

Journey Six

Omniall infinitude™
begin - return - continue

M. A. Helland



Good
and
Ready

*"**OMNIALLINFINITUDE™** builds a bridge on which my head and my heart can shake hands. It combines deep principles with ancient practices, and is a pathway to knowing God in order to love Him. I encourage you to walk the path; cross the bridge."*

*Dr. Jim Altizer
Azusa Pacific University*

Good and Ready

journey elements

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what comes to your mind?

Good and Ready

GOOD...on a scale of 1 to 10, it's like a 7
Somewhere in between OK and WOW!
Good things are good enough, maybe not the best; but better than average
Good....as opposed to evil, or bad or blah and boring
We evaluate and label and judge....play good cop/bad cop
Is it just a matter of opinion?

We teach our children and pets to be good
We seek good employees, who perform and behave, and do a good job
We like good....we especially like others to be good.
We say Good Boy!, Good Dog!, Good Morning and Good Night
Sometimes we say Good Bye and even Good Riddance.

GOOD....we have a good feeling about it and want to feel good
We hope we have good genes so we can look good and have a good long life.
A life where we have good intentions, perform good deeds, be the Good Samaritan
All with good luck and good weather
We fight that good fight realizing a good man or woman is hard to find.
Sometimes, things are too good to be true, while other times, they are as good as gold.

Good times - Good food - Good wine
Often we have too much of a good thing
Is this as good as it gets? Why can't we be good as new?

Life is good....very good. In fact, we've never had it so good.
We discover no good deed goes unpunished and sometimes no news is good news.
Soon - all good things come to an end and then we're gone for good.
Why do the good die young?

Only God knows and only God alone is truly GOOD - He is the source of all good.
It's His High Purpose - He seeks only good for us.
On a scale of 1 to 10 - His Goodness is off the charts.

He's ready, ready to act, prepared, patiently waiting for us to turn to Him
Giving us chance after chance.
We, on the other hand, are not ready, even though some think they were born ready
Ready or Not! Ready, Set.....Wait!

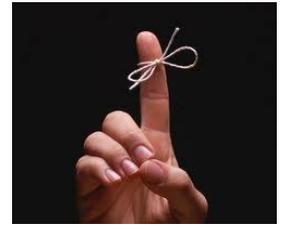
We wait, our patience is tested, tried and found lacking
We stand in line, sit in traffic, wait on hold
We watch the pot that never boils - Holding our breaths and our horses
At the ready! Sit tight!
Please Stand by, Stand Down, take a number - twist in the wind.

Waiting....For people.....To do.....What they say they will do
Waiting for GodFor answers, healing, and solutions
Don't all things come to those who wait?
Now we're all on the edge of our seats and can't wait any longer
It's enough to try one's patience and our patience has run out.

Are you ready?
God is Good and Ready! And waiting on us.

remember

Psalm 145: 8-9



"The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." NIV

Use the space below to help you memorize the verse above.

For additional background on the *remember* element, see the [appendix](#).

Now write out the verses from:

Journey 1: **Psalm 145:3**

Journey 2: **Exodus 3: 14a**

Journey 3: **Revelation 1:8**

Journey 4: **Jeremiah 29:11**

Journey 5: **Joshua 1:9**

read

Matthew 5-7, Exodus 20



Read through each chapter completely on three separate days, the first day in a **modern translation** such as the *NIV* or *NAS*, the second in a **modern paraphrase** such as *The New Living* (NLT) or *The Message*, and then the third **with a pad and pencil** by your side as you record your thoughts and observations. It is also helpful to **read the selections aloud**. As you read, underline words that describe who God is or names He is called.

This element is about **reading what it says** – try to put aside any preconceived ideas about what you think it says, or what you may have concluded based on other studies or classes. We are not saying those ideas are not correct, but for this Element, we just want to read it as if for the first time. **Read for the storyline** – and see if you can then faithfully retell it in your own words.

First Reading: Modern Translation – which one did you use?

Second Reading: Modern Paraphrase – which one did you use?

Third Reading: Reading Notes

Matthew 5:

Matthew 6:

Matthew 7:

Exodus 20:

Descriptions of God:

Names Used for God:

journal

6.1 Oh My Goodness!

Our journey so far has revealed that the **transcendent One and Only God** – the God of the Bible – is also **infinite, eternal, immutable and omnipresent**. Or in simpler words, He exists beyond and outside of time and space, there are no limits to any of his never changing attributes.

And then God's attributes and our lives collide when we discover He is **in charge**, working out **His plan** because He has **all the power, all the knowledge** and the ability to work them together to use **the right means to the right ends for the right reasons**. These include turning evil and suffering into ways to work out our Good and His Glory.

But God's attributes not only impact our lives, **He rubs off on who we are** at our core. We are made in His Image....He created us, and as a result, a human sized portion of some of his attributes can be seen in us. As He is perfectly Faithful and Trustworthy, we also show glimpses of these very attributes in our relationships with others.

But, we still have this problem with Evil.

In fact, **calling evil a problem assumes a standard of goodness**, but not one based on shifting sands, or feelings, or the whims of modern culture or celebrity. How do you deal with evil if your worldview provides no basis for believing in it?



Many use the existence of evil as evidence that God does not exist, or if He does, He is not a good God and worthy of belief and worship. But how do they determine evil? **If evil is evidence against God, shouldn't goodness be evidence for God?**



If there is no God, why is there so much good?

Remove God from the equation and human rights disappear. Our horrors at evil and suffering testify to good as the norm. We are shocked at gratuitous evil – it is unexplainable and grabs our attention. Yet, extreme goodness is never questioned.

Where does good come from? Why are we grateful? Why do we see life as a gift from God, a gift we will suffer great injustice and pain to hold on to? Why does good thrive in the darkest and most unexpected places, in darkness and persecution?

We use good to evaluate. Things are good or bad, good or evil. But Good is not a measuring stick – it is a force, a quality from God.

Only God is good. When we allow the good in us to be corrupted, evil sneaks in to destroy.

Your turn:

When you say that something is good – what do you mean?

List some good things? Some bad things?

analyze

Comparing the Old and New

Below is a paraphrased version of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is considered by many to be an amplification or restatement of them. Read through Matthew 5-7 and find ideas and verses that amplify or restate each commandment below. Write the verse numbers and a short explanation for each example you find. There will be more than one for each. The first one is completed for you. Take some time with this.

