

I wanted to send this letter along to share with you the "cliff notes" of the entire Bible. Did you ever wonder why there are so many religions in the world? Which begs this question: which one of them is right? They are all fundamentally very different so they all can't be right because of the law of non-contradiction which states that two things that are opposite cannot both be true.

Maybe you are like me and grew up in a church that kept God at a distance, and so that became your definition of Christianity (what I call "churchianity"). I came to Christ somewhat kicking and screaming because I thought that I knew what the Bible teaches, and what Christianity was all about since I went to church as a kid. Unfortunately for me, that left me with some preconceptions simply because I let man define God for me as opposed to allowing God to define Himself to me. Whatever your presuppositions may be, or wherever they may have come from, I hope that you will read this letter while placing them to the side.

I truly became a Christian over 17 years ago when I got on my knees in the bedroom of my condo in Manassas and gave my life over to Jesus Christ. You may be wondering, what the heck does that mean? I hope that you will know by the end of these cliff notes 😊. There is no doubt in my mind that I would not have the marriage that I have, or the peace in my life without Him. I am so glad that I discovered that God is a God of second chances, because if He were not, I would have never had a chance. The thought of a real fresh start and a new beginning in life has radically changed everything for me. In the eyes of God, I am coming up on my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday 😊.

God wants to be part of our lives, and all that we have to do is invite Him to be. One of the gifts that God gave us from birth is a free will—an ability to choose—but how we use our freedom is up to us. God wants so badly to fix whatever may be broken, but you have to give Him the pieces. The following is the message from the Bible that helped change my life and I hope that God's message to the human race does the same for you.

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The first question that you have to ask yourself is: does God really exist? And if it is true that He exists, doesn't it make sense that He would make Himself known to us? Each and every one of us knows in our heart of hearts that there is a God. We all have that sense of God that He placed within each and every one of us. Not only that, but saying that the universe—and you—are nothing more than a cosmic accident would be like claiming that we got Webster's unabridged dictionary from an explosion in a print shop, or that we got a Boeing 747 from a tornado that blitzed through a junk yard.<sup>1</sup> The Bible teaches that we all know that there is a God because He makes Himself known to us in the following three ways:

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<sup>1</sup> Example taken from Dr. Michael Behe's book Darwin's Black Box

### Evidence #1. Creation:

#### Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--His eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

#### Examples of creation:

- A single fertilized egg (zygote), the size of a pinhead, contains chemical instructions that would fill more than 500,000 printed pages. In time, this single fertilized egg divides into the 30 trillion cells that make up the human body, including 12 billion brain cells, which form more than 120 trillion connections.
- "This theory of an expanding universe emanating from a primordial big bang is the explanation of creation held ~~by nearly~~ all scientists, for it best fits what they can actually observe" - *U.S. News and World Report, March*

### Evidence #2. Conscience:

#### Jeremiah 31:33-34

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "

#### Examples of conscience:

- Have you ever noticed that every country in the world had the 10 commandments implemented as laws? The famous Oxford Atheist C.S. Lewis became a believer in God, and eventually a Christian based on the moral law within. In his book The Abolition of Man Lewis demonstrates that various cultures throughout the world and in different times all implemented this moral law within into their governing system.

### Evidence #3. Sense of Eternity:

#### Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

#### Examples of this internal witness:

- Do you sense a void within the deepest part of your being that seems to remain unfilled? This was placed there by your creator and can only be filled by Him.
- Have you ever gone to a funeral and thought "well that is it!" Of course not. The funeral experience, especially when you are there because of someone that you love dearly has died, awakens a persons sensitivity to the reality that we are eternal beings. Often times tragedies can do the same thing.

Religions created by man and for man come from the improper response to the three "lights" that God provides to His creation as evidence of His existence—known as general revelation. The founders of various religions, and individual people, take the natural revelations of God, which prove that He exists, and then say "Well I think that God is \_\_\_\_." So people end up making God in their own image and **declare** who God is instead of **discovering** who God is (I myself was once guilty of this ☹). Think about it! How many times have you heard, or maybe even said it yourself, "Well I think that God is \_\_\_\_." Or "My God is \_\_\_\_." This is declaring God to be whatever you think you want Him to be.

Instead, why not take these ways that God has proven to you that He exists and say "God, I know that you are there; who are you?" Now that is discovering who God is, or as God puts it, "seeking Him with all of your heart." There are six truths to discover.



How does a person discover who God is?

**Truth #1:** God promises that if you truly seek Him you will find Him.

**Proverbs 8:17**

"I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me find Me."

**Jeremiah 29:13-14**

"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD"



**Truth #2:** In fact, when God created you He placed you exactly where He wanted you to be so that you could find Him.

He knew the year that you were going to be born and the exact places where you would live.

**Acts 17:26-27**

"From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."

**Truth #3:** God loves you and He created you to know Him personally and spend eternity with Him.

**John 3:16**

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."



