he confesses his new-found knowledge that Jesus was the Son of God.”

- Tim Challies

Learn more about the centurion’s amazing conversion:

Truly This Was The Son of God | Tim Challies



Think Above the Box: Have you ever witnessed someone's *perceived* nature change before your very eyes, so much so that your opinion of them completely altered? Was it for better or worse? Have you ever been mischaracterized by others, only to show them the *real* you? In regards to Jesus, have you had *your* 'centurion moment' where in your heart you could declare, "truly this is the Son of God?"

3. After the battle, Jenkins suggested to Aggar that Streen and Garvey accompany him and transfer to the damaged *Echo* to make repairs and provide medical assistance, to which the captain agreed. Jonathan happily rested in the fact that his plan to overtake the Russians was working, thanks to Jenkins *seizing the opportune moment* to get himself on the ship to alert the rest of the crew to the scheme.

Ephesians 5:15-16 AMP Therefore see that you walk carefully [living life with honor, purpose, and courage; shunning those who tolerate and enable evil], not as the unwise, but as wise [sensible, intelligent, discerning people], making the very most of your time [on earth, recognizing and taking advantage of each opportunity and using it with wisdom and diligence], because the days are [filled with] evil.

There is a Latin term, *carpe diem* which translates from Latin as *seize the day*. The following movie clip from *Dead Poets Society* captures the sentiment well:

"Carpe diem. Seize the day." - Dead Poets Society - YouTube

"Either we seize the opportunities when they are before us, or we let them pass by, only to live with the sad regrets of what might have been. Perhaps John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker American poet of the nineteenth century, framed it best in his poem entitled 'Maud Muller', 'For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"

- Os Hawkins

Seize Your Opportunities – FaithGateway Store

EXTRA CREDIT: Read/listen to the following quick devotional:

Seize the Day . . . and the Moment (harvest.org)



Think Above the Box: Name a fictional character or real person who seized the moment to honor God. As you are heading towards full adulthood, independence, college, a career, etc., how can you make sure you don't miss any God-given opportunities?

REAL LIFE: If you did the extra credit from Chapter 24's **APOLO-GET-ITS**, you will be pleased to delve deeper into the inventor of the telegraph.

"Samuel Morse revolutionized communication by putting scientific knowledge to work. He did not see any conflict between his scientific knowledge and Christianity—in fact, quite the reverse."
- Ann Lamont

Samuel Morse—the artist who invented the Morse code | Answers in Genesis



Think Above the Box: What hits you most about the following statement from Samuel Morse, *"Education without religion is in danger of substituting wild theories for the simple common sense rules of Christianity."*

APOLO-GET-ITS: There have been many fortune tellers, soothsayers and false prophets throughout the ages that have predicted the future only to be proven wrong most of the time. None of them had a 100 percent accuracy level! But there is Someone who does have that degree of success...

Deuteronomy 18:22 AMPC When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or prove true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

1 John 4:1 GW Dear friends, don't believe all people who say that they have the Spirit. Instead, test them. See whether the spirit they have is from God, because there are many false prophets in the world.

Psalms 119:160 ESV The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Fulfilled prophecy can be a most powerful apologetic!

"The Old Testament prophets went to great lengths to describe the Messiah's life, death, and victorious resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these prophecies in such accurate detail a millennium later that there can be no doubt that He was that promised Messiah."

- Dolores Smyth

What Are the Prophecies about Jesus? His Birth, Death and Resurrection Foretold (christianity.com)

Guide for Chapter 26

The Hunt

1. In breaking the distressing news that their ship-stealing piracy had been uncovered, Lupien apprised his superior of the fourth member of the British spy ring – a dwarfish, diminutive midget with flowing blonde hair. Poor Delain was then described as a “wretched, stunted troll” by Orvislat. What’s wrong with being short? There just so happens to be a very famous height challenged person in the Bible who perhaps would never have had a face to face with Jesus resulting in his eternal salvation if he *wasn’t* knee-high to a grasshopper!

Luke 19:10 NLT For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re athletic, smart, popular, or tall. We all have a need for Jesus.”

- pursueGOD.org

Watch the following video and read the post about a height-challenged tax collector:

Jesus and Zacchaeus | Jesus: The Series - pursueGOD.org

EXTRA CREDIT: Stroll through and contemplate the questions at the end of the above post.

2. Lupien was instructed by Orvislat to bury Frey and Fairchild and to be ready to vanish from sight and meet up with him in Paris. If Orvislat didn’t make the rendezvous, Lupien was to go directly to Kharitonov to brief him on the situation. But Lupien decided that was not going to work for him. “He would take the small fortune he had collected all these years and hide somewhere, far from all this, for the rest of his days.” Sounds like a comfy plan for his future! Jesus cautions us to look at the big picture.

1 Timothy 6:17 GW Tell those who have the riches of this world not to be arrogant and not to place their confidence in anything as uncertain as riches. Instead, they should place their confidence in God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Luke 12:16-21 AMPC Then He told them a parable, saying, The land of a rich man was fertile *and* yielded plentifully. And he considered *and* debated within himself, What shall I do? I have no place [in which] to gather together my harvest. And he said, I will do this: I will pull down my storehouses and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain *or produce* and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many good things laid up, [enough] for many years. Take your ease; eat, drink, *and* enjoy yourself merrily. But God said to him, You fool! This very night they [the messengers of God] will demand your soul of you; and all the things that you have prepared, whose will they be? So it is with the one who continues to lay up *and* hoard possessions for himself and is not rich [in his relation] to God [this is how he fares].

“I work for myself. What I have is mine. You get your own stuff... this is mine.”

- Warren E. Berkley

This phrase from the link referenced below is the philosophy of many people. But is it the best way to really achieve success, happiness and security in this life?

Luke 12:16-21 - A Certain Rich Man (bible.ca)



Think Above the Box: From the above post: *“Here’s the foolishness: You work hard to gain stuff. You have more than you need. You think only of yourself. Then you die, and have nothing.”* Contemplate and discuss!

3. Delain’s disclosure to Miss Barbara Thompson of Lady Wilder’s involvement in stealing ships from the British Navy sounded about as preposterous as telling one of Jesus’ followers that a disciple, who had lived 24/7 with the Son of God for three years and witnessed innumerable miracles, would sell Him out for a lousy thirty pieces of silver. Who could have imagined it? The wife of Lord Wilder did it for the money. So did Judas, but there must have been something more...

“Why did Judas betray Jesus? Because Jesus could not or would not be who Judas wanted Him to be. Judas wandered with Jesus for a good three years and came to the conclusion that a poor itinerant teacher who refused to take political power was not of any significant value to him.”

- compellingtruth.org

What prompted Judas to betray Jesus? How did Judas' betrayal of Jesus unfold? (compellingtruth.org)



Think Above the Box: Many people during Jesus’ ministry followed him for what they could get from Him, not from a love and belief in His divinity. The last paragraph of the above post states it well, *“Countless people today do the same thing. They hear about Jesus’ healing power, or His ability to grant wishes or comfort. Many even respect His teaching. And they learn about His character, His claims, and His crucifixion. But they don’t accept Him as Lord. We are just as guilty as Judas when we use Jesus for our own selfish gain.”* Why do you think that so many today feel that belief in Jesus as Lord is *preposterous*?

REAL LIFE: The link below tells of a guy who actually plotted out his life from age 25 to age 70 (his ancestors’ average lifespan) to study and verify the Old Testament. You could say he was a man with a plan!

“He authored a marvelous book titled, [A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament](#), in which he confidently affirmed ‘we are scientifically certain that we have substantially the same [Old Testament] text that was in the possession of Christ and the apostles and, so far as anybody knows, the same as that written by the original composers of the Old Testament documents.’”