1. You shall have no other gods but ME.

6:24 – No one can serve two masters – cannot serve both God and money

6:33 – Seek first his kingdom and his righteous

7:13 – Narrow gate leads to life

7:25 – Build foundation on the rock so you do not fall

2. You shall not make for yourself any idol, nor bow down and worship it.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

4. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath Day holy.

5. Respect and honor your father and mother.

6. You must not murder.

7. You must not commit adultery.

8. You must not steal.

9. You must not give false evidence against your neighbor.

10. You must not be envious of anything that belongs to your neighbor.

journal

6.2 The Good Life

Blessings, Beauty, Family, Fun, Happiness, Health, Laughter, Creativity, Purpose, Accomplishment, Compassion, Love, Peace, Provision, Community.....God.



Goodness, Good Things, Good Times, Doing Good, Being Good. All Good is from God because only God is good. He is the **source of all good**. He gives us good things, works in our lives for good, accomplishes His good purposes. There is nothing about HIM that is not good.

Goodness is the attribute that is the **essence of all HE is, the motivation behind all HE does**. It is the perfection of His nature, that which predisposes Him to be kind, benevolent, and generous. All His attributes are good. We like this attribute, we appeal to His goodness and then take it for granted.

Goodness is why He blesses us – just because, for no reason, no merit required. It's why the sun shines on both the good and the evil – because God loves to give.

It's why He provides all that sustains life, the care and preservation of his people. If He wasn't good, He wouldn't bother.

His goodness breeds generosity, giving to all in a way that has no mercenary motive, not limited by what is deserved, going way beyond in order that those He blesses are blessed. And our true response to His goodness is gratitude and thankfulness. We marvel at His goodness expressed through the beauty of creation.



He encourages us through His goodness to not be afraid of Him. He is welcoming and inviting, yet His goodness will not force His affection on us. His goodness is unselfish. He cares about our welfare.

Love is Goodness in action toward a Beloved.

Righteousness is Goodness observed, attractive in its moral excellence.

Viewed from our distorted human perspective we often see good as only the absence of pain, difficulty, trouble, sorrow, poverty or ill health or the living in a state of comfort, power and prosperity.

Yet is God's dictionary – **the Highest Good is that which draws us closer to Him**, into deeper fellowship, greater knowledge and trust.

How God acts toward people is Good. Jesus is our supreme example. God's goodness is why He came. It's also why He died. All so we could have the Good life.

Your turn:

What does the Good Life look like for you?

How do we take the Goodness of God for granted?



investigate

Goodness and Patience

Define: Write a brief definition next to each of the above words using a regular dictionary, not a Bible dictionary. (Click on any word to link to dictionary.com)

∞ [Good](#)

∞ [Goodness](#)

∞ [Patience](#)

∞ [Longsuffering](#)

∞ [Benign](#)

∞ [Benevolence](#)

∞ [Forbearance](#)

∞ [Blessing](#)

∞ [Goodwill](#)

∞ [Kindness](#)

∞ [Excellence](#)

∞ [Moral](#)

∞ [Virtuous](#)

Now write your own definition for **Good and Ready below:**

Review:

Answer the following questions using the Bible references that follow each question.

What good does God do?

Genesis 1:31

Genesis 2:18

Genesis 50:20

Exodus 18:9

Joshua 21:45

Psalms 18:50

Psalms 86:5

Psalms 103:1-5

Psalms 145: 8-9, 15-16

Nahum 1:15

Luke 2:10

Acts 14: 7

1 Timothy 4:4

James 1:5, 17

Who receives or benefits from God's goodness?

Psalm 145:9

Lamentations 3:25

Nahum 1:7

Zechariah 8:15

Matthew 7:11

Why is God patient?

Nehemiah 9:17, 30-31

Psalm 103:8-12

2 Peter 3:9

Romans 9: 22-23

Conclude:

How is the Goodness of God different from the Good Things he provides?

List some of the Good Things he provides.

List some of the characteristics of His Goodness.

How does He use us as the distribution network for His Goodness and Good Things?

10 things

Good and Ready

1. **Yahweh Yireh** – This is the Hebrew name for God that describes His ability to provide for all our needs in advance. He delights in blessing his people inwardly and outwardly, beyond what we could even imagine. Nothing is a surprise to Him.¹
2. **A.W. Pink** – “Gratitude is the return justly required from the objects of His beneficence; yet we often withhold it from our great Benefactor simply because his goodness is so constant and so abundant...It is not felt because we daily experience it.”²
3. **A. W. Tozer** – “The greatness of God arouses fear in us, but His goodness encourages us to not be afraid of Him. To fear and not be afraid – that is the paradox of faith.”³
4. **J. I. Packer** - “Goodness points to generosity and is the focal point of God’s moral perfection which determines everything else He is and does. Generosity is a disposition to give to others in a way which has no mercenary motive and is not limited by what the recipients deserve, but consistently goes beyond it.”⁴
5. **Stephen Charnock** – “Whatever is truly goodness in any creature is a resemblance of God. As man was made for the honor of God, so the world was made for the support and delight of man in order to perform the service due from him to God.”⁵
6. Creation itself points to the goodness of God. His wisdom directed the process, His power performed the process, but His goodness motivated the process. Hence, the Highest Good, is the cause of all Good.
7. **A.W. Pink** – “We would define Divine patience as that power of control God exercises over Himself, causing him to bear with the wicked and forebear so long in punishing them.”⁶
8. **Stephen Charnock** – “God is slow to anger because He has great power. He has no less power over Himself than over His creatures.”⁷
9. The Cross dispels all doubt as to the Goodness of God.
10. The goodness of God has made bountiful provision for our full satisfaction and delight. Through His abundant creation He has provided pleasures of all kinds for our senses of sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell.

Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

journal

6.3 Once Upon A Time in the Garden

Where did we go wrong? How did we miss the Goodness of God? How did things get so messed up, corrupted, cruel, unkind, selfish, hateful, power hungry, insensitive....so evil?

It all began in the garden. Adam and Eve, and the snake called Satan, the great enemy of God. After God created Adam and Eve and declared them "very good" he placed them into the Garden of Eden, a beautiful and bountiful place, where they could eat freely of every tree (including the Tree of Life), except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.



The Tree of Life provided just that – eternal life with God's presence and provision, purpose, beauty and creation, all His Goodness.

But what about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? They were warned not to eat from it because then they would surely die.

The serpent, who did not have their highest Good in mind, set about to deceive and separate them from God. To make a long story short, **Satan undermined Eve's confidence in the goodness of God.** He eventually convinced her to change her opinion of God to being less than good and to the forbidden fruit as now being good.