What hinders us from knowing God personally?

**Truth #4:** As we all know human beings are not perfect, or to put it in bible terms, we are sinful.

This imperfection known as sin separates from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love. Did you know that the word 'sin' is an archer's term that means: "to miss the mark"? That mark or bulls eye that we all fall short of is God's perfection. We ALL have a sinful nature that we were born with that causes us to fall short of the mark of perfection. God is Holy and perfect and He cannot relate in a personal way with imperfection. This presents a problem that only God can fix. I have a small example that I like to use to help reveal the fact that we are born with a sinful nature. Here it is...

When we have children do they by nature do the right thing or the wrong thing? For example, do you have to teach a child to be selfish because he or she will share by nature? Or, do you have to teach a child to share because he or she will be selfish by nature? Really think about it. If you have children you know the answer to this one, you have to teach a child to share because he or she by nature will be selfish. Hence, the terrible two's--where did they get that--Yuck! 😞 As we grow, our relationships with ourselves and others help to mold that sinful nature. We all have to admit that we are not perfect. There is nobody on the face of the earth that is sinless or perfect, (what a relief I'm not alone 😊) we all fall short of God's mark. God Himself tells us this...

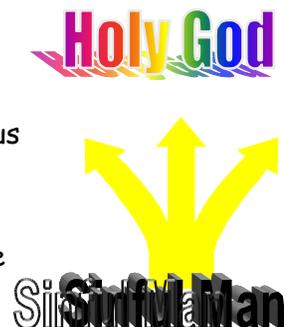
**Romans 3:23-24**

"for ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

**John 1:10**

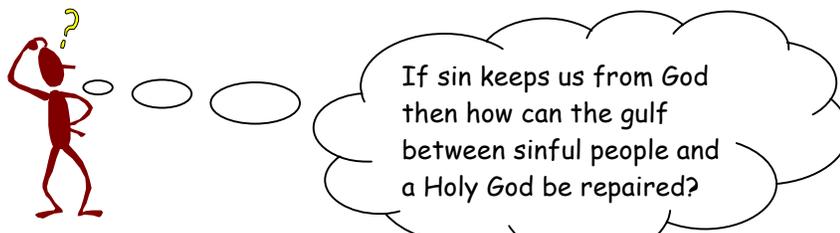
"If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives."

Because of this we continue to wonder through life trying to reach God OUR own way instead of God's way. We frustratingly try to work for God's approval by our own efforts through religious acts of good works. We create God in our own image then begin worshiping God in "our own way". Doesn't it make more sense to worship God His way? Our efforts at times seem right, but the real question becomes, are they right?



**Proverbs 14:12**

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.



The answer to this problem is summed up in one word: **forgiveness**. The forgiveness of God is tough for people to grasp because of how we confuse God's forgiveness with the supposed forgiveness that we experience from other people. The world says that they will forgive you, but they will never forget. We all have experienced this one time or another in our life when we reached out our hand and asked a person's forgiveness, only to have it pushed away. When we ask God to forgive us, He not only **truly** forgives but He **truly** forgets...

### Hebrews 10:17

"Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

### Romans 4:7-8

"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

"Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

An incident that took place several years ago in California illuminates what Jesus did on the cross in order to solve the problem that God had in dealing with the sin of humanity. A young woman received a ticket for speeding and she was taken before the judge. The judge read off the citation and said, "guilty or not guilty?" The woman replied "guilty." So the judge brought down the gavel and fined the woman \$100. Then an amazing thing took place. The judge stood up, took off his robe, walked down in front, took out his billfold, and paid the fine. What's the explanation of this? The judge was her father. He loved his daughter, yet he was a just judge. His daughter had broken the law and he could not say to her, "because I love you so much, I forgive you so you may leave." If he had done that he wouldn't have been a righteous judge, and he wouldn't have upheld the law. He loved his daughter so much that he was willing to take off his judicial robe and come down in front and represent her as her father and pay the fine; thus he remained both JUST and LOVING.

That illustration depicts to some extent what God did for us through Jesus Christ. We sinned. No matter how much God loved us, God had to bring down the gavel and say *death* because He is a righteous and just God. The Bible says that with sin there is a price the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). And yet, being a loving God, He loved us so much that He came down off of His throne in the form of the man Jesus Christ and paid the price for us, which was Christ's death on the cross. (The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us—John 1:14).