- Larry Wilson

2 Timothy 2:15 ESV Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

PS: He actually completed his quest, with four years to spare, dying at the age of 74!

APOLO-GET-ITS: **Luke 24:44** TPT Then he said to them, “Don’t you remember the words that I spoke to you when I was still with you? I told you that everything written about me would be fulfilled, including all the prophecies from the law of Moses through the Psalms and the writings of the prophets—that they would all find their fulfillment.”

Jesus’ assertion of His divinity sounds great, but how can we know that the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah point to Him?

“It seems impossible, but because of these prophecies, out of billions of people born over thousands of years we are able to pinpoint one person in history as the Messiah.”

- Sean McDowell

Let’s imagine a question-and-answer session with God about this very thing:

Is there Proof for Jesus as Messiah? | Sean McDowell

Guide for Chapter 27

The Torpedo Kérata

1. Harrison spent a hurried five minutes instructing Hudson on how to pilot a ship so he could be freed up to attend to Sean, who was unconscious and losing a lot of blood. He possessed a basic knowledge of how to treat illness and battle wounds from assisting the ships' doctors in the past. Medicine at the time was quite rudimentary compared to the treatment available today! Can you imagine a doctor having only lemon juice and salt at his disposal to bandage a gunshot wound? Now travel back to Biblical times.

Luke 10:33-34 AMP But a Samaritan (foreigner), who was traveling, came upon him; and when he saw him, he was deeply moved with compassion [for him], and went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them* [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

2 Kings 20:7 ERV Then Isaiah said, "Crush figs together and put them on your sore; you will get well." So they took the mixture of figs and put it on Hezekiah's sore place, and he got well.

1 Timothy 5:23 ESV No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

"The Bible is concerned more with spiritual soundness than with physical health. Yet surely the God who created us would understand what we need to be healthy. Certainly He would teach us the most important rules for the bodies He designed."

- from lifehopeandtruth.com

The following post list seven Biblical health recommendations and their modern medical equivalent:

Health Science and the Bible (lifehopeandtruth.com)

EXTRA CREDIT: Read about plants mentioned in the Bible that have medicinal benefits for today:

8 Incredible Medicinal Plants from the Bible - Suzy Cohen, RPh offers natural remedies to help you feel better now!



Think Above the Box: Why do some people have trouble believing that the Creator of the universe would also know how to heal His own creation by using material He made?

2. As his fellow friends and crewmen waited anxiously on the deck above him, Sean's many talents and accomplishments were reviewed as the prospect of his imminent demise was felt by all. The list of the young man's capabilities and achievements read like an introductory speech for an award recipient! Let's go to Hebrews Chapter 11 to see what God says about several ordinary people who let their faith in God and His promises lead them:

Hebrews 11:1-2 AMPC Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope

for, being the proof of things [we] do not see *and* the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]. For by [faith—trust and holy fervor born of faith] the men of old had divine testimony borne to them *and* obtained a good report.

Hebrews 11:4 ESV By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

Hebrews 11:6 ERV Without faith no one can please God. Whoever comes to God must believe that he is real and that he rewards those who sincerely try to find him.

*“And because they had faith and demonstrated that faith by their actions, God used them in mighty ways and, as it says in **Hebrews 11:2**, they received God’s commendation.”*

- Roy McMillan

Time for a little field trip!

A Visit to the Hall of Fame (Faith) – A Worshiper’s Journal (aworshippersjournal.com)

EXTRA CREDIT: Read the entirety of **Hebrews 11**, pick one of the people mentioned and read their Bible story in the Old Testament.

3. The captain thanked God that Sean was asleep so as to not feel his ministrations in extricating any stray fibers embedded in the wound. All of the ship’s men had gathered together to pray for the young marine’s healing. “We’d been prayin’ ‘e would live,” said Welty. “Did we pray ‘ard enough?” Harrison replied, “You did.”

The term *intercessory prayer* comes to mind (praying to God on behalf of someone) which was exactly what the crew was doing for Sean.

Galatians 6:2 NLT Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Hebrews 4:16 GW So we can go confidently to the throne of God’s kindness to receive mercy and find kindness, which will help us at the right time.

Philippians 4:6-7 ESV do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

James 5:16 TLB Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results.

Let’s see what else God has to say about this:

“What a blessing it is that we can pray to our Lord. We don’t have to have a human intercessor – for we have Christ, who is our perfect intercessor. One of the ways that we care for and love one another is by praying for them. Let’s see what the Bible says about praying for others:”

- from **30 Important Bible Verses About Praying For Others (EPIC)**
(biblereasons.com)



Think Above the Box: Read the post above. What do you think of the following statement?

“True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance. People describe intercession by saying, ‘It is putting yourself in someone else’s place.’ That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God’s place; it is having His mind and His perspective.”

- Oswald Chambers

4. Sean questioned the name of the Black Sea and Harrison explained that, “Actually, in ancient Turkey, color was used to describe direction. Black was north, so since it is north of many of the Turkish lands of the Ottoman Empire, it was called North—or Black—Sea.” The use of colors as symbolism is nothing new, even having been used throughout Scripture:

Daniel 7:9 ERV As I was looking, thrones were put in their places, and the Ancient King sat on his throne. His clothes were as white as snow. His hair was as white as wool. His throne was made from fire, and its wheels were made from flames.

Isaiah 1:18 ERV “I, the Lord, am the one speaking to you. Come, let’s discuss this. Even if your sins are as dark as red dye, that stain can be removed and you will be as pure as wool that is as white as snow.”

Exodus 24:10 ESV and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

Esther 8:15 TLB Then Mordecai put on the royal robes of blue and white and the great crown of gold, with an outer cloak of fine linen and purple, and went out from the presence of the king through the city streets filled with shouting people.

The following article asks: “Do colors in the Bible have a symbolic significance that can remind us of God and His plan of redemption? Just like with numbers, the meaning of colors points us to Jesus by symbolizing His Person and His works.”

Colors in the Bible (reasonsforhopejesus.com)

EXTRA CREDIT: Now it’s time to learn about the significance of numbers in God’s Word:

The Meaning of Numbers in the Bible? (reasonsforhopejesus.com)

REAL LIFE: “When I was ten years old, I tried to commit suicide. I had lost my hope. I tried to drown myself...but I couldn’t do it. God had a plan for my life...to give hope to other people...through my story.”

- Nick Vujicic

John 9:1-3 TPT Afterward, as Jesus walked down the street, he noticed a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused this guy’s blindness, his own, or the sin of his parents?” Jesus

answered, "Neither. It happened to him so that you could watch him experience God's miracle."

Isaiah 40:31 NLT But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Watch the testimony of Nick Vujicic, born without arms or legs, and his journey from desperation to God:

Nick Vujicic: Life Without Limbs - CBN.com - YouTube

Now watch Nick's compelling music video, *Something More*, including the following lyrics:

"I know there's something more. I don't wanna die, I don't wanna waste another day or night. I know there's something more than what we're living for. I see it in the stars, I feel it on the shores. I know there's something more. I know there's something more."

♪ Nick Vujicic - Something More (with Lyric) - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Does Nick's story put any troubles you have in perspective? How can you keep God and His promises as the focus through the trials and tribulations of this life?

APOLO-GET-ITS: So, here's a question for you:

"Do you think that it seems reasonably possible that forty men, from varying backgrounds, and scattered across more than a thousand years in time, could have designed some sixty-six metal components, which accidentally came together to form a precision machine that revolutionized the world?"