It was much easier for her to disobey Him when she doubted His Goodness. She forgot that He prohibits things out of His Goodness and acted independently for her own good. She chose her own wisdom over God's revelation and instruction.



This is what she gained when she ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: moral discernment and human wisdom, a grasp for autonomy and wisdom that were God's alone. She rebelled and took God's rightful place in her life.

She became like God – just like the serpent. **Enter death and destruction, and sin, separation from God.** And not just for herself, for all generations to come. All because she doubted the goodness of God.

Original sin – it permeates the human race. It's so obvious that it cannot be ignored. It was the beginning of the corruption of good, the crack that ushered in the wisdom of man that let loose evil.

Non Christian worldviews come up with other explanations and solutions for this problem.

- **Materialism** sees it as merely biological dysfunction
- **Evolutionism** explains it as whatever hinders the perceived progress of the human race
- **Psychologism** says it is just a result of low self esteem
- **Humanism** sees it as attitudes or actions that hurt other people
- **Environmentalism** says it is not acting on truth the earth is our mother and all living things are equal
- **Pantheism and Panentheism** says it happens when one is out of balance or harmony with rest of creation

Even some Christians get it wrong when they simply see sin as breaking the rules of God. **Sin is fundamentally violating our relationship with God**, the core of our being, the attitudes of our heart.

Some equate sin with fun, when in reality it eventually leads to shame, guilt and death. Some say if it doesn't hurt anyone, it doesn't matter – yet, since it is ultimately rebellion against God, it matters to Him.

Some say if sin is popular or accepted – it can't be sin.....but if a majority agree, then it is. We **legislate morality**.

It's very hard to live with the idea there is no sin, even if we believe we, personally, aren't sinners, other people sure are. Our God given moral code deep within knows better. But our human wisdom causes us to rationalize, minimize, blame shift, divert, joke, plead victimization, illness, or coercion. We ignore, look the other way, excuse, and make excuses.

And nothing changes.

But out of God's Goodness, His morally attractive, admirable, beneficial and appealing being and doing – He provided a solution.

The Goodness of God provided the Good News of Jesus.

Your turn:

In what ways do we doubt the Goodness of God?

Why do so many struggle with the idea of original sin?



practice

Service

Living Humbly



For our purposes in this journey we are going to distinguish between the practice of Service as opposed to Calling and Gifting for ministry. The Practice of Service or Servanthood is necessary to deal with our **natural tendency toward pride**. The solution is to **replace it with Godly submission and humility**. It requires that we put aside our vanity and stubbornness and allow God and other people to resume their rightful relationships to us.

It keeps us from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought.

We are commanded to love God and others, and pride will destroy our ability to do that. The practice of Service over time will put these relationships back in their proper places.

Service is not about the big things, and is best done in secret, not expecting thanks.

It is about helping people we come in contact with.

It requires we are available and paying attention.

It does not worry about being taken advantage of.

It is not a list of things to do and doesn't worry about the results.

It is helping people with the mundane things of life; the simple things, the ordinary, everyday things that we might ordinarily not even notice.

Be intentional, pay attention, listen to the Spirit's prompting, be available. Below are some areas of service that you might consider during this journey unit. It could be as simple as opening a door to watching a child or driving someone to the airport. It can be to anyone, anywhere.

1. Small things – what do they need at this moment in time?
2. Defend a Reputation – Watch your tongue, or speak up in their defense if someone slanders them
3. Let someone serve you
4. Be courteous – civility, manners, respecting elders, please and thank you, RSVP, be on time, letter of appreciation, etc.
5. Hospitality – Open your home
6. Listening and Bearing Burdens – struggles, comfort, sorrows, etc.
7. Sharing a Word from God

Plan to practice Service using the process below.

1. Pray for God to provide you with opportunities every day.
2. Pay attention as you go through your daily activities.
3. Respond as the Spirit leads.



why?

Service

Rick Warren – “Great opportunities to serve never last long. They pass quickly, sometimes never to return again. You may only get one chance to serve that person, so take advantage of the moment.”⁸

John Wesley – “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.”⁹

Jesus - "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' " Matt 25:37-40 NIV

John Ortberg – “At the deepest level, pride is the choice to exclude both God and other people from their rightful place in our hearts.”¹⁰

Dallas Willard – “In service we engage our goods and strength in the active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world...Such discipline is very useful for those Christians who find themselves in the ‘lower’ positions in society....It alone can free us from resentment.”¹¹

Richard Foster – “As the cross is the sign of submission, the towel is the sign of service. When Jesus gathered his disciples for the Last Supper they were having trouble deciding who was the greatestWhenever there is trouble over who is the greatest, there is trouble over who is the least.Most of us know we will never be the greatest; just don’t let us be the least.”¹²

John Ortberg – “When Jesus came in the form of a servant, he was not disguising who God is. He was revealing who God is.”¹³

Jesus - "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matt 20: 25-28 NIV

Dallas Willard – “The discipline of service is even more important for Christians who find themselves in positions of influence, power, and leadership. To live as a servant while fulfilling socially important roles is one of the greatest challenges any disciple ever faces.”¹⁴

Paul - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Phil 2: 3-4 NIV

Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

journal

6.4 Ready and Waiting



Prepped, planned, ducks in a row, and then you wait.... the seriousness, or value of what your waiting for, might determine the quality of your waiting.....Is it worth it? Do you care that much? How long will you wait on hold? Or in line, or by the phone? What happens if you don't wait, Speak to soon, leave the room, give up, hang up, accept a substitute?



What's the big hurry, anyway? We wait for people, for love, for our turn, for the money to show up, for the phone to ring, for the email to come thru, to sign the papers, for the call back, the big break, for others to change, to grow up, for our day in court, for our dreams to come true, to get well, for God to fulfill His promises and answer our prayers.

Waiting is irritating, frustrating, makes us angry, lose our tempers, lose perspective, and lose control. We've done our part, we're ready, **why is it taking so long?** Who keeps cutting in line? It didn't happen when it was supposed to. How many more chances? Sometimes others delay on purpose, sometimes there are extenuating circumstances, sometimes it's just plain old incompetence, disinterest, or forgetfulness....So many excuses.

How long can you wait?

God is the model of patience. He is very slow to anger. In fact, **His Patience is the attribute that uses His Goodness to restrain His Wrath.** It is the power God exercises over Himself that causes Him to bear with the wicked and wait so long in punishing them. It allows him to sustain great injury without immediately avenging Himself.

