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Finding a Story to Live By

Christianity
Rediscovered



A DARE BOOKLET

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Christianity Rediscovered

1 The Unfinished Drama

Everybody has a story. One of the most interesting things we found when we came to Canada over twenty years ago was that you could ask anybody, How long has your family been in Canada? and get an interesting answer. Some had emigrated from Europe after the Second World War. Some were descendants of the original New England pilgrims who had emigrated to Canada after the American War of Independence. Some were First Nations, and they had a different kind of story.

Stories like that are important because they make us who we are. We say things like, Our family have always been hard workers; or, Our family always did love a good party. If we had no stories like that, we would have a real problem with our identity: it would be a form of amnesia. The story is told of a mother who was trying to get her son out of bed to go to church on a Sunday morning, and it was getting late. “Give me two good reasons why I should go to church this morning,” he complained. “Well,” she replied, “you’re 38 years old and you’re the priest. Is that good enough?” Our stories tell us who we are and how we should live.

From time to time, however, most of us have a hankering for a bigger story, a story that tells us not just who we are as individuals, or as families, or even as nations, but who we are in the universe. We ponder the big questions of life: Why am I here? What am I supposed to do with my life? How do I know right and wrong? What happens after death? Where is it all going to end? Where is there a story that will tell me this kind of thing?

Sometimes people ask the question: Why would I want to be a Christian? I’m a spiritual person. I’m a good person. I believe in God. I pray sometimes. I just do not feel any need for organised religion. What’s more, I’m very busy and I really do not need any more complications in my life.

So why be a Christian? One answer is that Christianity is precisely the kind of big story that helps us make sense of our lives, know who we are and how we should live. It is a story that children can understand, but it is also a story that can stretch the greatest intellect.

The Christian faith can actually be thought of as a story in six acts:¹

In **Act 1**, God creates an incredibly beautiful world with imagination and intricacy, diversity and vitality, and

love. It is fresh and alive. At the heart of that world are human beings, male and female, made to reflect like a mirror something of the beauty of the Artist who made them, with love and creativity. They live in a dance of perfect harmony with the Creator and with one another and with their environment.

In **Act 2**, however, things go horribly wrong. Human beings try to play God. They behave as though they are the centre of the universe. They treat the world as though *they* were the landlord, whereas of course they are only the tenants. They step out of the choreography of God’s cosmic dance. They get out of step with one another and with the environment – and, most importantly, they get out of step with God. Instead of love being the spirit that weaves the world together, the loudest voices now are often those of self-centredness and anger.

At this point, a lot of artists would simply give up on their work of art and start over. Bill Mason made a lot of nature films for the National Film Board of Canada. His last film, *Waterwalker* (with special music by Bruce Cockburn), features a canoe trip Bill took on the north shore of Lake Superior. At once point, Bill stops and does an oil painting of Cascade Falls on Lake Superior.² (He was a great painter as well as a marvellous film-maker.) For the viewer, it is an amazing scene to watch.

When Bill has finished, however, he stands back from the canvas, and looks at it with a critical eye. Then, to every viewer’s horror, he tears the painting from its easel, and casually drops it into the merrily blazing campfire. To his perfectionist eye, it just was not good enough.

Many artists are like that. Fortunately for us, however, God is not that kind of Artist. God is more patient than Bill Mason! Instead of dumping this fractured and

imperfect world into some kind of cosmic campfire to burn up, God decides to restore his work of art to its original glory and – what’s even better – God invites human beings to co-operate with him and become his apprentices in the project.

God starts with one couple, Abraham and Sarah, and tells them, “Through your descendants I’m going to create a great nation, and their job will be to bring my healing to the whole world.” The story of this nation – the Jews – and how God prepared them for this role is told in the book Christians have traditionally called the Old Testament. This is **Act 3**.

In **Act 4**, God’s restoration project reaches a crucial stage. God writes a part for himself in the drama of human life. It is as if Shakespeare should write himself into the script of *Hamlet* to be one of the characters in his own creation. That way we can see what God is like in a form we can relate to, and we can learn what God’s dreams are for us and for the world. This character in the play we call by the name Jesus.

And there is **Act 6**: the Bible doesn’t tell us a whole lot, but it does give tantalizing glimpses of the end of the story, when Jesus will return, the earth will be restored to its original beauty and more, and God will set everything to rights. J.R.R. Tolkien (author of *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*) made up a new word to describe this. Since it was the opposite of a catastrophe – not so much turning the world upside down as turning it right way up – he called it a “eucatastrophe” – a good catastrophe.³ This is the final act – although, as C.S. Lewis says at the end of the Narnia series, this is “only the beginning of the real story...the beginning of Chapter One of the Great Story which no-one on earth has read.”⁴ But we are jumping ahead.

You may have noticed I missed out **Act 5**. The reason is a simple one: Act 5 has not been written. It is still in the process of being written – today – by every choice we make, every action we take, every word we speak. How come?

Tom Wright puts it like this: suppose a previously unknown play of Shakespeare’s was discovered, but with one act, Act 5, missing. What could you do? One solution would be to get together the world’s most experienced Shakespearian actors, get them to read Acts 1 through 4, and Act 6, till it is second nature to them – and then set them loose to act out the play. When they came to Act 5 they would improvise. If they were going to do that well, they would have to be true to Acts 1 through 4, the characters and the plot would have to be credible, and their improvisation would have to connect with the start of Act 6.

Now, says Wright, that is where we are in relation to the Christian story. God has given us a framework for our lives in Acts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. All the clues for how to perform Act 5 are right there. And it is as if God says to us, Do you want a part in my story? I have created a part specially for you, and I long for you to play it.

This blending of our story into God’s story is illustrated very powerfully in the book (and movie), *The Neverending Story*.⁵ The central character, a young boy called Bastian, is reading a mysterious book called “The Neverending Story.” In the hard-back version of the book, in order to distinguish the never-ending story we are reading from the neverending story Bastian is reading, the parts about Bastian are printed in green, the parts from the book he is reading in red.

In the story he is reading, the beautiful world of Fantastica is being destroyed by a terrible force called The Nothing. The Childlike Princess who rules Fantastica sends the young hero Atreyu to discover what can be done to stop The Nothing.