- Wayne Jackson

Intrigued? Please read on:

The Holy Bible, Inspired of God: A Look at the Evidence | Christian Courier

Guide for Chapter 28

The Black Sea

1. Jonathan watched the sun set from the stern deck of the stolen *Paladin*, mentally tallying events in his life, both past and present. He contemplated what the future might bring. Although he felt very blessed and lucky, the most likely scenario for the rest of his life filled him with grief, sadness and despair. "If it weren't for Jenkins, Garvey and the others, he would simply dive into the water and accept the fate that the sea offered." Thankfully, the remote possibility of seeing his beloved Delain again dashed that suicidal thought and gave him the hope to fight onward for his life. To have *hope* is to trust that something positive will occur. Scripture tells us to always hope in the Lord, no matter what the season:

Psalm 43:5 ERV Why am I so sad? Why am I so upset? I tell myself, "Wait for God's help! You will again have a chance to praise him, your God, the one who will save you."

2 Corinthians 4:17 NLT For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

Jeremiah 29:11 AMP For I know the plans *and* thoughts that I have for you,' says the Lord, 'plans for peace *and* well-being and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Psalm 139:11-12 ESV If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

"All the bitter weary ways / Endless striving day by day / You barely have the strength to pray / In the valley low / And how hard your fight has been / How deep the pain within / Wounds that no one else has seen / Hurts too much to show... He knows, He knows / Every hurt and every sting / He has walked the suffering."

- Jeremy Camp

♪ **Jeremy Camp - He Knows (Lyric Video) - YouTube**

"Are you facing a season of loneliness, grief, depression, anxiety, or even hopelessness? God says no darkness is too dark for Him."

- Sarah Frazer

For a mini-study on hope:

What Does the Bible Say about Hope? Faith in Hard Times (crosswalk.com)



Think Above the Box: Comment on the quote from C. H. Spurgeon in the article above: "Hope itself is like a star – not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity."



Double Think Above the Box: Suicide seemed a convenient option for Jonathan, waiting right over the railing for him. But is “ending it all” really the cure? Read on.

*“Why should you **not** commit suicide? Friend, no matter how bad things are in your life, there is a God of love who is waiting for you to let Him guide you through your tunnel of despair and out into His marvelous light. He is your sure hope. His name is Jesus.”*

- GotQuestions.org

Why should I not commit suicide? | GotQuestions.org

EXTRA CREDIT: Don’t ever think that you can’t do something to save someone. Microwave a bag of kernels, grab a pop and settle in for a short film (I’m not cryin’, you’re cryin!):

Watch The Ride: A Christmas Eve Parable (2012) - Free Movies | Tubi (tubitv.com)

2. In the midst of his melancholic mood, Jonathan continued his watch as the captain approached and inquired if any ships had been sighted. An interesting discussion ensued between the two adversaries, with Aggar reflecting that, “Sailors and soldiers we are, and our lot in life is not dictated by our own desire. Servants of others. All of us serve another, eh?” He was right. Everyone does serve a master whether they realize it or not. It might be money, success, material wealth, a person or group, etc. Any of these can become idols in our lives, putting them ahead of loving and serving God. The big question is this: Is your master God or this world?

Matthew 6:24 AMP No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions, fame, status, or whatever is valued more than the Lord].

Galatians 1:10 NLT Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.

James 4:4 TLB You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband’s enemies. Don’t you realize that making friends with God’s enemies—the evil pleasures of this world—makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God.

1 John 2:15 TPT Don’t set the affections of your heart on this world or in loving the things of the world. The love of the Father and the love of the world are incompatible. For all that the world can offer us—the gratification of our flesh, the allurements of the things of the world, and the obsession with status and importance—none of these things come from the Father but from the world.

*“If we attempt to serve two masters, we will have divided loyalties, and, when the difficulties of discipleship clash with the lure of fleshly pleasure, the magnetic pull of wealth and worldly success will draw us away from Christ (see **2 Timothy 4:10**). The call to godliness goes against*

our sinful nature. Only with the help of the Holy Spirit can we remain devoted to one Master (John 6:44).”

- gotquestions.org

What does it mean that you cannot serve two masters in Matthew 6:24? | GotQuestions.org

Mark 10:43-45 GW “ But that’s not the way it’s going to be among you. Whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant. Whoever wants to be most important among you will be a slave for everyone. It’s the same way with the Son of Man. He didn’t come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people.”

Serving God – Secrets of the Bible Unlocked – Christian Devotional - YouTube

So how *do* we serve the Lord? For those of us who like to have a list to work off of, please see the following link:

How to Serve God Today - What Does it Mean to Serve God

EXTRA CREDIT: Click the link below to see how Christians have put their service to good use!

Stories Archives - What Does it Mean to Serve God



Think Above the Box: Joshua 24:15 GW But if you don’t want to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Even if you choose the gods your ancestors served on the other side of the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live, my family and I will still serve the Lord.

Whom do *you* serve?

3. At the end of Aggar and Jonathan’s heart-to-heart, the captain let the young man know that he was aware of his real identity, “Yes, I know you are no powder monkey. I saw you assume command during the battle. And I saw Jenkins taking orders from you.” He asks for Jonathan’s real name and the young man “stood erect, faced Aggar, and saluted.” Finally able to be his true self again, he declares, “I am Midshipman Jonathan Moore of the HMS *Paladin*, at your service, sir!” Out of sheer necessity, Jonathan had to take on a false persona in order to protect himself and the members of the British crew, but found himself freed to be who he really was once Aggar revealed that he knew the truth. We can also be the true self we were created to be once we become followers of Jesus.

Ephesians 4:22-24 ESV to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:9-10 AMPC Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old (unregenerate) self with its evil practices, and have clothed yourselves with the new [spiritual self], which is [ever in the process of being] renewed *and* remolded into [fuller and more perfect [knowledge upon] knowledge after the image

(the likeness) of Him Who created it.

John 8:32 AMP And you will know the truth [regarding salvation], and the truth will set you free [from the penalty of sin].

Psalm 32:2 NLT Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

"We cannot really be true to ourselves until our selves derive their identity, purpose, and destiny from God."

- Jon Bloom

How do you become true to yourself? Check this post out:

Be True to Yourself | Desiring God



Think Above the Box: Do you feel that you can be your true self around friends and family? The author above, reflecting on God's will for us, states, "He wants to align our inner beings and our outer beings with his being." Why is that so hard for most of us? What can we do about it? Where does the Holy Spirit come in?

REAL LIFE: "Out of all the things I have done to manage my depression over the years, it is the gospel of what Jesus has already done for me that has given me lasting hope. Because the insidious thing about depression and despair is the way they strip away hope. The future is dark and bleak. The silence and isolation is deafening. There seems to be no end in sight. But the gospel gives hope:"

- Christina Fox

John 16:33 TPT And everything I've taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!

Romans 8:38-39 NLT 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. No power in the sky above or in the earth below — indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Learn how Christina worked through her depression through hope in the Gospel:

Hope for the Despairing Heart | Desiring God

APOLO-GET-ITS: The following video helps answer these questions: "Is the Bible reliable? Does it include prophecies about Jesus Christ that have come true? Has it been reliably copied over the centuries? Is the Bible inerrant?" [which means flawless, truthful, unerring and infallible]

The Reliability of the Bible - YouTube

Guide for Chapter 29

The Hunted

1. At the hunt master's signal, the mounted ensemble of riders at the Wilder's estate raced off into Van Patton Wood. The majority of guests chose the easy, "wide and well-maintained" center path, following the fun (and the drink cart!) The minority chose to follow the hunting dogs onto courses that were on the actual fox's trail. The commencement of the fox hunt could be used as an allegory for the spiritual roads people select to take in their lives. Jesus tells us that the path to Him and eternal life is like the narrow ones the hunting dogs and serious riders chose and yet, like a bucking horse, the majority of people refuse to go that way:

Matthew 7:13-14 ERV "You can enter true life only through the narrow gate. The gate to hell is very wide, and there is plenty of room on the road that leads there. Many people go that way. But the gate that opens the way to true life is narrow. And the road that leads there is hard to follow. Only a few people find it."