While mercy pities the misery, **patience bears with the sin that causes the misery.** Patience allows it to continue. Whatever for? His perspective is so far beyond ours, He sees the whole road at once.....**God is patient because He does not want anyone to perish and be eternally lost.** The quality of His waiting is perfect.

What is He waiting for? Maybe you, maybe me?

But lest we think we have a good thing going.....that we can take advantage or exploit the Goodness of God – **He will not be patient forever** - as He has demonstrated below.

- Everyone but Noah – Gen 6:3-8
- Sodom and Gomorrah – Gen 18:16 – 19:29
- Moses – Exodus 34, Numbers 14, 20
- Israel – Nehemiah 9
- Ahab - I King 21:17-29
- Evil – Revelation 19:11-21

And perhaps the hardest part of all - we are to emulate His patience. And not just the patience of Job, the Patience of God. Calm, self possessed, waiting.

Your turn:

List some things you are waiting for. How long can you wait?
What determines the quality of your patience?
What makes you lose your patience?

inventory

What fills you? What drains you?

As we seek to serve God and our fellow man, we discover God has wired each of us differently. This results from a combination of all kinds of things from our personalities to our life experiences. What we find is after awhile we need to recharge ourselves, do something or go somewhere and get filled back up, so we are ready to go again. Even too much of some good things will drain us if done for too long. What we need will be different for each of us and may change throughout our life.



Take some time during this journey unit to think about what drains you over time and what kinds of activities will get you going again. It can be anything. Let the Holy Spirit bring it to mind. As an example, on the next page you can see some of the things that drain and fill up the author.

What drains Me

What fills Me up again

Example: What drains and fills the Author

Drains

Uncertainty

Disorder

Confusion

Mundane

Business

Groups

Conflict

Unresponsive Relationships

One sided Relationships

Selfishness

Injustice

Time wasters

Evil/Wickedness

Hurriedness

Fills

Beauty

Security

Order

Purpose

Discovery

Accomplishment. Progress, Movement

Excellence

Depth

Solitude and Quiet

Growth

Brain exercise (games, reading, puzzles, study)

Deep conversations/relationships

Truth

Creativity

Impact

Esteem and Recognition

journal

6.5 Why are You here?



So you walk into the room, the meeting, the party, an event, your own home.....

You've called ahead, sent some emails, notified them you were on your way...even described how they could recognize you...

Most don't even notice you've come. You jump right in, doing your thing, getting to work, and finally someone says, "What are you doing? Why are you here?"

An honest question. Maybe you know something they don't know. You can help them, fix the problem, show them the way, answer their questions, share your expertise and wisdom.



Well, why are you here?

Many wondered this about Jesus, God's own Answer to the Problem of Sin, Suffering, and Evil. **What was His mission? Why did He come? Why was He here?**

Many are still asking these questions today, once they notice He's still here.

Listen as He answers them in His own words.

- John 3:17 - "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to **save the world** through him"
- John 18:37 - In answer to Pilate's question - "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to **testify to the truth**. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."
- Matt. 5:17 - "Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them, but to **fulfill them**."
- Luke 19:10 - "For the Son of Man came **to seek and to save what was lost**."

Ultimately, He came to Die and die He did.

And that was just the beginning.....

Your turn:

Why are you here?

Have you ever had the answer or solution to someone else's problem and they weren't interested?

What are some of the possible reasons they wouldn't accept your input and help?

adventuring

Pay It Forward

“Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

Matthew 7:12



The ethic of reciprocity only with a twist.

Do an unselfish act of kindness or service for someone and then ask them to pay the kindness forward instead of paying it back. This can be for someone in need, or just a random act of kindness.

It should be for someone you do not know. Be as extravagant as you can.

Ask the Holy Spirit for creativity and sensitivity to choosing the right person. Pay attention and be ready, or plan something and just go and pick someone at random.

Either way, God will be in it.

Have fun!!

Here are some examples:

Give away gift cards from the store or restaurant you are in

Leave a large tip and a note to pass some of it on

Having a **Pay it Forward yard sale** where people can trade for things they need

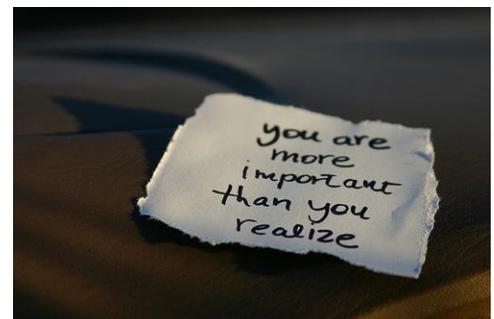
Have a clothing swap

Look in the Want Ads and provide something to someone

Clean up someone's yard, paint a room, wash a car.

Make double a meal and drop it off, and then have the recipient give away part of it

Put extra money in a parking meter



journal

6.6 The Four Captives

Once upon a time....



Four People were held captive, bound in darkness, with no knowledge of any other kind of life. The jailers named them; Prisoner of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades.

The jail was cold, they were thirsty and hungry, bruised and battered, bound and blind. The jailers were merciless, giving them the punishment they deserved, always close by, casting gloom and hopelessness over the captives.

Daily, other people, supposedly from a world outside the prison, would be allowed access to the jails. The jailers for some reason had no power to keep these people out. They were able to enter the jail because they carried the Towels of their masters, the Kings of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades. These people seemed happy, and helpful, but from another world one could only dream about.



The first set of Towel Bearers came one day with water. They asked the prisoners if they could serve them by giving them sips of water. The jailers could do nothing but watch. All the prisoners eagerly accepted this generous gesture – except one.

A second group of Towel Bearers came the next day bearing pieces of bread – fresh bread, not the moldy, hard kind they usually got in the prison. They eagerly ate, except the one who had turned down the water. She was afraid, suspicious, unwilling to trust.

On the third day a new group of Towel Bearers brought blankets for the long, bone chilling nights. They wrapped them around the prisoners, except for the one who rejected assistance once again. Her jailer was pleased she had not fallen for this silliness. These Towel carriers were filling the prisoners' heads with false promises. It is better to stick with what you know, what you already had. Hold tightly to it.

The next group of Towel Bearers brought cloths for washing – they gently bathed the arms of the prisoners with warm water. The holdout once again refused any care, not wanting to be touched and further retreated within herself. Her jailer only smirked at those attempting to assist her.