Bastian identifies strongly with Atreyu. At first, this means little more than that when Atreyu stops to eat, Bastian pulls out his bag lunch and munches on an apple. But then it gets more complicated, and this is where the different colours are useful. Atreyu encounters a hideous monster, Ygramul:

[græn] Ygramul sensed that something was coming toward her. With the speed of lightning, she turned about, confronting Atreyu with an enormous steel-blue face. Her single eye had a vertical pupil, which stared at Atreyu with inconceivable malignancy.

[red] A cry of fear escaped Bastian.

[green] A cry of terror passed through the ravine and echoed from side to side. Ygramul turned her eye to left and right, to see if someone else had arrived, for that sound could not have been made by the boy who stood there as though paralyzed by horror.

[red] Could, she have heard my cry? Bastian wondered in alarm. But that's not possible.⁶

Little by little, Bastian realises that it is in fact possible that he is personally a part of this story, until finally the Childlike Princess appeals to him by name to redeem Fantastica by giving her a new name. He calls it out, and immediately finds himself physically present in Fantastica itself, in the story he is reading. And so, in true fairy story style, the brave little boy saves the beautiful but helpless maiden from a fate worse than from death. From here on till the end of the book when he returns to our world, the whole story is in green.

In *Dead Poets Society*, the Robin Williams character, John Keating, quotes Walt Whitman:

The powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

“What will your verse be?” Keating asks the silent class.⁷ The Christian story is like that. It sounds at first like a story of far-away people in a far-off time. But the more we reflect on the stories, the more we realize the story actually speaks to us and about us, and that we are being summoned from another world to play our part in it. Act 5 is still being written and God is inviting us to contribute our verse.

Among all the Oscars, there is one Hollywood never gives, although I think they should, and that is for best casting director. So much depends on getting the right actors for the right parts. (If you doubt me, imagine your favourite movie with your least favourite actors in the lead roles. What about *Titanic* with Sean Penn instead of Leonardo DiCaprio, for example?) In the story God is writing about our world, it is as though Jesus is the casting director. Whenever anyone comes and says to him, I'd really like to be a part of God's story, Jesus smiles and says,

You're welcome. I have just the part for you. It'll stretch you, there will be adventures you could never have imagined. Sometimes it will be hard, but it will bring you joy. And it will be the right part for you, the part I dreamed for you before time began and for which you were made.

In the chapters that follow, we will look in more detail at different acts from this story, and see how they relate to today's world where we are invited to live out God's story. Chapter two is an expansion of Act 2, where things go wrong; chapter three explains more about Act 4, where the Artist steps in; chapter four explains in more detail how we join Act 5 of the story; and chapter five gives some ideas for improvising the part we play in the ongoing drama.

2

The Heart of the Problem

People disagree about most things in our world, whether it is politics or religion, morality or fashion. But there is one thing on which there is agreement around the world. It does not matter whether you ask an Aboriginal leader in Australia, a black woman bishop in the US, a rice farmer in China, or a fisherman in Newfoundland. They will all agree about this one thing: something is wrong with our world. I do not think you would find anyone anywhere who would say, "What do you mean, something's wrong? The world is perfect just the way it is."

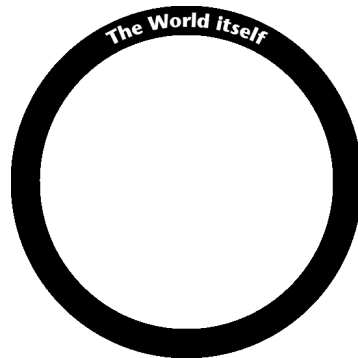
Our awareness of this starts young. There is a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon where Calvin is complaining (as all children do), "It's not fair!" His father replies (as all parents do), "Life's not fair." But then Calvin comes back with a reasonable question: "But why is it never fair in my favour?"⁸ Something is clearly wrong!

There are at least five possible explanations people have offered for why the world is such a crazy mixed-up place:

CIRCLE 1:

The Universe is Just a Bad Place

This is the point-of-view which says the universe is a sick joke, and human beings are the punch line. The problems of the world are really not our fault. If there is a



God, well, maybe we can blame God. And if there is no God, well, we just have to blame the way the world is.

Samuel Beckett wrote a play which expresses this point of view. It is called *Breath*⁹ and it lasts all of thirty-five seconds. The curtain goes up, and the stage is in darkness. You hear the sound of a newborn baby's cry, and then two things happen: you hear a breath being drawn slowly in, and, at the same time, the lights slowly go up on the stage, to reveal...a pile of garbage. Then, the breath is let out, just as slowly, and at the same time (you guessed it) the lights are dimmed, until the stage is in darkness again. There's a second cry, and the play is over.

What is the message? Life is over in a single breath, and at the heart of it is nothing more than a pile of garbage. If Beckett is right, then it is no wonder we have a hard time hanging on to goodness, truth and beauty. The universe is a pile of garbage: what do you expect?

But it is difficult to argue that human beings have nothing to do with the state of the world. Most people would agree that human beings share at least some of the blame.

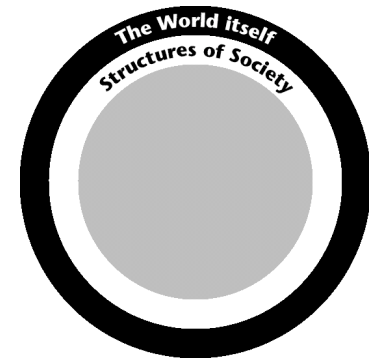
One way to look at this is to say:

CIRCLE 2:

Society Needs to Change

If human beings are part of the problem, maybe we can change the way society functions, and then things will improve.

Maybe what is wrong is a lack of



education. There are programs for educating people out of their racism, for example, and programs to re-educate men who abuse their wives. Could we one day figure out a way to educate ourselves out of all our problems?

Another way to improve the world might be to make every country in the world democratic. Surely if people were involved in choosing their own leaders, that would make the world a better place and solve a lot of our problems? Then dictators of whatever stripe could simply be voted out of office. Unfortunately, of course, even democracies have their shootings, their racism, their corruption in high places, just as much as dictatorships do. Democracy is hardly a panacea.

These solutions, though worthwhile in themselves, do not go far enough. For one thing, they tend to blame other people: *I'm OK, it's they who are the problem.* If only *they* would be more like *us*. Other voices (including Christian ones) would say that *nobody* is innocent in the problems of the world. We are all implicated. It can be an easy way out to blame society. Calvin tries this excuse:

I've concluded that nothing bad I do is my fault... Being young and impressionable, I'm the helpless victim of countless bad influences... I take no responsibility for my behaviour. I'm an innocent pawn! It's society's fault.