Job 23:11 GW I have followed his footsteps closely. I have stayed on his path and did not turn from it.

Luke 13:24 AMP "Strive to enter through the narrow door [force aside unbelief and the attractions of sin]; for many, I tell you, will try to enter [by their own works] and will not be able."

Proverbs 16:25 TLB Before every man there lies a wide and pleasant road he thinks is right, but it ends in death.

Romans 8:13 ESV For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

"At the beginning of His ministry, thousands of disciples chased after Jesus Christ as they would a celebrity—but after His death, that number had dwindled to only a few hundred... These disciples quickly learned that being a Christian was no walk in the park. Following in the footsteps of our Savior means more than just giving your heart to the Lord—it often means making difficult choices and doing difficult things."

-Cecil Maranville

Learn more about this proverbial fork in the road:

What Is the Narrow Gate Jesus Talked About? (lifehopeandtruth.com)



Think Above the Box: Why do you think people "follow the drink cart" through this very short life without a thought for eternity?

2. As he struggled in vain with Orvislat's knife at his throat, Lord Wilder accepted that his life was over and after a very rapid life review, concluded that his demise was due to his own choices and blunders. Not to be outdone, Delain also had a near-death experience at the hands of Lady Wilder and a rather large stone. At the final moments before certain death, the young woman "realized that all her adventuring, all her life, all her expectations and dreams, now had no future at all." Both characters were about to die, facing regret and

sorrow over a destiny lost. In a similar manner, your last breath is not the best time to realize you should have put some thought into eternity, although some are blessed to see the light of salvation at their final moment, such as the thief on the cross next to Jesus:

Luke 23:39-43 NLT One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!" But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The author of the following tract, J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), wrote, "I want you to beware of presumption. Do not abuse God's mercy and compassion. Do not continue in sin, I beseech you, and think you can repent, and believe, and be saved, just when you like, when you please, when you will, and when you choose. I would always set before you an open door. I would always say, 'While there is life there is hope.' But if you would be wise, put nothing off that concerns your soul."

Christ and the Two Thieves. (rylequotes.org)

EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: It's *AUTOMATIC* this time as the above link is somewhat longer than usual but well worth your time! Please don't skip this. The soul you save could be your own!

EXTRA EXTRA EXTRA CREDIT: Let's imagine that *you* were the thief on the cross. What events and choices brought you to Calgary? What caused you to go from a hardened atheist to believing that Jesus is Lord and Messiah during the most horrendous last hours of your life?

Watch a short film imagining what it must have been like for the two thieves that ended up as bookends to Jesus on the cross (run time 26:42 min.)

"2,000 years ago, two Jewish prisoners await their fate in a Jerusalem jail cell. One, a lifelong criminal and a rebel against the Roman occupation, is resigned to his death. The other, a lifelong rabbinical student and peacemaker, refuses to accept his fate. As the afternoon progresses, their history is revealed, a history that leads them to a shocking encounter with a mysterious man who changes their lives forever."

- Vision Video

Two Thieves | Short Movie | Srellio Savante | Christopher Maleki | Jonathon Roumie - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Matthew 25:8-13 TPT But the foolish ones were running out of oil, so they said to the five wise ones, "Share your oil with us, because our lamps are going out!" "We can't," they replied. "We don't have enough for all of us. You'll have to go and buy some for yourselves!" While the five girls were out buying oil, the bridegroom appeared. Those who were ready and waiting were escorted inside with him and the wedding party to enjoy the feast. And then the door was locked. Later, the five foolish girls came running up to the door and pleaded, "Lord, Lord, let us come in!" But he called back, "Go away! Do I know you? I can assure you, I don't even know you!" That is

the reason you should always stay awake and be alert, because you don't know the day or hour when the Bridegroom will appear.

Many people live life figuring that they will have plenty of time to consider spiritual things and their coming eternal state, but as Lord Wilder and Delain found out, we don't always get a lot of warning or notice of our impending departure from this world. They were both fortunate to have been saved in the nick of time. Like Lady Wilder and the foolish bridesmaids in Scripture, many are caught by surprise and realize all opportunities are lost. Are *you* ready?

3. After Lady Wilder had pulled Delain off her horse, searching for a stone to kill her with, the sordid details came out about the woman's involvement in the stealing of English ships. Lady Wilder proudly declared that she was a hero, not a traitor and admitted that she doesn't serve the British king, but the Russian tsar. We all serve a king of some sort in this life. Scripture tells us that Jesus is the King of Kings, sovereign over all human leaders. Sounds like He's the guy we should be loyal to!

Micah 5:2 TLB "O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are but a small Judean village, yet you will be the birthplace of my King who is alive from everlasting ages past!"

John 18:36-37 ESV Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Matthew 28:18 AMP Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority (all power of absolute rule) in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

Revelation 19:15-16 TLB In his mouth he held a sharp sword to strike down the nations; he ruled them with an iron grip; and he trod the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. On his robe and thigh was written this title: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

"Fundamentally, the idea of Jesus being King of kings and Lord of lords means that there is no higher authority. His reign over all things is absolute and inviolable."

- gotquestions.org

What does it mean that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords? | GotQuestions.org

"Praise the Father / Praise the Son / Praise the Spirit three in one / God of glory / Majesty / Praise forever to the King of Kings"

For the Gospel in a nutshell, listen to this!

🎵 **King of Kings (Live) - Hillsong Worship - YouTube**

Watch the following short video of a sermon given by Dr. S.M. Lockridge, *Seven Way King*:

My King Is - YouTube

That's *my* King. Is He *yours*?

4. Lord Wilder and Delain had to use their wits and any available weapon as self-defense to fight for their lives. The desire to safeguard our bodies from harm is innate in both man and beast. With that idea in mind, isn't it odd that we don't use self-preservation for our very *souls*? Could it be that most of us don't know what we are really up against—eternity in Hell or Heaven?

Matthew 10:28 ERV Don't be afraid of people. They can kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul. The only one you should fear is God, the one who can send the body and the soul to be destroyed in hell.

Ezekiel 18:4 TLB "for all souls are mine to judge—fathers and sons alike—and my rule is this: It is for a man's own sins that he will die."

Mark 8:36 TPT For what use is it to gain all the wealth and power of this world, with everything it could offer you, at the cost of your own life?

Listen and/or read the Colin Smith study below which expounds on the fact that *"Your soul has an endless life. That's why it's so important. It's immortal. It has a beginning, but it has no end."*

Valuing Your Soul | Open the Bible

EXTRA CREDIT: Listen and/or read the rest of the series here:

Saving Your Soul | Open the Bible

Caring for Your Soul | Open the Bible

REAL LIFE: Bishop J. C Ryle, from Question 2 above, was a very prolific writer of gospel tracts and Christian books in the 19th century which are still being published and read today. He is famous for his quotes on the life of believers, such as this, *"Do nothing that you would not like God to see. Say nothing you would not like God to hear. Write nothing you would not like God to read. Go no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, 'Show it to Me.' Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, 'What are you doing?'"*

Read a quick synopsis of his life and don't miss his words of wisdom at the end of the post:

Who was J. C. Ryle? | GotQuestions.org

EXTRA CREDIT: For more inspiring quotations from J.C. Ryle, please access:

J.C. RYLE QUOTES - J.C. Ryle Quotes

APOLO-GET-ITS: A lot of people will tell you that there are many paths to God and Christianity is but one of the many beliefs that will get you there. Apologist Lee Strobel writes, *"Christianity is unique. It cannot be reconciled with any other religion. It backs up its truth claims with the credentials and credibility of Jesus Christ, which cannot be duplicated by any other spiritual leader:"*

Are There Many Paths to God? | Christian Bible Studies (christianitytoday.com)

Guide for Chapter 30

Mutiny and Pity

1. All of Jonathan's preparations for the dual ship mutiny were in place and about to commence when the unexpected arrival of Kharitonov and his ship the *Navarkhia* threw a monkey wrench into his plans. This forced him to make a quick decision on the two options available: cancel the mutiny until a more opportune time or go ahead and execute it. Either choice had the possibility of being successful or ending up with the death of his crew and himself. Everyone will at some time in their life experience dilemmas and unexpected tribulations that can build them up or bring them down. Many people will testify that a severe trial is when they felt closest to God. We aren't naturally drawn to Him when all is rosy, but feel closest to Him when brought deep into the pit of trouble.