The fifth day brought Towel Bearers with medical skills and they bandaged the wounds of the prisoners and eased their aches and pains. The lone holdout once again refused in fear and purposed that she would just suck it up and hold on. She could handle this. She didn't need anyone's help. Those other prisoners were so foolish to get sucked into such nonsense. I mean you don't know who these people really are. They might be crazy.

On the sixth day, a final group of Towel Bearers arrived. Each one knelt before their prisoner and requested permission to ask them a question. When granted access, they whispered a question into the ears of each prisoner, and when each prisoner nodded, they placed a sticker over their heart. The withdrawn prisoner did not grant her Towel Bearer access once again. She did not receive a sticker.

On the seventh day the Kings of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, and Spades arrived with their entourages. The Kings of Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs each had a scroll requesting the release of their subjects since they now displayed the Patch of the Cross over their hearts. The jailers, knowing they had no power to object, allowed them to lead the Newly Freed away.



However, the King of Spades left empty handed as He had not received a scroll from the Most High One for the release of his prisoner. She remained imprisoned and her jailer waved good bye to the King of Spades.

The other 3 Kings led their Newly Freed, still blind and bound, to the banquet hall, where the Queens of Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs had prepared a beautiful table. As the Newly Freed were led to their seats, they were unbound and they saw with new eyes. They were served a heavenly treat by the Queens and their fellow Towel Bearers.



At the end of the meal, each King presented each Newly Freed with a towel of their own, as they now had joined the ranks of the Towel Bearers.

The Next Day was the first day of the week. The new Towel Bearers returned to the prison, only this time they carried cups of water to the Prisoner of Spades, in hopes she would now allow them to serve her. And when they were done, they were free to leave.

Matt 25:34-40

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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 needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'
NIV

Your turn:

What are some reasons people stick to what they know?

Why is it sometimes hard to accept help? To allow others to serve us?

Have you ever been in a situation where someone showed up out of the blue and helped you? Have you ever been the one who showed up out of the blue to help someone? Share your experience if you feel comfortable doing so.

lyrics

You might wonder why lyrics are included in a study like this.

I believe lyrics, or poetry put to music, as well as the accompanying music, have always been used by the Most High to impact our hearts and minds –

either by **our part in its creative process** –
 or through **our participation in its expression** –
 or through **our pleasure as a recipient** of its

sensory benefits.



Please try to listen to the musical versions on your own - **iTunes** and **youtube** are great online resources. If you are using the PDF version of this study and are connected to the internet, clicking on the song title will bring up a youtube video of each song. The lyrics presented will not always be spiritual in their original context – but much can still be gained from applying them to how they describe and point to the Most High God.

You Raise Me Up

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJxrX42WcjQ>

Music by Rolf Løvland and lyrics by Brendan Graham of the group, Secret Garden, 2002.
 Originally recorded by Secret Garden and then various artists, including *Josh Groban* and the group, *Westlife*.
 Youtube Video by Adamfulgence.

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary;
 When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
 Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,
 Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
 You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;
 I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;
 You raise me up... To more than I can be.

There is no life - no life without its hunger;
 Each restless heart beats so imperfectly;
 But when you come and I am filled with wonder,
 Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
 You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;
 I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;
 You raise me up... To more than I can be.¹⁴

The song was originally written as an instrumental piece and titled "Silent Story." Parts of the melody are based on a traditional Irish tune (especially the opening phrase of its chorus), the Londonderry Air, which is best known as the usual tune to the 1910 song *Danny Boy*. Løvland approached Irish novelist and songwriter Brendan Graham to write the lyrics to his melody after reading Graham's novels. In 2004, the song was played more than 500,000 times on American radio. In late 2005, there were over 80 versions available in USA alone.

Your turn:

Part of the overwhelming response to this song stems from the truth it speaks to our weary souls. We all have troubles, burdens, lose perspective and then hope. List the characteristics and actions of God presented in these verses, as well as the impact this has on a person. How have you experienced being Raised Up?

[59th Street Bridge Song \(Feeling Groovy\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBQxG0Z72qM)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBQxG0Z72qM>

**Words and Music by Paul Simon, 1966.
Performed by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel.
Youtube Video uploaded by summitmusic70**

Slow down, you move too fast.
You got to make the morning last.
Just kicking down the cobble stones.
Looking for fun and feelin' groovy.

Ba da, Ba da, Ba da, Ba da...Feelin' Groovy.

Hello lamp-post,
What cha knowin'?
I've come to watch your flowers growin'.
Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?
Doot-in' doo-doo,
Feelin' groovy.

I've got no deeds to do,
No promises to keep.
I'm dappled and drowsy and ready to sleep.
Let the morning time drop all it's petals on me.
Life, I love you,
All is groovy.¹⁵

The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy) is a song by folk music duo Simon and Garfunkel, appearing on their 1966 album *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme*. 59th Street Bridge is the colloquial name of the Queensboro Bridge in New York City. The song's message is immediately delivered in its opening verse: "Slow down, you move too fast".

Your turn:

Do you need to slow down?

What good things are you missing?

According to these verses what characterizes a groovy life?

According to God what characterizes a good life?

For Good

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtMN3mXmvqU>

Words and Music Stephen Schwartz from the musical Wicked, 2003
Performed by Kristin Chenoweth with the Boston Pops Orchestra
Youtube video uploaded by marianaraay

(Glinda):
I've heard it said
That people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn
And we are led
To those who help us most to grow
If we let them
And we help them in return
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true
But I know I'm who I am today
Because I knew you...
Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you
I have been changed for good

(Elphaba):
It well may be
That we will never meet again
In this lifetime
So let me say before we part
So much of me
Is made of what I learned from you
You'll be with me
Like a handprint on my heart
And now whatever way our stories end
I know you have re-written mine
By being my friend...
Like a ship blown from its mooring
By a wind off the sea
Like a seed dropped by a skybird
In a distant wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you

(Glinda):
Because I knew you

(Both):
I have been changed for good

(Elphaba):
And just to clear the air
I ask forgiveness
For the things I've done you blame me for

(Glinda):
But then, I guess we know
There's blame to share

(Both):
And none of it seems to matter anymore

(Glinda):
 Like a comet pulled from orbit
 As it passes a sun
 Like a stream that meets a boulder
 Halfway through the wood

(Elphaba):
 Like a ship blown from its mooring
 By a wind off the sea
 Like a seed dropped by a bird in the wood

(Both):
 Who can say if I've been
 Changed for the better?
 I do believe I have been
 Changed for the better

(Glinda):
 And because I knew you...