His father, however, is not impressed: "Then you need to build more character. Go shovel the walk."¹⁰ We cannot just blame "society." Maybe then:

CIRCLE 3:

Human Nature is the Problem

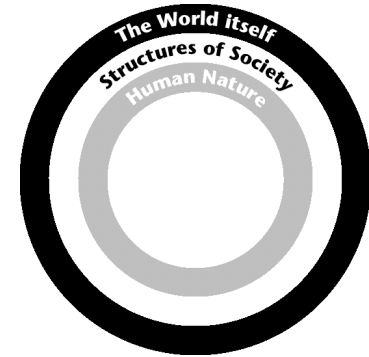
Victor Hugo, who wrote *Les Miserables*, believed this. He put it this way: "The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart." Canadian novelist Timothy Findley has a fascinating paragraph in his book, *Famous Last Words*, saying

the same thing in different words. The novel is set in the Second World War, and Findley comments like this on those who collaborated with the Nazis:

*"We should never have done these things," they will say, "were it not that men like...Mussolini, Dr. Goebbels and Hitler, drove us to them. Otherwise, we should have stayed home by our quiet hearths and dandled our children on our knees and lived out lives of usefulness and peace." Missing the fact entirely that what they were responding to were the whispers of chaos, fire and anger in themselves.*¹¹

This is strong language. Nazis are part of our cultural mythology, the ultimate symbol of evil, yet Findley dares to say that Nazi evil was not caused by the nature of the universe, nor by the structures of society, nor just by a few evil individuals, but by something present, latent, inside human nature. That's heavy.

The trouble is, once we start blaming human nature, the problem begins to become rather personal. Calvin discovers this for himself. He complains to Hobbes, "People are so self-centred. The world would be a better place if people would stop thinking about themselves and focus on others for a change." Hobbes responds with apparent innocence: "Gee, I wonder who that might apply to?" And Calvin walks straight into the trap, saying: "Me! Everyone should focus more on me!"¹² If the problem is human nature, since I am human too, that makes me a part of the problem. So perhaps:



CIRCLE 4: There's Something Wrong With Me

There was once a correspondence in *The Times* newspaper of London, on this topic of what is wrong with the world. Various famous and learned writers voiced their opinions. The last letter was also the shortest, and it brought the correspondence to an end. It was from G.K. Chesterton, the Catholic journalist. His letter simply said:

Dear Sir:

What is wrong with the world? I am.

Yours sincerely,

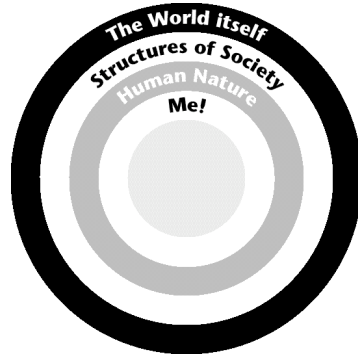
G.K. Chesterton

Yet this diagnosis is very radical. If we are the problem, if each one of us contributes to what is wrong with the world, what can we do to help ourselves? Who is left to do anything about it?

That leaves the last circle, and it is specifically a spiritual one. If we ask what exactly it is that is the problem with me, the answer as Christians understand it concerns:

CIRCLE 5: My Spirituality: I Am Out of Step with God

This view says that the world is in a mess because we have made ourselves the centre of the world, instead of giving God God's rightful place at the centre. Calvin epitomizes the problem in a class assignment, which begins, "Our country was



founded a very long time ago, roughly around 200 BC." The teacher expostulates: "200 BC?" Calvin responds calmly, "Before Calvin. *That's* what's important."¹³

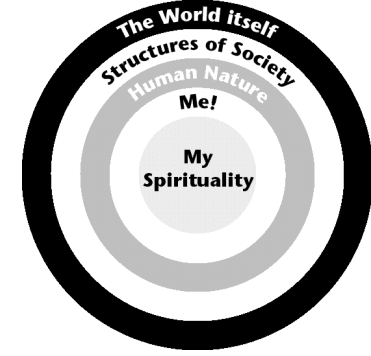
It is as though the human race is like an orchestra, capable of the most marvelous music when we follow the conductor. Occasionally we still hear snatches of gorgeous melody or a few moments of rich and mysterious harmony, but more often it sounds chaotic. The problem is that we no longer bother to follow God the conductor: we each play our instrument as seems right to us.

Frederick Nietzsche was an atheist, but he understood clearly the consequences of turning one's back on God. In his *Parable of the Madman*, he writes:

"What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now?"¹⁴

Nietzsche sees that we are like planets, designed to revolve around God our sun, who gives us our light and heat. But, says Nietzsche, we have unchained ourselves from that orbit, and made ourselves free – but as we move away from the sun, we move also further and further away from the only true source of heat and light. It is a powerful image.

Jesus told a story which makes the same point as Nietzsche, but using a different metaphor. Jesus' story also has a different ending: he doesn't just explain the problem, he also tells us what we can do about it:



There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no-one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death? I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son: make me like one of your hired men.'

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him: he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son..." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and let's kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.¹⁵

Jesus is saying that as a race and as individuals we have turned our backs on God and left our spiritual home. That is the heart of our problem. We have gone our own way, done our own thing. We have ignored God's norms and direction for our lives.

The only way to cure a disease is by dealing with what caused it in the first place. For the cure of our spiritual sickness, like the boy in the story, we need to come to our sens-

es, return to our Creator, and say we are sorry. And the good news is that, in spite of all we have done, before the speech is even out of our mouths, God is delighted to take us back and throws a great party to celebrate.

Even in human terms, that kind of love is rare, and that kind of forgiveness is difficult to receive. Calvin knows what that is like. One day, he and Hobbes let the family car roll down the drive, across the road and into the ditch on the far side. They decide the only sensible response is to run away from home, and hide up a tree out of fear of Calvin's mother. When she comes after them, however, she is simply relieved that no-one was hurt. Calvin, understandably, refuses to believe they are forgiven until he actually hears her say she loves them!¹⁶

With Calvin, what he has done is less awful than he thinks. With us, our turning away from the Creator is much greater than we think. Yet God still comes after us, willing to absorb the pain and the insult of our rejection. The only question for us, as for Calvin, is whether we are willing to come down from our tree and come home to God.