Psalm 23:4 ESV Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

James 1:12 AMPC Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who is patient under trial *and* stands up under temptation, for when he has stood the test *and* been approved, he will receive [the victor's] crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him.

1 Peter 5:10 ERV Yes, you will suffer for a short time. But after that, God will make everything right. He will make you strong. He will support you and keep you from falling. He is the God who gives all grace. He chose you to share in his glory in Christ. That glory will continue forever.

1 Peter 1:6-7 TPT May the thought of this cause you to jump for joy, even though lately you've had to put up with the grief of many trials. But these only reveal the sterling core of your faith, which is far more valuable than gold that perishes, for even gold is refined by fire. *Your authentic faith* will result in even more praise, glory, and honor when Jesus the Anointed One is revealed.

"You may never have planned on ending up where you are, but hidden in this trial is a beautiful opportunity to cling to the One who's holding you. He's with you now:"

- biblereasons.com

Unexpected Trials (You Are Not Alone) (biblereasons.com)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever had an experience where you reached out to God from the lowest abyss of despair? Would you say it was the deepest encounter of Him you have ever had? Why do you think people don't reach out to God when all is going great?

2. Captain Aggar and Jonathan's relationship progressed from having a deep discourse on the mutual heartbreaking paths that their lives had taken them down to facing each other in a sword fight to the death. The younger man was able to overcome his much larger foe and at the moment of complete defeat, Aggar asked to be killed, "...my sad life has no hope. I will never see my family again. And I am tired. Tired of it all." Life doesn't get any lower than this. But at what the captain thought was to be his final breath, Jonathan ordered him to escape with his men on the skiff *Alexandria* and to go find his family. What?? Why would

Jonathan extend mercy to such a man as this? Why should any of us give anyone mercy in this dog-eat-dog world? Because God says so!

Matthew 5:7 ESV “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Luke 6:36-37 AMP Be merciful (responsive, compassionate, tender) just as your [heavenly] Father is merciful. Do not judge [others self-righteously], and you will not be judged; do not condemn [others when you are guilty and unrepentant], and you will not be condemned [for your hypocrisy]; pardon [others when they truly repent and change], and you will be pardoned [when you truly repent and change].

James 2:12-13 GW Talk and act as people who are going to be judged by laws that bring freedom. No mercy will be shown to those who show no mercy to others. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

1 Peter 1:3 TPT Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his *fountain of* mercy has given us a new life—we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

When you read that Jonathan showed mercy to Aggar, were you shocked? Likewise, during a *The Lord of the Rings* movie marathon, friends of the author of the article below exclaimed, “*They should have just killed Gollum right there!*” Uh oh! Showing mercy is hard to do:

Vessels of Mercy: God, Grace, and Gollum - Tolkien / The Hobbit (crosswalk.com)

EXTRA CREDIT: Find some time (12 hours or so!) and watch the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy of movies if you haven’t seen them already. Take note of the many times that Frodo shows Gollum mercy and compassion and look for analogies to the Gospel.

3. Even though Aggar had been reprieved of execution, Jonathan had to convince his crushed opponent that he was trying to save his life and to get in the skiff and escape the evil Kharatinov. Due to his *empathy* for the man, the midshipman was able to put all past grievances and attacks by Aggar behind him due to their lives’ shared misery. Jesus, by living a life on earth as a man, can empathize with all of our suffering, not from up on high, but right alongside us in the dark valleys.

Hebrews 4:15 AMP For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize *and* understand our weaknesses *and* temptations, but One who has been tempted [knowing exactly how it feels to be human] in every respect as *we are*, yet without [committing any] sin.

Matthew 9:36 TLB And what pity he felt for the crowds that came, because their problems were so great and they didn’t know what to do or where to go for help. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

Galatians 6:2 GW Help carry each other’s burdens. In this way you will follow Christ’s teachings.

1 Peter 3:8 ERV So all of you should live together in peace. Try to understand each other. Love each other like brothers and sisters. Be kind and humble.

Matthew 7:12 NLT “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”

1 John 3:17 TPT If anyone sees a fellow believer in need and has the means to help him, yet shows no pity and closes his heart against him, how is it even possible that God’s love lives in him?

*“When we look down into someone else’s trench and feel sorrow and sadness, that’s sympathy.
When we jump into that same trench and get dirty, that’s empathy.”*

- Lori Freeland

Why Christians Should Show Less Sympathy and More Empathy (crosswalk.com)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever been able to minister to a hurting person due to the fact that you went through something similar in your life? Has anyone ever helped you get through a trial because they also experienced what you are going through? What do you think of the following quote from the article above?

“Jesus is empathy’s perfect example. He didn’t come to earth to save us as God, detached and gazing down in sympathy and pity. He came as man, born into the trenches, to live and suffer as a human. His empathy makes Him the perfect sacrifice. The perfect bridge between God and us.”

REAL LIFE: *“New York Times #1 Best Selling author, speaker at the president’s National Prayer Breakfast, and frequent guest on CNN, Fox News, and other national media outlets, Eric Metaxas never believed in blind faith. He never expected to be a spokesman for God, that is until he had a dream that changed everything.”*

Eric Metaxas - White Chair Film - I Am Second® - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: Let’s have some fun and solve the following riddle:

Job 40:15-24 GW *“Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you. It eats grass as cattle do. Look at the strength in its back muscles, the power in its stomach muscles. It makes its tail stiff like a cedar. The ligaments of its thighs are intertwined. Its bones are bronze tubes. They are like iron bars. Behemoth is the first of God’s conquests. Its maker approaches it with his sword. The hills bring it food, and all the wild animals play there. It lies down under the lotus plants in a hiding place among reeds and swamps. Poplars by the stream surround it. Though the river flows powerfully against it, it’s not alarmed. It’s confident even when the Jordan rushes against its mouth. Can anyone blind its eyes or pierce its nose with snares?”*

“Job chapter 40 describes ‘Behemoth’ the chief of all of God’s creative works. Could Behemoth be a sauropod dinosaur?”

- **Genesis Apologetics | Folsom, CA**

Behemoth is a fancy word for an awesome creature of immense size and forceful strength. Warning: this post has a very fast-paced video with lots of info. Get ready to hit pause to take it all in!

Behemoth: A Sauropod Dinosaur? | Genesis Apologetics

Guide for Chapter 31

Paladin's Fate

1. As the *Navarkhia* and her two hundred men were rapidly advancing directly towards him, Jonathan had to make another quick decision, resulting in abandoning the *Paladin* and retreating onto the *Echo*, which had much better odds of surviving the onslaught. He pondered in his head the old adage, "One in the hand is worth two in the bush." Now where did that phrase come from? Like many other sayings that you may be familiar with, it is from Scripture. Check out these words of wisdom:

Ecclesiastes 6:9 TLB A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; mere dreaming of nice things is foolish; it's chasing the wind.

Proverbs 1:7-9 ERV Knowledge begins with fear and respect for the Lord, but stubborn fools hate wisdom and refuse to learn. My son, listen to your father when he corrects you, and don't ignore what your mother teaches you. What you learn from your parents will bring you honor and respect, like a crown or a gold medal.