(Elphaba):
 Because I knew you...

(Both):
 Because I knew you...
 I have been changed for good...¹⁶

The song is performed towards the end of the musical, *Wicked*. In it, the two are singing farewell to one another. The song's lyrics concern how both **Elphaba** and **Glinda** have been changed by their friendship with each other. Glinda starts out by saying that, while she doesn't know if it is true that people come into each others lives for a reason, "I know I'm who I am today because I knew you." Similarly, Elphaba tells Glinda that "whatever way our stories end, I know you have rewritten mine by being my friend." Elphaba also asks Glinda to forgive her for anything she might have done wrong, to which Glinda replies that "there's blame to share", but both agree that "none of it seems to matter anymore." The lyrics rely on the play of words, "for good," which are used to signify alternatively "forever" and "as an improvement."

Stephen Schwartz considers "For Good" from *Wicked* one of the best songs he's written. Here's what Schwartz says about "For Good": "The song 'For Good' was, of course, written for the show to try to express the leading characters' feelings as they are seeing each other for the last time. The title came out of a brainstorming conversation I had with Winnie Holzman (the book writer) -- basically at one point she said it should be about how the two of them had changed each other 'for good', at which point, hearing the amazing possibilities in that phrase, I knew I had found the title for the song. To get some of the content, I had a long conversation with my daughter, in which I asked her what she would say to her best friend (someone she has known pretty much all her life), if she knew she was never going to see her again. A lot of what Jessie said got transformed into the first verse of the song. Other than that, it was simply trying to put myself into the hearts and minds of the characters and see what they said."

Your turn:

How has someone you know changed your life or you for good?
 Has anyone left their handprint on your heart?
 How does God leave His Handprint on our hearts?

more cool stuff

Strengthen Your Core

The Resurrection

And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave.

But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. I Cor 15: 14-20 NLT



This is the core teaching of Christianity – If Christ did not rise from the dead, then Christianity is simply false.

Why is the Resurrection so important?

- His Resurrection reveals and confirms Jesus as the Messiah King who will return someday (John 8:58, 10:30)
- Jesus, Himself, predicted His own death and resurrection – if it did not happen, He would be a False Prophet (Matt. 12:3-40, 16:21, 20:18-19; Luke 9:22-27; Mark 8:31, 9:31, John 2:18-22)
- Proof His teachings are true and can be trusted – gives us confidence. His teachings are the core of Christianity.
- Our sins are forgiven – we can live victorious lives
- Death is conquered and put to death – we can look forward to our own resurrection and eternity with Him
- This earth matters – Jesus will return to restore and reclaim all that He made in creation.
- Good news for the whole world

So, you can imagine the battles that have waged on both sides to prove or disprove this world and eternity changing historical fact.

If Jesus rose from the dead, we must accept all He said.

If he did not, then why worry about any of it?

Our acceptance of any of His teachings is not based on a whim, cultural acceptance or personal taste – it is based on whether the resurrection is true or a lie.

Historic vs. Scientific Proof

There are different kinds of evidence and acceptable ways of validating historical occurrences, especially ones from what is considered ancient times. Just as a policeman would investigate a crime, or an archeologist analyze fossils, or even a doctor or a pathologist seeking the cause of symptoms, historians have recognized ways of validating events.

Nothing in History can be proven the way we can prove or reproduce something in a laboratory. Yet using respected methods including dating of relevant sources, restrained results, minimal facts, and careful consideration of logical causes and effects, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical event more fully attested to than most other ancient events.

Philosophical Bias

Sometimes people bring their own philosophical biases to their investigation. A common bias is to short circuit their investigative process by never starting because of a belief that miracles are not possible. Another bias is that modern societies are more advanced and smarter than ancient societies. Because of this, the people in Jesus' time would believe anything.

However, a careful study of the culture and society of the time, shows that bodily resurrection was inconceivable. They didn't believe it could happen.

As you can imagine there are volumes of books, articles, videos, podcasts, blogs, documents, and historical records on this subject. The following is just the tip of the iceberg. There is a suggested reading list at the end for those wanting more in depth information.

Setting the Stage: A Little Context

There were three main competing worldviews at the time Jesus lived on earth and they all considered individual human bodily resurrection not just inconceivable, but impossible.

1. The **Greco Roman** thinking during this period believed the soul/spirit was good and the physical was corrupt. No soul having left its body would ever want to return to it.
2. In the **Eastern religious thinking** of India and Asia the goal was also to leave the body eternally through the process of reincarnation. The body was to be discarded.
3. In contrast, the **Jewish worldview** believed that the physical/material was good and death was a tragedy. Eventually, someday at the end of history, the bones of all men would be part of a mass resurrection. The idea of an individual resurrection in the middle of history was never considered.



Also, around the time of Jesus' resurrection, there were dozens of other messianic pretenders whose lives were ended. None of their followers claimed their leader had risen from the dead. They either found a new leader or gave up their cause.

In addition, during the same time in Judea, you could find around fifty tombs of prophets and religious leaders that had been enshrined as places of worship because they contained their dead bodies.

Yet, over time, skeptics and non-believers have offered up numerous explanations and theories that continue to this day. Many stem from a deep seeded skepticism towards the supernatural.

Many understand the importance of the resurrection and the truth they would be forced to confront if it is true, so they seek to prove it false.

Common alternative theories or fallacies follow a common train of thought. They start by declaring the followers of Jesus unscientific, and believers in magic and the supernatural. Heartbroken because of His death, His followers sense He is still with them and eventually conger up visions of Him speaking with them. These visions morph into stories of the resurrection leading to the writing of the Four Gospels to bolster this myth or legend.

From here we will look at the facts of the Resurrection, the proof, and then the alternative explanations. In earlier journey units we have already reviewed and established the historical authenticity of the Bible, and the person of Jesus.

What Really Happened?

Prophecy

Both Jesus and Isaiah predicted his death and resurrection.