Is that the end of the story? No. Christianity is sometimes accused of being concerned only with individual salvation: all that matters is this central thing of getting right with God. But it is not as simple as that. Once we are reconciled to our Creator, ripples begin to spread out from that central event. The Christian claim is that the impact of returning to God affects every part of life – our relationship with others, and even with the structures of society itself.

In the first free election in South Africa in 1994, for instance, there was a point at which the whole future of democracy in South Africa appeared to be in jeopardy because the Zulus were refusing to participate in the election. Christians in Durban, however, organised a peace rally.

Thousands of Christians, black and white, came from miles around, many on foot, to take part. In the VIP lounge at the stadium, Zulu Chief Buthelezi finally agreed to take part, and the election went ahead.

That sort of thing always happens, not necessarily on such a dramatic scale, of course, when those who have been reconciled to God look for reconciliation with others, and, through that, begin to bring about a change in society itself. So this faith is not a self-seeking, narcissistic kind of faith: it has radical healing potential for the world at large.

3

What's so Special about Jesus?

In the 1960s, lots of people liked Jesus but did not believe in God. Jesus was seen as an anti-authoritarian, long-haired rebel, while God was an elderly authority figure. You can see why people in the '60s might have reacted the way they did! Now, however, the case seems to have been reversed. Everybody believes in God but a lot of people ask, What's special about Jesus? Why do I need Jesus? Jesus just complicates things. God, after all, is a nice vague word, and can mean whatever you want, whereas Jesus is very specific: a particular man in a particular place, at a particular time in history, saying some particularly awkward things. In a world of no-name-brand spirituality, Jesus sticks out like a sore thumb.

So, in thinking about Christian spirituality, it is important to ask the question: What is so special about Jesus? In the history of Christian faith, three things about Jesus have consistently been singled out as making him "special," whichever branch of Christianity you look at. The first is to do with:

1. Jesus' Life

As the first Christians reflected on the life of this strange, intriguing, compelling man, they wrestled with who exactly on earth he was. And as they tried to account for everything they had seen him do and heard him say, they found themselves pressed to a conclusion that seemed unthinkable, a reality that was scary and overwhelming and yet irresistible, a concept for which they really did not have the right words in their theological dictionaries. Yet what alternative did they have but to try and say it? So they gulped and said things like:

- **"Jesus perfectly mirrors God and is stamped with God's nature."**¹⁷

There are two pictures here. One is that of the mirror: the writer almost seems to be suggesting that if God stood in front of a mirror, what God would see reflected back is the face of Jesus. The second is that of a stamp – like the face stamped on a coin: the die has the face of the queen on it, and the coin has exactly the same face of the queen on it. Well, says the writer, God and Jesus are like that.

Another writer says this:

- **"Jesus had equal status with God... When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, becoming human!"**¹⁸

Remember that these writers are Jewish and that they believed passionately in one God and only one God. But their experience of Jesus led them to rethink what it meant to say there is one God.

Think of it like this. Imagine a Calvin and Hobbes strip where the two of them are arguing about how they came into

being. One (and in my imagination it is Calvin) believes they were created by a great invisible Cartoonist and the other (Hobbes is generally the more cynical one) thinks they simply happened through inkblots coming together by chance on a page. They find it impossible to decide for sure.

Bill Watterson, the cartoonist, listens to this argument, and decides to help them out. But how can he communicate with these characters who exist in two dimensions, and who talk in bubbles coming out of their heads? He lives on a totally different level of existence which they could never understand.

Then he hits on a plan. He creates a new cartoon character, and draws him into the strip. His name is Bill Watterson. He exists in two dimensions, just like Calvin and Hobbes, and he communicates through speech-bubbles. And this cartoon character says to Calvin and Hobbes all the things the “real” Bill Watterson would want to say; and he behaves towards them in the way Bill Watterson behaves.

This means that Calvin and Hobbes can get to know their creator in a way that is real even though it is limited – and, of course, they can decide whether or not they want to relate to him.

Christians believe that this is precisely what God has done. Our understanding of God is limited because of course God is far more complicated than we could figure out for ourselves. But God has written himself into the script of the cartoon strip we call human life, and said those things God wanted to say, and shown his character by the things he did, so that we could understand something of what God is like, and, of course, choose whether or not we want to relate to the Creator. And as Christians understand it, when God did that, the name he was called by was Jesus.

So Jesus shows us what God is like in a way that no-one else has ever done. This is the first reason Jesus is special. We are

not left to puzzle over what God is like, nor is it left for each individual to create their own personal understanding of God. God has shown us his character, his personality, in terms we can understand and relate to.

2. The Death of Jesus

I own an 800-page biography of US President John F. Kennedy. In spite of the controversy surrounding Kennedy’s death, only ten of those 800 pages are taken up with talking about his death.¹⁹ I also have a classic biography of Muhammad, founder of Islam. It has 250 pages, of which six are devoted to his last year, and one to his death.²⁰ Not that this is particularly strange: after all, surely what is important for us to read about is what people do in their lives, not their deaths? In the earliest biographies of Jesus (the so-called Four Gospels), however, the story of Jesus’ death takes up no less than one-third of the pages.

What is so unique about the death of Jesus that these writers think it is worth all that ink? Classic Christian spirituality over the centuries has used shorthand explanations for this, such as, “Christ died for our sins.” But what on earth does that mean? Novelist A.S. Byatt speaks for many when she says:

I rejected the Atonement on the grounds that I did not need it, or want it, and as far as I could see it had not happened. God had sent his only begotten son into the world to die “for” us but the story did not make it at all clear what “for” meant. Nobody had been benefitted by this death in any way the story made dramatically recognizable.²¹

There is no one simple explanation of the death of Jesus. There are many theories which may help, but none of them is ever going to be adequate.²² Anything important can’t be described in just one way. However, let me offer you an illustration I personally find helpful:

The movie, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*²³ is about a dysfunctional family – a mother, two sons and two daughters. The mother, played by Darlene Cates, has not stirred from the couch in front of the TV for years, and is painfully overweight as a result. The younger son, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, plays a mentally challenged 13 year old whose main joy in life is climbing the water tower in the little town where they live, so that the fire department frequently have to come and rescue him. Finally, however, the police get tired of dealing with him, and decide to lock him in a cell to teach him a lesson.