Proverbs 31:9 ERV Stand up for what you know is right, and judge all people fairly. Protect the rights of the poor and those who need help.

Proverbs 19:20 TPT Listen well to wise counsel and be willing to learn from correction so that by the end of your life you'll be known for your wisdom.

Proverbs 28:6 ESV Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.

Wise instructions for living are so important to God that He devoted a whole book of the Bible to it!

"Each proverb is a short statement that uses every day, familiar illustrations to teach moral, ethical or spiritual principles. These principles apply to all human beings, male and female, young and old, in every age and circumstance. The wisdom recorded in this book is true of human beings in general and is universal in its appeal."

- Roy Demarest

Click here for a brief tutorial:

Proverbs (lifehopeandtruth.com)



Think Above the Box: There are, conveniently, 31 chapters in Proverbs. How about reading one per day this month? Not only will you be four weeks older, you will be ever so much wiser!

EXTRA CREDIT: The following post expounds on this statement: *"There are some human tendencies that create pitfalls on the path to our future. Here are five of the most common and dangerous ones."*

Five Foolish Things We Do to Foul Up Our Future (lifehopeandtruth.com)

2. As Jonathan held his bloodied dying friend in his arms, the older man tried to encourage him to press on to return the ship and crew to England. But the young man cried "I need you here, Jenkins! That's an order!" to which he replied, "You don't need anyone, Mister Moore." But is that true, that we don't need anyone?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 GW Two people are better than one because together they have a good reward for their hard work. If one falls, the other can help his friend get up. But how tragic it is for the one who is all alone when he falls. There is no one to help him get up.

Proverbs 18:1 TPT An unfriendly person isolates himself and seems to care only about his own issues. For his contempt of sound judgment makes him a recluse.

Genesis 2:18 ESV Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

"We weren't created to be independent, autonomous, or self-sufficient. We were made to live in a humble, worshipful, and loving dependency upon God and in a loving and humble interdependency with others."

- Paul Tripp

The following blog post discusses how we were made for community:

Don't Go It Alone, God Made Us For Community (christianity.com)



Think Above the Box: Discuss a time when you decided to go it alone. How'd that work out? On the other hand, was there a time when others were there to help see you through a trial?

3. Following the sinking of the *Paladin*, Jonathan ruminated on what would become of his friendship with Harrison and the fact that even his father couldn't save him from being sentenced to hanging by the Admiralty for losing one of the King's ships. "Jonathan, in his depression, actually smiled...The king said I had a favor. I guess I will use it for a pardon, if he is willing." What a relief that epiphany must have been for our young hero. Mercifully for us, God has a 'wild card' for us too!

Psalms 25:11 ESV For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great.

Numbers 14:19 AMP "Please pardon the wickedness *and* guilt of these people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You have forgiven these people, from Egypt even until now."

Isaiah 55:7 AMP Let the wicked leave (behind) his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion (mercy) on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Exodus 34:9 TLB And he said, "If it is true that I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, then please go with

us to the Promised Land; yes, it is an unruly, stubborn people, but pardon our iniquity and our sins, and accept us as your own.”

Micah 7:18 NLT Where is another God like you, who pardons the guilt of the remnant, overlooking the sins of his special people? You will not stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing unfailing love.

Here is a short analogy entitled *The King's Pardon* by Dwight L. Moody:

The King's Pardon (biblehub.com)

“Is there any hope at all? We certainly cannot realistically provide ourselves with even the smallest measure of hope. There is nothing we can do for ourselves. Our pardon must come from another.”

- Jon W. Quinn

Here's his interesting tale about a judge and a felon entitled *Pardon Me!*

Romans 5:6-10 - Pardon Me! (bible.ca)

4. Two trains are traveling towards each other on the same track, one at 40 mph and the other at 60mph...have you ever had to do that dreaded train problem in math class? Looks like Harrison's our man to figure it out! He possessed the "ability to gauge the speed of a sailing ship with almost magical accuracy." This enabled him to successfully calibrate the exact moment to light the fuse aboard the *Kerata* for a successful hit on the *Navarkhia* and for him to jump overboard in order to avoid being engulfed in the explosion. What a life-saving gift he possessed! Do you realize that God has equipped every believer with special talents and gifts to be used in the furtherance of His kingdom and glory?

1 Peter 4:10 NLT God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

Romans 12:6-8 NLT In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

1 Corinthians 7:7 GW I would like everyone to be like me. However, each person has a special gift from God, and these gifts vary from person to person.

“If we accept the premise that an all-powerful God is the creator of all matter and life, it is reasonable to conclude our abilities (even if we are inclined to attribute them to genetics or environment), must ultimately come from the source of genetics and environment: the God who created everything in the first place.”

- Jay Warner Wallace

Go here for some discernment about talents and gifts:

The Difference Between “Natural Talents” and “Spiritual Gifts” | Cold Case Christianity



Think Above the Box: Have you experienced a spiritual gift in your life yet? If so, how would you describe it and how does it differ from a natural talent?

REAL LIFE: Jonathan was able to provide Aggar and his remaining crew a second chance for their lives by allowing them to escape. Read/watch the following account from Dave Eubank, a missionary who has worked in Iraq during the Battle of Mosul and who has stated that, *“the good news in the middle of that whole mess: God doesn’t give up on people. He always gives us second chances.”*

'Not About to Throw Away Our Freedoms': Lessons on Love and Justice from the Missionaries in the Battle of Mosul | CBN News



Think Above the Box: **Ephesians 4:31-32** TLB Stop being mean, bad-tempered, and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ.

Colossians 3:13 TLB Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

1 Peter 3:9 AMPC Never return evil for evil or insult for insult (scolding, tongue-lashing, berating), but on the contrary blessing [praying for their welfare, happiness, and protection, and truly pitying and loving them]. For *know that* to this you have been called, that you may yourselves inherit a blessing [from God—that you may obtain a blessing as heirs, bringing welfare and happiness and protection].

Leviticus 19:18 ERV Forget about the wrong things people do to you. Don’t try to get even. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

What would have been the effect on *Jonathan* of executing a man whose very life and the lives of his family were being held under the thumb of the evil Kharatinov? Do you think it would come back to haunt him? Do you think the statement below reflects Jonathan’s shocking and tenderhearted choice of freeing Aggar and his crew?

“And the only way you can get justice is with love because if someone’s hurt you it’s very natural to be angry and want to crush them. You want revenge. But if it’s wrapped up in hate that will be revenge that will do them no good and worse,” he said. “That hate is not going to stop until it comes back to you. That’s the way Satan operates.”

- Dave Eubank

APOLO-GET-ITS: Isaiah 45:12 TLB I have made the earth and created man upon it. With my hands I have stretched out the heavens and commanded all the vast myriads of stars.

In honor of Captain Harrison's gift for numbers, let's have some fun with math in regards to Alnitak, Alnilam, and Mintaka. Who are Alnitak, Alnilam, and Mintaka, you ask? The following article will enlighten you!

"The three bright blue stars that make up Orion's belt look pretty small up in the night sky. But actually blue stars are some of the most massive and brightest stars in the whole universe. How do so many short-lived stars exist in a universe that is supposedly 13.8 billion years old?"

- Jason Lisle, PH.D.

You may never look at Orion the same again:

[Blue Stars Confirm Recent Creation | The Institute for Creation Research \(icr.org\)](#)

I love a good visual, don't you?

[That's a Fact - Blue Stars on Vimeo](#)

Guide for Chapter 32

Justice and Reward

1. A small crew in the *Echo's* dingy dropped anchor on the island of Kinaliada for a much-needed respite. As Jonathan sat alone with his anxious thoughts by the campfire, "He felt lost, confused; yet he knew that all was his own doing. Could someone complete noble and honorable actions, yet still be wrong?" In Jonathan's heart, he knew that the demolition of the beloved *Paladin* (which could have inevitably resulted in his execution) was necessary to save the crew and himself, but it instilled within him a sense of dread for disappointing his friends and father. He appeared to have lost all hope for himself and his future. The young midshipman was focusing on the loss of a ship, but not on the saving of lives, forgetting to look at the bigger picture of the situation. How does one rise up from such a place of failure and despair, when trying to do good results in massive loss?