At this point many people ask the question, "Why couldn't God just forgive?" Often people fail to realize that wherever there is forgiveness there is a payment. For example, let's say that you come over to my house and break the lamp on my table. You are my friend and I care about you so I say, "don't worry about it. You are my friend and I love you and forgive you." Now usually a person would think, "well that is what God ought to do." Now I have a question, "who pays for the lamp?" The fact is *I do*. There's always a price in forgiveness. Let's say that somebody insults you in front of others and later you

graciously say, "I forgive you." Who bears the price of the insult? You do. This is what God has done. God has said, "I forgive you", but He is willing to pay the price for you Himself on the cross. <sup>2</sup>

You see, in God's eyes the ability to **receive** is very important. Actually, receiving is the first step that we take in establishing our relationship with God. Once a person receives from God, then and only then can that person give to others what they have never been able to give before. God knows that you cannot give what you do not have. For example, you cannot give **true forgiveness** to others until you have received forgiveness yourself. That is because we by nature are unforgiving, but God by nature is forgiving, and He demonstrates that to us by providing us forgiveness freely through the cross. Forgiveness that costs us nothing but costs Him everything. All that we have to do is **receive**. We cannot give unconditional love to another person until we have received unconditional love for ourselves, because, we by nature love "by emotion" (only certain people) and expect "something in return". But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

#### **Romans 5:8**

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

By that act of love we see that God by nature loves with "His emotions & His will" the unlovable, and expects "nothing in return." This type of forgiveness from God can only be received on the road of repentance; furthermore, we are set free from not only the sin itself, but the guilt that comes along with it...

#### **Acts 3:19**

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

We can pour out to others **ONLY** what we allow God to pour into us. Since He is the only source of these qualities, we must come before Him and receive them. You see that is why receiving is so important. Receiving often times is more difficult than giving because receiving admits a need, and most importantly receiving is an on going process. When you have a problem receiving you deny the giver—God or another person—that joy of giving that you yourself enjoy. As you can see, our relationship with God affects **ALL** other relationships in our life. God provides us the ability to **connect** with people that He places in our lives in ways that we never could before.

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<sup>2</sup> The courtroom story and the explanations of forgiveness was taken from the book More Than A Carpenter by: Josh McDowell.

**Truth #5:** Jesus Christ, who is God in human flesh, is God's *only* provision for man's sins.

Jesus lived the perfect life that we could never live, and offers it to us as a free gift. Faith in Him reconciles us to God. He died on the cross in our place to pay our sin debt so that we could have a personal relationship with God. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love, forgiveness, and freedom.

**Acts 4:12**

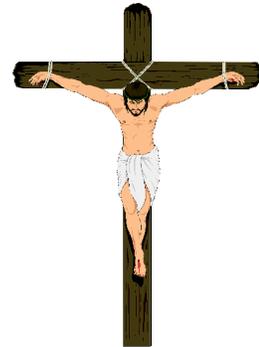
Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

**Romans 6:23**

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**John 14:6-7**

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."



**Truth #6:** We must individually **receive** Jesus Christ as our Savior.

By Receiving Christ we can know God personally and experience true joy that is not shallow and based on life's circumstances. God is standing right now at the door waiting with acceptance in one hand and forgiveness in the other.

**Luke 11:10**

For everyone who asks **receives**; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

The slate is wiped clean by God, and we can start life over again with a renewed spirit from God. Ah, to be spiritually debt free by the grace of God. Here is the biblical definition of grace...

*Grace* - Favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person deserves. Grace is one of the key attributes of God.

**John 1:12**

"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God"

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast."

## 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation "

## John 3:3

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

*New Birth* - Inner spiritual renewal as a result of the power of God in a person's life. The phrase new birth comes from <John 3:3,7>, where Jesus told Nicodemus, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus meant that all people are so sinful in God's eyes that they need to be regenerated (recreated and renewed) by the sovereign activity of God's Spirit <John 3:5-8>. The activity of God's Spirit that regenerates sinful man comes about through faith in Jesus Christ <John 3:10-21>. *Regeneration occurs the moment a person exercises faith in Christ.* At that point, their sins are forgiven and they are born again. The new birth is a decisive, unrepeatable, and irrevocable act of God.



How do I become recreated by God, so that I could have a real fresh start---that second chance in life that I have been searching for that only God can give?

## Romans 10:9-11

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says: "Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame."

This is where faith comes in. If we want the free gift of salvation and eternal life all that we have to do is receive that gift from God by asking Jesus Christ to come into our heart and take control of our lives.

If this prayer speaks to your heart, from this moment on you are a "new creation" and today you are brand new in the eyes of God. Now with God's forgiveness you have the ability to forgive yourself and others—so do it! If there are any questions, or you would like additional information on how to begin your walk with God, please send e-mail to [pete.lackey@mcleanbible.org](mailto:pete.lackey@mcleanbible.org).

**If you prayed this prayer look what happened:**

**(1) *You are a new creation!*** Also, take note of the date so that you can celebrate your spiritual birthday.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

John 1:12-13

12 Yet to all who *received* him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

**(3) *The Holy Spirit of God dwells in you!***

Romans 8:9

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Share this good news with someone that you know will celebrate with you and help you grow in your faith. One of the primary ways to grow is by getting connected to a good Bible believing church.

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

I pray that from this day forward you will not be the same.

Thanks for listening!

Pete Lackey