His mother, Bonnie, decides to do something about it. With great difficulty, she gets up from the couch, calls for her coat, and, for the first time in years, leaves the house. She goes to the police station, and demands, “Give me my son!” with such passion and authority that the police, breaking all regulations, release him into his mother’s care. As they leave, however, Bonnie supported on both sides and walking only with great difficulty, a crowd forms. They stare at her, giggling and whispering behind their hands. One man even takes a photograph. But the mother doesn’t care: she has her son.

Forgiveness is never cheap. Bonnie had a choice. She could have said, Well, he did a stupid thing, he needs to pay for it, it’ll teach him a lesson – all the sorts of things we say when we are concerned for justice. And she would have stayed comfortably at home. But she decided that although she had not done anything wrong – the police were not mad at her, after all – she was willing to go through suffering so that her son didn’t have to suffer, and so she could have him back.

In the same way, we have done wrong. We are like that runaway boy in Jesus’ story. We have hurt God and messed up God’s world. Like Bonnie in the movie, God had a choice: God could have said, Hey, let them suffer, they got themselves into this mess, let them pay for it. That would hardly be unfair. But

God chose the other option: to come after us in person to get us back, even though it meant suffering. And what we see in the crucifixion of Jesus is the suffering God went through in order to be reconciled with us. The pain of Jesus’ death was the pain we caused to God’s love.

There is a very strange thing about Jesus’ story of the runaway son. Although Jesus and the cross on which he died are central to classic Christian belief, Jesus himself does not get a mention in it, and neither does his death. Yet there is a cross in the story: it is just that it is not a visible cross. The cross is there in the heart of the father, who chose not to punish his runaway son but to absorb the pain and keep it inside. That pain in the heart of God is what is made visible in the crucifixion of Jesus. That is at least part of what it means to say “Christ died for our sins.”

3. Jesus’ Resurrection

Jesus died on a Friday – and there seems to be no serious doubt that he was really dead – but by early Sunday morning his followers – terrified, defeated and demoralized by his death, of course – began to say he was alive again, and got to the point where they were even willing to die for their conviction that he was alive.

Now, this was not like people saying Elvis is alive: if Elvis is alive, it is because he never really died.²⁴ Nor is it like people in the 1960s and 70s who said of Che Guevara, the South American freedom fighter, “Che lives” – meaning, his life is still an inspiration to us as it was when he was alive; or maybe that his spirit inspires us.

No, the followers of Jesus were convinced that he had come back to them in a physical form which was recognizable yet mysterious. They said he had conquered death. They said this showed that Jesus was lord over heaven and earth.

Could such a thing be *true*? It depends how you think of the world. If there is no God, then no, probably not. If there is a God who is indifferent to the fate of human beings, probably not. But if there is a good God like the God Jesus taught about, then it would make perfect sense. In fact, what would be really puzzling is if Jesus had not been brought back from death!

Yet even some of the first followers of Jesus doubted, and God has kindly given us lots of evidence to help us with our doubts. In 1930, for instance, a journalist named Frank Morison tried to write a book to show that the resurrection never happened. By the time he had examined the evidence, however, he realized that that book couldn't be written. Instead, he wrote a book setting out the evidence in incredible detail (which, in my humble opinion, makes it a very boring book) called *Who Moved the Stone?* which is still in print,²⁵ and the first chapter of which is called "The Book That Refused to be Written."

Why does this matter? It matters because, if it is true, then the world looks quite different from how it looks if it is not true. For instance, if it is true, then it means God has put his stamp of approval on all that Jesus did and said, and we should sit up and take notice. It also means that when we face death (our own or others') we do not need to be afraid because there is someone available who has overcome death, someone we can trust to take us through it.

What's so special about Jesus? Lots of things, but in particular, his unique life, his death and his resurrection. When my daughter Anna was about six years old, one Sunday morning before church, she said to me, "Daddy, I like Jesus, but I hate church." It can be a helpful distinction. Many people in our society say things like, "I'm really not into organized religion." (Those of us who have hung around churches for any length

of time, of course, might argue that organized religion is a bit of an oxymoron anyway.) That is understandable, but it is a tragedy if they then throw out the baby with the bathwater, and miss out on Jesus just because they do not like church.

The important question for us to consider in figuring out our spirituality is not whether we like church or not, but as Jesus once asked his first followers, "Who do you say that I am?"²⁶

4 The School of Jesus

Whatever you think of political correctness, it has had some good spin-offs. One of them is that we try to call people what they want to be called. That seems to me a matter of simple courtesy. So we no longer call the Inuit "Eskimos" because they call themselves Inuit; we no longer call the First Nations "Indians" because that's not who they are. Personally, since I am from Wales, I am waiting for this fine principle to be applied to the Welsh, since the word "Welsh" is actually an Old English word meaning foreigner, but I am not holding my breath.

By the same token, Christians have not always called themselves Christians. Christian is a label that was stuck on them by people who were not Christians. (In fact the word is only used three times in the whole of the Bible: it doesn't seem to have been that important to them.) The first Christians had another word for themselves which they preferred, which they used far more frequently, and which actually tells you a lot about how they understood Christian faith.

That name by which the first Christians called themselves most often was "disciple." The literal meaning of the word

“disciple” is actually “learner” or “student.” For them, it seems, when they thought of Christian faith, the thing that came to their mind first was not church or services or the ten commandments or being a good citizen...but learning! Which means that for them the church was first and foremost a school, and the Christian life a process of learning.²⁷

That raises some interesting questions. Where is this school? What is it for? What do you learn there? What are the teaching methods? Who are the teachers? Where are classes held? What do you need to do to graduate? And is it true that the graduate programs are out of this world?

The easiest question to answer is: who is the teacher? Many times in the pages of the earliest biographies of Jesus he is called teacher; and a couple of times he calls himself by the same title.

But what is it that he teaches? What is the curriculum in this school Jesus is running? In the 1940s, Dorothy Sayers wrote a series of plays for radio based on the life of Jesus and called *The Man Born to be King*. In one of those plays she puts into the mouth of Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus’ first followers, the sort of thing Mary might have said to Jesus as she recalled the first time she met him:

“Did you know? My friends and I came there that day to mock you. We thought you would be sour and grim, hating all beauty and treating life as an enemy. But when I saw you, I was amazed. You were the only person there who was really alive. The rest of us were going about half-dead – making the gestures of life, pretending to be real people. The life was not with us but with you – intense and shining, like the strong sun when it rises and turns the flames of our candles to pale smoke. And I wept and was ashamed, seeing myself such a thing of trash and tawdry. But when you spoke to me, I felt the flame of the sun in

my heart. I came alive for the first time. And I love life all the more since I have learnt its meaning.”²⁸

Sayers explains elsewhere: “What she sees in Jesus is the Life – the blazing light of living intensely.”