"There's no failure, no fall, there's no sin You don't already know, so let the truth be told. Can I really stand here unashamed knowin' that Your love for me won't change? Oh, God if that's really true then let the truth be told."

- Matthew West

Please note that the music video follows the lyrics:

♪ **Truth Be Told Lyrics - Matthew West (christian-songlyrics.net)**

Never fear, God always has a plan for us!

Genesis 50:20 ERV "It is true that you planned to do something bad to me. But really, God was planning good things. God's plan was to use me to save the lives of many people. And that is what happened."

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 AMPC But He said to me, My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and show themselves most effective in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me! So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses; for when I am weak [in human strength], then am I [truly] strong (able, powerful in divine strength).

Psalm 73:26 TPT Lord, so many times I fail; I fall into disgrace. But when I trust in you, I have a strong and glorious presence protecting and anointing me. Forever you're all I need!

Psalm 46:1-3 AMPC God is our Refuge and Strength [mighty and impenetrable to temptation], a very present and well-proved help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains be shaken into the midst of the seas, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling and tumult. *Selah* [pause, and calmly think of that]!

"I know what it's like to fear failure. As a classic over-thinker, I often deliberate over outcomes until I've exhausted my ability to think clearly. Why? Because I don't want to fail. I don't want others to see me in a state of defeat. And more than anything, I don't want to endure the anxiety of recovering from disappointment."

- Nicholas Hemming

Don't ever lose sight of God's love, care and provision:

4 Bible Verses for Finding Comfort in the Face of Failure | Blog.bible



Think Above the Box: Name someone you know of who recovered from what they saw as a failure that resulted in something positive. Have you experienced this in your life? How can we remember to turn to God first?

EXTRA CREDIT: What is a *shingle beach*?

2. After coming to the acceptance that he had made the right decision for his crew's survival and freedom, Jonathan addresses the waves breaking on the shore, "You give me hope, and you take from me as well." Job said something similar about God Himself:

Job 1:20-21 ERV When Job heard this, he got up, tore his clothes, and shaved his head to show his sadness. Then he fell to the ground to bow down before God and said, "When I was born into this world, I was naked and had nothing. When I die and leave this world, I will be naked and have nothing. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Praise the name of the Lord!"

"What we really love and trust aren't truly seen until we are tested by loss."

- Jon Bloom

What God Gives When He Takes Away | Desiring God

Here is the music video referenced in the above post:

"Only know you've been high when you're feeling low / Only hate the road when you're missin' home / Only know you love her when you let her go..."

🎵 **Passenger | Let Her Go (Official Video) - YouTube**

Jonathan faced the morning as a new man, "at peace with his past and future." It is said that man can live without anything in life but hope. "I've read the last page of the Bible. It's all going to turn out all right," said Billy Graham. Gilbert M. Beeken stated, "Other men see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope."

Psalm 42:5 ESV Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation.

"Hope can be lost and found. It can be as tiny as an atom and still pack a powerful punch in the eye of despair. Hope is the gentle tug within the heart of every Christian to comfort us when we are tossed to and fro by trials. Hope is a powerful stimulant for the brokenhearted and dejected especially when we've lost loved ones in death."

- Crystal McDowell

Learn more about how essential hope is:

What Does the Bible Say About Hope? A Christian Study (whatchristianswanttoknow.com)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that there wasn't any hope? Did you keep God in the picture throughout the trial? How were you able to do it? If you forgot Him, what could you do next time to 'keep Him in the loop?'

3. Just as on that calamitous day of battle when the beloved *Paladin* was sacrificed to spare the lives of her crewmen, the horrific death of Jesus on the cross resulted in saving the souls of millions of believers. How can something so awful result in such immense eternal good?

John 3:16 ESV For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

1 Peter 2:24 AMP He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross [willingly offering Himself on it, as on an altar of sacrifice], so that we might die to sin [becoming immune from the penalty and power of sin] and live for righteousness; for by His wounds you [who believe] have been healed.

Isaiah 53:5 ERV But he was being punished for what we did. He was crushed because of our guilt. He took the punishment we deserved, and this brought us peace. We were healed because of his pain.

1 Peter 1:3 TPT Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his *fountain of* mercy has given us a new life—we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

John 11:25 TLB Jesus told her, "I am the one who raises the dead and gives them life again. Anyone who believes in me, even though he dies like anyone else, shall live again."

"Paradoxically, the day that seemed to be the greatest triumph of evil was actually the deathblow in God's gloriously good plan to redeem the world from bondage."

- Justin Holcomb

Intrigued? Find out more about why the day of Jesus' crucifixion is called *Good*:

What's So Good about Good Friday? Bible Story and Meaning (christianity.com)

PS: Don't miss the video halfway through the article! If you did, here's the YouTube link:

8 Holy Week Prayers: Good Friday - YouTube

4. A beleaguered Captain Gray and his intrepid crew limped into Malta after a treacherous journey following a most unceremonious ouster off of their ship at Dugi Otok. They all just wanted to go home. After hearing the amazing story of the *Echo's* survival, the young officer was told that there was a ship available waiting to

take them back to England. Imagine their relief and joy at the news! Believers will also experience something like that but *better* as we enter eternity at the end of our physical lives. Gray and his crew knew all about the earthly homes they were returning to in England, but what can the believer know about the heavenly home we are going to someday?

1 Corinthians 2:9 GW But as Scripture says: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him.”

2 Corinthians 5:1 TLB For we know that when this tent we live in now is taken down—when we die and leave these bodies—we will have wonderful new bodies in heaven, homes that will be ours forevermore, made for us by God himself and not by human hands.

Philippians 3:20-21 NLT But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

“Clouds, harps, feathery angels—according to pop culture, that’s what you’ll find in heaven. But what picture does God’s Word paint for us? In this message, Dr. Stanley clarifies who will be in heaven, what kind of relationships we will have there, and just what we will be doing for all eternity. While we may not know everything this side of glory, the Bible does reveal just enough to whet our appetite for more..”

- from intouch.org

Please listen to Dr. Charles Stanley’s message here:

Life in Our Heavenly Home (intouch.org)



Think Above the Box: Have you ever seriously thought about yourself going home to Heaven? Do you imagine an eternity of wearing a white toga and strumming a harp on a cloud? How boring! Most people put more thought into planning their annual two week summer vacation than where they will be spending eternity. Watch the following Heavenly ‘travel brochure’ for some insight. Looks like a destination you won’t want to miss!

What will HEAVEN BE LIKE according to the BIBLE? - YouTube

5. The story’s happy ending took us to St. Paul’s Cathedral for the wedding of Admiral Nathaniel Moore and Miss Barbara Thompson. The use of such a breathtakingly extraordinary location was a result of Jonathan calling in a favor from the King. The entire wedding party was dressed to the peak of perfection, from crisp military uniforms to beautiful gowns, with the bride resplendent and glowing as she floated through the sunbeams coming through the stained-glass windows towards her soon-to-be husband. The Bible paints a picture of another bridegroom and bride at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb:

Revelation 19:7-9 AMP Let us rejoice and shout for joy! Let us give Him glory *and* honor, for the marriage of the Lamb has come [at last] and His bride (the redeemed) has prepared herself. She has been permitted to dress in fine linen, dazzling white and clean—for the fine linen signifies the righteous acts of

the saints [the ethical conduct, personal integrity, moral courage, and godly character of believers]. Then the angel said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me [further], "These are the true *and* exact words of God."