- Isaiah 53:8-12
- Matthew 12:38-40, 16:21, 17:9, 22-23, 20:18-19, 26:32, 27:63
- Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34, 14:28,58
- Luke 9:22-27
- John 2:18-22, 12:34, John 14-16

Jesus Dies

Matthew 26 – Matthew 27:56, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18:28 – 19:42

Jesus' path from the Garden of Gethsemene to the Cross took the following route:

- Soldiers take him to Annas,
- Annas sends him to Caiaphas, the High Priest. Soldiers mock, blindfold, bind, slap and beat him.
- Trial before the Jewish High Counsel finds Him guilty of blasphemy and sends him to Pilate
- Pilate sends Him to Herod
- Herod questions, mocks and ridicules Him, sends Him back to Pilate
- Pilate gives in to Jewish leaders and the crowd and sentences Jesus to death
- Jesus is flogged and scourged by Roman soldiers to within inches of death, now weak and bloody
- Forced to carry his own cross to Golgotha – needs help from Simon the Cyrene
- Hands and feet nailed to cross
- Tormented on cross by soldiers and crowd
- Gives up His own life
- Pierced on side by Roman soldier– **water and blood run out, modern day evidence of cardiac rupture or a broken heart.** He was already dead when his side was pierced.
- Because He was already dead, they did not have to break his legs, which was customary to speed up death.
- Pilate was surprised he died so quickly, and since it usually took much longer he required certification of death from executioners before Jesus' body was taken away (Mark 15:44-45)



Jesus Buried

Matthew 27:57-65, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42

- Normally victims of crucifixion are left on the cross to be devoured by birds and then buried in a shallow common grave to be dug up by dogs.
- Jesus' body was requested from Pilate by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish High Counsel and secret follower of Jesus.
- Joseph buried Jesus in his own Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. Everyone knew Joseph and where the tomb was.
- There are **no competing traditions** about what happened to Jesus body after it was taken off the cross.
- Women came to prepare Jesus' body according to Jewish burial traditions, which included up to 75 pounds of burial spices and yards of grave cloths wrapped around the body.
- 1.5 ton round stone disc was rolled downhill in groove to cover opening of burial tomb. A smaller rock was placed next to it to hold it in place. This was to keep out men and beasts. The stone was so big it required several men to move it into place.
- Jewish leaders requested a Roman Guard at the tomb to keep the disciples from stealing the body. They remembered that Jesus had promised that He would rise from the dead on the 3rd Day. (Matt. 27:62-66) A Roman guard normally consisted of 4 disciplined and loyal soldiers; one would guard and the others would sleep. Pilate granted this request. Roman guards were sentenced to death for any dereliction of duty, like falling asleep on the job.
- **Pilate also authorized the Roman Guards to put the Roman Seal on the tomb.** Once the Seal was on the tomb, no one was allowed to break it without the permission of the Roman Governor. It was a seal of Roman authority and authenticity.
- Never before had any crucified man been given so much worry after his death.



At this point we know that Jesus was crucified, died, was certified to be dead, wrapped in grave cloths and spices, placed in a new garden tomb which was closed with a large stone, affixed with a Roman Seal and secured by a Roman Guard.

Jesus was dead. Jesus was buried. The tomb was secure.

Disciples and Followers in Hiding

It goes without saying the disciples were in disarray. Most of them fled when the soldiers showed up at the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter denied he knew Jesus three times, just as Jesus predicted he would. Only John remained at the cross until the end. They were in hiding, timid and fearful.

Even though Jesus had talked about His Resurrection many times with them, they had no way to comprehend what He meant. They did not understand the prophecy and were slow to believe, cautious and skeptical. All they were looking for Him to become was their Jewish political Messiah leading them to victory over Rome. They had no idea what was about to happen.

Early Sunday Morning

- On the 3rd day – (Friday, Saturday, Sunday – not 72 hours later) after the crucifixion, Mary returns to the grave in the early morning with two other women to complete the burial procedures. Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20.
- The **guard unit was nowhere to be found**
- The **seal was broken**
- The **stone removed** and moved uphill
- **Grave clothes remained in tomb untouched**, in same place the body had been



- Angels were waiting to announce the good news - He is Risen!
- The **tomb was empty** for all to see.
- **Then Jesus appeared.**
- Besides appearing to Mary Magdalene, his mother Mary, and Salome, Jesus also appeared in his glorified, physical body to:
 - Peter – Luke 24:34, I Cor. 15:5
 - Emmaus Disciples – Luke 24: 13-33
 - Apostles without Thomas – Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24
 - Apostles with Thomas – John 20:26-29
 - Seven by the Sea of Tiberius: John 21: 1-23
 - Multitude of 500 plus on Galilean mountain – I Cor. 15:7
 - To his brother James – I Cor. 15:7
 - To the Eleven: Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:33-52; Acts 1:3-12
 - At the Ascension: Acts 1:3-12
 - To Paul – Acts 9:3-6; I Cor. 15:8
 - To Stephen – Acts 7:55
 - To Paul in the Temple – Acts 22:17-21; 23:11
 - To John on Patmos – Rev. 1:10-19

First Responses to the Empty Tomb

Can you even imagine what you would have felt or done? The initial reactions of the women, the disciples and other followers of Jesus were **fear, joy, and unbelief**. Peter and John ran to see the empty tomb for themselves. They remained in hiding until Jesus appeared to them out of nowhere. Thomas needed to touch his nail scarred hands. The women clung to him.



All John needed to see to believe were the empty grave clothes. They lay exactly where the body of Jesus had lain, like a deflated balloon. Not strewn around, they were still intact like the body had left from the inside out. The head piece or napkin, a cloth wrapped around His head, lay on the stone pillow, separate from the rest, right where Jesus head had been.

The Jews were afraid this very thing might happen, which is why they had asked for a Roman Guard to watch the tomb in the first place. The Roman Guard had fainted dead away at the sight of the angel and then disappeared. Some of the Guards reported back to the leading priests who called a meeting of the Jewish elders who then decided to bribe the guards to say they had fallen asleep and the disciples had stolen the body. The elders said they would cover for the Guards with the Governor who had the power to punish them by death for such a dereliction of duty. (Matt. 28:11-15)

They all knew the tomb was empty.

One of the earliest Biblical accounts is written by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 around 15 years after the resurrection. He bases his accounts on the many witnesses he lists, most of whom were still alive to verify his facts. This was a letter to be read in public, a historical account, not a secret document or a folktale. Many historians also believe the gospel of Mark was recorded within 5 to 10 years of the resurrection.

The belief in the resurrection did not evolve, was not made up after the fact, but was there from the beginning, verified by the many witnesses who were there.

Points of Contention

Over the centuries, various alternate theories of what really happened have appeared, which if they could be proven true, would deny the core truths of Christianity. These theories need to not only disprove the resurrection, but also feasibly explain the many historical circumstances, effects and impacts that resulted from what they believe is a nonevent.