What did Jesus come to teach? He said on one occasion, “I have come so that people might have life and have it in all its fullness!”²⁹ That’s it! Jesus is a teacher of life: he teaches us how to live as God’s people in God’s world in God’s way – and in the friendship of God. That is what people saw in Jesus: it is what gave him that unique quality of being fully alive; it’s what attracted people like Mary to be his followers. They wanted to learn the life that they saw in Jesus.

But then I want to ask: *how* do we learn this kind of life? Let me first describe one way that we do *not* learn it. Some time ago I received in the mail a Bible study guide with a picture of a very formal classroom on the cover: big desk, blackboard, books neatly arranged in the desk, clock on the wall. To be honest, I did not spend a lot of time with it, because it seemed to me the whole image was so deeply wrong. Jesus’ kind of learning never took place in a classroom with a blackboard and a big desk. Jesus’ school is not an academic kind of place. The school of Jesus is not a school for passing on information. (You may know the definition of a lecture as the process whereby the professor’s notes become the student’s notes without passing through the minds of either. Jesus was not into that kind of learning.)

If that is the wrong image for the school of Jesus, then how exactly *do* we learn? Jesus has a specially vivid image for this. He once said:

Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me: for I am gentle and humble in heart,

*and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*³⁰

There in the centre of this saying of Jesus is his offer to be our teacher: “Come... Learn from me.”

He also gives us a powerful image to explain how we learn. He says, “Take my yoke upon you.” Before my family came to Canada twenty-something years ago, I thought I understood this image. Jesus was saying he is the farmer, I am the ox, I submit to his yoke, and as I pull the plough he follows behind and directs me. Right? Probably not. Soon after we came to Canada, we went to one of those living museums where everything is done as it was in the nineteenth century. And I saw there something that completely changed my understanding of Jesus’ words: an ox-cart pulled by two oxen yoked together. We were told that one use of the double yoke was to train young oxen: the farmer would link together an experienced ox and a young ox, and, as they pulled the plough together, the older ox would demonstrate how it was done: the discipline, the patience, the obedience, the stick-to-itiveness.

That is what I believe Jesus is saying by this picture. He is saying, I am already wearing the yoke of being God’s person in God’s world. Come and walk alongside me, share the yoke I’m already carrying, and I will teach you what I know.

What kind of learning would that be? It will be very different according to who we are. But just as in those first days, it may well involve such things as:

- learning to be generous with what we have – perhaps more generous than we feel comfortable with at first;
- learning to express our anger in more constructive ways;
- learning how to forgive;

- learning to come alongside someone at work or at school who is a bit of a misfit;
- Jesus the Teacher may also want to make changes to our career plans, or our retirement plans, or our holiday plans.

The list is endless: the lessons of Jesus’ school are as diverse as the situations people can find themselves in over the course of a week!

If this sounds like a demanding school (and I would be wrong to suggest anything less), there are encouragements here. Jesus says he is a teacher who is gentle and humble. Many of us have had teachers who are not like that: they delighted in showing how clever they were, and in putting down their students’ mistakes. Jesus is the opposite: he is encouraging, nurturing, patient with our mistakes, taking time and trouble with us individually, to help us learn.

Then too he says his yoke is “easy.” For anyone who has been a follower of Jesus more than about 24 hours, that sounds a little strange. Being a Christian is often tough! However, the original biographies of Jesus (from which this saying is taken) were written in Greek, the main language of Jesus’ world, and I am told that the Greek word for “easy” can be equally well translated “well-fitting.” That would mean he is saying, in effect, My yoke is well-fitting.

Actually, we still use the word “easy” this way. If you are looking for a pair of new shoes, you might try a couple of pairs that really do not fit and then you find one that is just right, and you say, “That’s a really easy fit” – meaning, it is comfortable, it is just right for you. This is the sense in which Jesus’ yoke is “easy” – it is well-fitting – not that it is no sweat but that it fits us well. After all, in those days, yokes were made one by one for individual oxen – there was no mass production –

so Jesus is saying in effect, My yoke is made specially for you. It does not mean there will be no work, it does not mean there will be no difficulties – but it will still be the yoke I made for you.

When Jesus first issued this invitation to come to him and learn, he was being quite practical, and his hearers knew it. In my imagination, when he had finished his speech, and the crowds were going home for supper, there were some who did not leave straight away. They pushed through the crowd and came up to Jesus, maybe a little hesitantly, and said something like this, “Jesus, you know what you said about being your student and sharing your yoke? I really think I’d like to do that. Is there an application form to fill out? Do you need my transcripts?” And whoever that person was, whatever they had done, wherever they had been in their spiritual journey, Jesus said, “That’s great. You’re welcome. We’re just going to have supper. Come eat with us and I’ll introduce you to the others.”

In one sense, nothing has changed since that first day: because Jesus came back from death, he is alive for ever and we can speak to him just as if he were present here in the flesh. And the invitation to become his student, to learn how to live as God’s person in God’s world in God’s way, still stands. His invitation, “Come to me,” is just as real today as it was 2,000 years ago. And now just as then he waits to see what we will say.

Let me offer you the sort of thing you may wish to say to Jesus in response to his invitation. If it makes sense to you, you may like to echo these words in your heart or out loud to him.

*Jesus –
Thank you for inviting me to join your school.
Thank you for offering yourself as my Teacher,
and for shaping a yoke just for me.*

*I do want to learn what it means to live
as God’s person in God’s world in God’s way.
Please enroll me as a student in your school.
Teach me to share your yoke
and to be your faithful student day by day.
Amen.*

5 The Long Journey Home

For over two hundred years, most homes in western society would have owned two books. Even if they were not rich, even if they were not highly educated, they would have these two books, and (what’s more) they read them both. One was the Bible and the other was John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, written in about 1676, while Bunyan was in prison in England for his Baptist faith. Building on the idea that life is a journey, Bunyan explores what that image might mean in terms of Christian spirituality – what the journey is all about and how it should be traveled.