Isaiah 54:5 TPT For your Maker is your husband; his name is Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies! Your Kinsman-Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel! He has the title *Mighty* God of All the Earth!

John 14:3 NLT When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

Ephesians 5:25-27 TLB And you husbands, show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the Church when he died for her, to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's Word; so that he could give her to himself as a glorious Church without a single spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, being holy and without a single fault.

Revelation 22:17 AMPC The [Holy] Spirit and the bride (the church, the true Christians) say, Come! And let him who is listening say, Come! And let everyone come who is thirsty [who is painfully conscious of his need of those things by which the soul is refreshed, supported, and strengthened]; and whoever [earnestly] desires to do it, let him come, take, appropriate, *and* drink the water of Life without cost.

Every little girl dreams of her wedding day. But to the guys in our audience, did you know that as a believer, you too will be part of the *Bride*? Say what? Now calm down and read this:

Who Is the Bride of Christ in the Bible? (crosswalk.com)



Think Above the Box: From the above post: "I pray that you and I would remain committed and conscious of the REALITY THAT THE BRIDEGROOM IS COMING. I don't know when that day will be, but I can assure you it will happen. Let's stand devoted to our betrothed, so that on the day of his coming there will be much oil in our lamps and we will be ready to meet our bridegroom."

- Clarence L. Haynes Jr.

What do you think about that?

6. Jonathan, Sean and Delain stole away from the wedding reception at Captain Walker's home for a little fresh air and camaraderie. The three friends linked arms and pondered their past and future, with Sean stopping to give a homeless boy a welcome bag of food. They walked onward and savored the precious moments of reunion after so many trials and adventures. Jonathan hugged his friends and said, "For now, we are all together." Delain asked, "But when tomorrow comes?" to which our courageous hero replied, "I have no idea." Do any of us know what comes next? Let's ask God!

James 4:13-15 ESV Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Philippians 4:6-7 ESV Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 3:5-6 ERV Trust the Lord completely, and don't depend on your own knowledge. With every step you take, think about what he wants, and he will help you go the right way.

Psalms 32:8 NLT The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you."

Jeremiah 29:11 GW I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope.

Psalms 37:23-24 AMP The steps of a [good and righteous] man are directed *and* established by the Lord, and He delights in his way [and blesses his path]. When he falls, he will not be hurled down, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand *and* sustains him.

"Jesus guides us in many different ways. Sometimes he makes the next step clear as day. Other times, ... it feels like we're left to muddle through, only to find that Jesus was leading through our muddling."

- Jon Bloom

Read about how a bunch of fishermen dealt with an uncertain future:

When You Aren't Sure What to Do Next | Desiring God

EXTRA CREDIT ('cuz it's poetry): "Resist the allure of self pity, and just take the next step of obedience. We are typically given enough grace just for the next step. Fret not about what lies around the bend. Perform faithfully the next step, and we will make it home safely in the end."

- Ray Van Neste

Read the following blog about a poem "From an Old English Parsonage down by the sea" about how we should "DOE THE NEXTE THYNGE."

Do the Next Thing (thegospelcoalition.org)



Think Above the Box: When contemplating future plans, do you find that you first go to God and His Word for guidance or do you go it alone and then hope for the best?

REAL LIFE: Here's a guy who had a real "What's next?" moment after an almost sure bet turned into a colossal failure.

"I didn't know what my future held. I just knew that I was willing to do whatever it took to provide what God wanted from me even if it was small."

- Dallas Jenkins

Dallas Jenkins (creator of "THE CHOSEN") - THIS IS MY STORY... - YouTube



Think Above the Box: Sometimes what we want in life is not what God wants for us. In the video, Dallas Jenkins states the lessons that he learned, “Joy regardless of happiness, hope regardless of circumstance, being content in wherever God has you as long as you’re presenting the loaves and fish to Him. Bring your loaves and fish, the rest is up to Him.” Sometimes what we want in life is not what God wants for us. Have you ever had to change course after a failure and realized it was a blessing in disguise?

EXTRA CREDIT: Here is the film “*The Shepherd*” that started the Chosen series as mentioned above.

The Chosen Pilot Episode - TTW - YouTube

APOLO-GET-ITS: At Jesus' Crucifixion, the Book of Matthew tells us that there was three hours of darkness and an earthquake. Were these events added to Scripture just for “Hollywood” special effects style dramatics or can they be verified by extra-Biblical sources?

Matthew 27:45 TLB That afternoon, the whole earth was covered with darkness for three hours, from noon until three o’clock.

Matthew 27:51 GW Suddenly, the curtain in the temple was split in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split open.

Discover what Thallus, Tertullian, Eusebius and some other toga-wearing dudes (all non-believing writers of the time) had to say about them:

Geological and Historical Evidence for Jesus’ Crucifixion Account – Christian Apologist (christian-apologist.com)

Now let’s explore the Resurrection!

Matthew 28:6 TLB but he isn’t here! For he has come back to life again, just as he said he would. Come in and see where his body was lying...

9 Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus – Moral Apologetics

Scholarly hint: don’t forget to peruse the footnotes!

EXTRA CREDIT: **1 Corinthians 15:3-7** ERV I gave you the message that I received. I told you the most important truths: that Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures say; that he was buried and was raised to life on the third day, as the Scriptures say; and that he appeared to Peter and then to the twelve apostles. After that Christ appeared to more than 500 other believers at the same time. Most of them are still living today, but some have died. Then he appeared to James and later to all the apostles.

Matthew 12:39-40 NLT But Jesus replied, “Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

Since the resurrection is proof of our belief in Jesus, we can't research enough about it! Here's Resurrection apologetics in a nutshell:

Christ's Resurrection: The Cornerstone of Christianity - YouTube

...and for the detail oriented:

Reasoning About the Resurrection of Christ - Apologetics Press

MORE EXTRA CREDIT (and another nutshell!): *“Christians are called to make a rational case for their worldview. This task of Christian apologetics is too important to be left to big textbooks read by few people. Christianity is intellectually strong and can be summarized for ready access and as a means for further study and application. Reason and evidence are available in the defense of Christianity as objectively true, compellingly reasonable, and pertinent to the whole of life.”*

- Douglas Groothuis

Christian Apologetics in a Nutshell - Christian Research Institute (equip.org)

ANOTHER EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: How about showing off and composing a do-it-yourself question in the same style as this study guide? Now that you have completed three Think Above the Box Bible Studies, can *you* view literature through a Biblical lens? Pick your favorite chapter from *Paladin's War* and pull a Biblical concept out of it! Add relevant Scripture, blog posts, videos and maybe even a song or two.

THE LAST EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: Now give me a **REAL LIFE** and an **APOLO-GET-IT!**

What's Next?

Hopefully, you will find yourself automatically viewing secular culture through a Biblical lens. Keep in mind that practice makes perfect and remember that the Lord and His teachings are everywhere if one only knows how to look for them!

Let's let God have the last word with these parting shots (otherwise known as verses!):

Colossians 2:8 NLT Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

Matthew 7:24 TPT "Everyone who hears my teaching and applies it to his life can be compared to a wise man who built his house on an unshakable foundation."

Proverbs 4:5 AMP "Get [skillful and godly] wisdom! Acquire understanding [actively seek spiritual discernment, mature comprehension, and logical interpretation]! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Psalms 119:9 TPT How can a young man stay pure? Only by living in the word of God and walking in its truth.

Romans 12:2 ERV Don't change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but let God change you inside with a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to understand and accept what God wants for you. You will be able to know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.

Please check out www.thinkabovethebox.com for more study guides, blogs, and links to thought-provoking material.

*And please leave us a note on our site about your experience!
We would love to hear your comments!*



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

LIFE IS SHORT. ETERNITY IS FOREVER.