I want to leave the image of the school, which we explored in the previous chapter, pick up instead Bunyan’s image of following Jesus as a journey, and unpack some of the richness of the metaphor.

From the Beginning to the End

The Christian journey begins with Christ inviting people to join the journey. He invites everybody, whoever they are, wherever they have been in their lives before. There is a restriction, but it’s an obvious one: to follow Jesus, you have to give up on other roads and to choose this road. The technical terms for that switch of roads are repentance and faith.

“Repentance” is literally changing your mind: “No, I do not want to travel that road any more: I want to follow this one.” And “faith” is not some mystical quality which only religious people have: it means simply trust or commitment. Faith is taking the first step on the new road.

That’s how the journey begins. And the end of the journey? Well, you can call it heaven if you like, though that’s not the way the Bible generally speaks of it. The Bible speaks more often in terms of a city as the goal of the journey, a new Jerusalem; or it speaks of a new heaven and new earth where righteousness lives.³¹ Certainly the end of the journey is knowing God fully, and seeing the king of that city, Jesus, face to face. If we want to know God intimately, that’s what life is all about. If we do not want to know God, of course, heaven would feel remarkably like hell. But that’s another subject.

The journey from here to there is long and often difficult. How can we make it? Since the journey is God’s idea, and God wants us to make it, God has also provided resources to make the journey possible.

Friends for the road

The first and most basic resource is that God provides **traveling companions**. There are times on the journey when you feel alone, there may be times when you actually need to be alone, but the normal mode of travel on this road is in a group. There is safety in the group, there is encouragement, and there are resources.

For example, among the traveling companions, there are some who are great map-readers. We need that. Some are good at first aid, which is important because people get hurt on this journey. Others in the group can light a campfire, and others can create a wonderful meal out of almost nothing. Still others are great at telling stories when you have had your

meal in the evening and you are watching the campfire slowly die down before turning in. In the Bible, these different contributions to the group are called the “spiritual gifts” that we bring to the journey.

Now the Bible doesn’t explore this image of the journey in that much detail, though it is there. However, it does draw attention to the importance of traveling companions in other ways. It says that the Christian community is like a body, with each limb and each organ playing an important part. It says we are like a building in which we are all stones, living stones, bonded together for mutual support to create a beautiful temple. It says we are a family, brothers and sisters together on the road. It says we are like an army, working together to fight evil and injustice and oppression in the world.³²

I think you get the idea. On the Christian journey, we need one another. If you have felt attracted by the idea of being a follower of Jesus, and you are beginning to follow the path, you need to find companions for the road.

Personally, I love getting together with my fellow travelers. There’s friendship, there’s satisfying work, there’s lots of laughter, there’s lively conversation, there’s a warm welcome, often there’s pizza and coffee. We can share our joys and our sorrows. We can pray together and sing together. I know I come away feeling stronger because I have been there. I am encouraged to continue on the Christian journey. Somehow, if we are to keep following Jesus, we need to find companions who will help us to continue on the road.

If you are not sure where to look, talk to someone who has been on the road longer than you, and ask them where they find their traveling community. That is the first resource for the journey and it is a great gift from God.

Evenings around the campfire

The second has to do with evenings on the road. In many ways these are the best time of day. The evening meal is over, coffee is served, and as people are beginning to mellow out, someone starts a song – a song of the road, maybe a very ancient one, sung by travelers for hundreds of years – about the joys and hardships of the road, and about the King and his city – and everybody joins in. Then someone will tell a story of the road – a story of heroes like Abraham and Sarah, of David or Deborah or Paul or Mary Magdalene, or of those magical years when the king was seen in human form walking on the road himself.

Then perhaps a silence falls, and in the deepening darkness, one of the grandmothers of the group lifts her voice and prays to the King – a prayer of thankfulness for the day and for good companions, a prayer for those who have strayed from the road or never yet found it, a prayer for safety and strength and courage for the day ahead. Then perhaps there is another song or two.

The Bible's word for this ritual is **worship**. I do not know your image of worship, but it is basically a time when the Christian community gathers from whatever tasks the members have been doing, and they remind themselves who they are and what they are about. They tell the stories of those who have followed God in previous generations. They sing songs of the faith, and they pray to the King who rules the road.

There is another form of worship on the road. Some groups call it the Mass, some the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion – but it's basically the same thing. That is a special form of meal on the road. In some ways it is just a very simple picnic – no more than bread and wine. But it is special because it is sent direct from the King's table in the new Jerusalem at the end of the road. And there is always a mes-

sage with the picnic: "This is to remind you how much I love you, so much that I died for you. This is food to sustain you for the journey. It may not look like much, but it's a foretaste of what we'll share together when you get here. Love, Jesus." That's why travelers love this meal.

The Book

There is a third resource for the journey, and it's the big Book of stories about the road. If you joined the journey as a child, you probably did not think too much about where you were going. Life was on the road, and that was normal, and you did not stop to think about it. But as you grew, you began to ask questions: Why are we on this road? How do we know which way to turn? Are there other roads worth following? I do not like how difficult it is sometimes. Or even, Couldn't I be the leader sometimes? But how would I know where to lead us?

At some point, the leader of the group says to you, Listen, when we stop for supper tonight, we'll sit together, and I'll show you the Book. And so, that evening, as you sip your coffee, the leader sits by you and opens the Book. It is huge, it is very old, and it is covered in handwritten notes and sketches and diagrams and maps. It tells how the journey began (maybe you hadn't heard that before), and it describes where the journey ends (you knew something about that). It tells the stories of the heroes of faith: how they got on the road, how they slipped off the road, how the King went after them to get them back, sometimes by the scruff of the neck. There are tales of fights with dragons and tales of false friends who misled the travelers.

Some of the old songs you have heard are there in the Book: the upbeat Jazz ones and the sad Country and Western ones and the angry Rap ones and the dignified Classical ones.

There are also the travelers' reflections on the journey: they discuss the dark valley, like the one you went through a few months back; they tell you how to find the lookout points where you can see for miles ahead down the road.

As you look through it, you say to the leader, This Book is wonderful. Could I look at this some more? I want to read some of these stories for myself. And she smiles and says, Somehow I knew you'd say that. Sure you can.

There are no prizes for knowing that the Book is the **Bible**. I do not know how you view the Bible. At one level, however, it is simply the stories of those who have struggled to follow Jesus before us. As we read, we learn from their successes and failures, their battles and their celebrations, their relationships with their fellow travelers, their longing to be home. There is also advice on how to keep on the road, how to live as followers of Jesus when the world around does not even seem to know or to care there is a road.

Because this is so important, followers of Jesus try to read something of the Bible every day, either by themselves or in a group, or by someone teaching it to them. On the days I am at home, my wife and I read the Bible and pray together after we finish breakfast. On the days when I commute in to work, I read the Bible and pray on the commuter train or the bus. It helps keep my feet on the path, it encourages me, sometimes it sobers me and challenges me, and, best of all, it reminds me of the King, King Jesus, whose road it is.

When the going gets tough...

There is another thing I need to tell you about the road, though I think I have implied it already. I want to spell it out because we often miss it, and it is this: The road can be hard, very hard, and sometimes it is difficult to go on. Sometimes the path comes up against a cliff, and the only way forward is

upward, hanging on with your fingers and toes, and you have to shed some of your baggage in order to go on. At other times the path seems to go through endless bog or thick forest, and the sun never shines, and you just get sick of it. But the stories are clear: some days will be like this, some weeks, some months. The Book emphasizes: it will be tough, do not be surprised, do not give up. And you sing the songs, you tell the stories, you carry one another's packs, and you get through.

Under those circumstances, the Book encourages a quality our society doesn't appreciate very much: **obedience**. I realise that the word conjures up pictures of stern policemen, or evil dictators. Obedience suggests losing your individuality and your ability to think for yourself. But it's not necessarily like that.

My son Ben is a jazz trumpeter. After some years of learning trumpet, he got a new teacher, Robert Oades, who happened to be one of the top trumpet players in Canada. And Mr. Oades said, You're doing it all wrong. If you want to develop in your playing, you're going to have to start over, and relearn your embouchure. Did Ben do it? He could have said, No way. I've spent years playing this way, and I feel comfortable with it. Don't cramp my style. I just gotta be me! But he did not say that. He obeyed the teacher, and, as a result, he was able to move ahead in his playing, way beyond where he would have got to any other way.

Now Jesus is a teacher, not just of trumpet, but of life. Does it make sense to obey him? You bet. Does it make us feel uncomfortable? Frequently. "Love your enemy." "Do not judge." "Give to everyone who begs from you." "Do not worry about your life."³³ That's tough talk. But does obedience cramp our individuality? Not at all, because Jesus knows us intimately, and he knows what he is doing, and so obeying

him will only serve to make us more the person he knows we are capable of becoming.

When the road gets tough, we obey.

An internal resource

There is one last thing. Archbishop William Temple once reflected on the Christian journey, and he said something like this:

*If you asked me to live a life following Jesus' footsteps, and learning to be like him, I would tell you it was impossible. It's as crazy as if you asked me to write plays like Shakespeare's. But if by some mystery, the spirit of Shakespeare could come and inhabit my personality, fire my imagination and expand my vocabulary, then, certainly, I could do it. And in the same way, if **the Spirit of Jesus** could come and inhabit my personality, and change me from the inside, then I could follow Jesus and grow more like him.*

And, of course, the Christian claim is just that. The Jesus we follow is not just sitting comfortably in the castle at the end of the road, twiddling his thumbs and wishing we would hurry up. Jesus is present in the world right now in the form of his Spirit, willing and able to help us follow him every step of the way, until we get home, and the real fun begins.

Notes

1. Tom Wright proposes five acts in N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 140-141. The suggestion that the five be expanded to six, which I prefer, comes from Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh in *Truth is Stranger than it Used to be* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 182, 240.
2. He later wrote of this scene, "About the halfway mark between Marathon and Wawa you round a point and are confronted with one of the most beautiful sights to be found along the rugged north shore of Superior. Here Cascade Falls drops straight into Superior in twin plumes." Bill Mason, *Canoescapes* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1995), 122.
3. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in *Tree and Leaf* (London: Unwin Books, 1964), 60.
4. C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (London: The Bodley Head, 1956; Fontana Lions, 1980), 173.
5. Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1983). In the movie, the name Fantastica is changed to Fantasia.
6. *Ibid.*, 65-66.
7. N.H. Kleinbaum, *Dead Poets Society* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1989), 41-42.
8. Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1987), 73.
9. Samuel Beckett, *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1984), 211.
10. Bill Watterson, *The Days Are Just Packed* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1993), 29.
11. Timothy Findley, *Famous Last Words* (Toronto: Penguin

Books, 1981), 77.

12. *The Days Are Just Packed*, 208.

13. *Ibid.*, 78.

14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), quoted in Hans Kung, *Does God Exist?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 371-373.

15. *The Gospel According to Luke*, chapter 15.

16. Bill Watterson, *The Indispensable Calvin and Hobbes* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1992), 85.

17. *The Letter to the Hebrews*, chapter 1, verse 3.

18. *The Letter of Paul to the Philippians*, chapter 2, verses 6-7.

19. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

20. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

21. *The God I Want*, ed. James Mitchell (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), 73.

22. C.S. Lewis commented, "The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. A good many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that it does work." *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952; Fontana Books, 1955), 54.

23. I am indebted to Les Casson of Queen's University for this illustration.

24. I have tried to show the difference between the stories of Elvis and Jesus in another Dare booklet, *Jesus is Alive, Elvis is Alive: What's the Difference?* (Richmond BC: Digory Designs, 1997).

25. Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (London: Faber & Faber, 1930; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958).

26. *The Gospel According to Matthew*, chapter 6, verse 13.

27. I have written in more detail about this image of Christian faith as a school in Dare Booklet #2, *The School of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Living as a Christian* (Richmond BC: Digory Designs, 1997).

28. Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Man Born To Be King* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943), 187.

29. *The Gospel According to John*, chapter 10, verse 10.

30. *The Gospel According to Matthew*, chapter 11, verses 28-30.

31. *The Book of Revelation*, chapter 21, verses 1 and 2.

32. You can find these images respectively in Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*, chapter 12, verse 12; the *First Letter of Peter*, chapter 2, verses 4-5; Paul's *First Letter to Timothy*, chapter 3, verse 15; and Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians*, chapter 6, verses 11-17.

33. These quotations are a selection from what is called Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount": *The Gospel according to Matthew*, chapter 5, verse 44; chapter 7, verse 1; chapter 5, verse 42; chapter 6, verse 25.