Was He Really Dead?

The Swoon Theory **states that Jesus was not dead, only unconscious**. Once he was in the cool tomb, he was revived by the embalming spices.

- There is little evidence for this since Jesus went through severe physical trauma prior to being nailed to the cross.
- He was pierced in the heart by the Roman soldier, releasing blood and water, evidence that he was already dead.
- He was **certified dead** at the request of Pilate by the Romans soldier who knew a dead person when they saw one.
- He died sooner than expected and they didn't break his legs.
- Normally victims of crucifixion were left on the cross for days to be eaten by the birds.
- His disciples believed Him to be dead. They fled, went their own way, and even rejected the first reports of his resurrection.

But say, for a moment we entertain this theory....**How did He get out of the tomb?** In his dire physical condition, how did he unravel yards of grave cloths and 80 pounds of spices? How did He move away the stone from the inside without disturbing the Roman Guard and then appear good as new to His disciples?

He was dead. His disciples knew it, the Roman Guard knew it, Pilate knew it, and the Jewish leaders knew it.

An offshoot of this theory postulates that either Jesus' twin or a look alike was crucified in his place. Then the real Jesus appeared as if resurrected. Evidence against this includes:

- His mother was at the cross and was not fooled
- Wounds on his feet and hands were visible on his resurrected body
- Tomb was still empty and the burial cloths were left behind.



Was the Tomb Really Empty?

What do we do with the empty tomb? Doubters have come up with various attempts to explain this fact away. The Jewish leaders at the time bribed the Roman Guard, who knew the truth, to say that the Disciples stole the body.

Many still cling to this belief today, although there are many proofs against it.

- What motive would the disciples have to steal the body and then die for a lie?
- What motive would there be for the Jews, the Romans, or anyone else to steal the body?
- **The enemies of Jesus wanted Him to stay in the tomb**, the followers of Jesus had no power to remove Him from the tomb.
- If the soldiers were sleeping, how could they say someone stole the body? It is extremely unlikely the entire Roman Guard would have fallen asleep at the same time.
- It would have been easy to produce the corpse to refute the stories.
- Disciples did not comprehend the idea of a resurrection, so they would not have been trying to make it come true.

- **Tomb was secure** – to steal the body, must overcome Roman Guard, Break the Seal, Roll the Stone uphill and remove body, but leave the grave cloths as if never disturbed.
- The spices and grave cloths would have been more valuable to thieves than a naked corpse.
- No one was going in, and no one was coming out.
- Jews never denied the tomb was empty.
- **First witnesses to the empty tomb were women.** Because of the low status of women in the culture, their testimony was considered unreliable and they could not testify in court. Yet these women were mentioned by name. They were well known in the early church. **No one would have concocted a story and used women as the first witnesses because it would not appear credible (even if it was a lie).** There would be no reason to include these culturally embarrassing facts unless it really happened that way.



One other effort to explain away the empty tomb is the **Mistaken Tomb Theory**. This explanation believes that the women went to the wrong tomb. Peter and John must have also gone to the wrong tomb. The angel also must have been at the wrong tomb. The women had been at the tomb when Jesus was laid there on Friday so they knew where to go. This was a private burial ground, not a public cemetery with rows and rows of graves. And finally, the authorities could put the entire controversy to rest by going to the correct tomb and producing the body.

Where is the Empty Tomb today? It was customary then to preserve and venerate the tombs of prophets or holy men as shrines – because the remains of their bodies were still there. Because the tomb Jesus was laid in was empty, it was never made into a holy place.

Of the four major world religions based on a human founder, **Christianity is the only one that claims the tomb of its founder is empty.**

Jesus died. He was laid to rest in a garden tomb, wrapped in grave cloths and spices. The tomb was secured by a huge stone, a Roman seal and a Roman guard. On Sunday morning the tomb was found already open and empty. The resurrection, however, is not just a matter of a missing body. We need more than a certified death and an empty tomb. **We need witnesses to His resurrected body.**

Were the Witnesses Credible?

Historians use what is called **The Jerusalem Factor** to show how improbable it was that the tomb was anything else but empty. Because He was publically executed and buried and then resurrected in the same city, and everyone knew about it, anything that was not true could have easily and quickly been refuted because of **so many eyewitnesses.**



We listed above the many eyewitnesses that saw the risen Jesus over a period of 40 days. Many of these people were listed by name in the Gospels and in 1 Corinthians 9 and 15. They could be interviewed. The recorders and writers would not be able to include fanciful myths or folk tales if the actual eyewitnesses could refute what they said.

One very common alternate explanation to explain away the eyewitnesses is the **Hallucination Theory**. This proposes that his followers hallucinated his resurrection – that they were so distraught, they confused visions, dreams, and hallucinations with reality. An additional version along these same lines says that the idea of resurrection is a personal experience, the heart of faith, and not an actual event in history. Truth is what you feel in your heart.

Scholars, psychologists and historians offer the following responses to these claims.

- Hallucinations are always private, never public.
- They are restricted to individual times and places and only certain people are susceptible.
- Yet Jesus appeared multiple times and in a variety of locations to a variety of people.
- They appear over longer periods and taper off over time. They do not stop abruptly.
- Yet after 40 days, the sightings of Jesus stopped completely.
- They are a projection of a thought that preexists in the mind, linked to one's subconscious and particular past experience.
- The concept of individual resurrection in the middle of history was a brand new idea.
- In a sense, Jesus followers were caused to believe against their wills. They were not expecting this to happen. They were not gullible but exactly the opposite; slow to believe, cautious and skeptical.
- Often we assume the people in Jesus day were less intelligent and more gullible than we are today. Yet, they were more personally aware of the finality of death than we are. Because of the influence of Greek Dualism, the idea of resurrection was undesirable.

Jesus was recognizable – even in his glorious state that could walk through walls, he looked like he did before he died. He ate, He talked, He was skin and bones that could be touched, He still had the nail scars on His hands and feet. He ministered to them - especially Peter and Thomas, continued teaching and gave some final instructions. Then He ascended back into Heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father even today.

No other leader or guru of any world religion has even claimed to be God and all are still in their graves today. To this day, no one, although many of tried, has provided any proof that He did not rise again – His body has not been found.

Cause and Effects

Things happen because other things happen.

The Resurrection was the beginning of and cause of an explosion of effects that are still occurring today. Take away the Resurrection and one needs to come up with a reasonable cause for all these effects.



1. **Transformed Lives of Disciples then and now** – once timid, fearful and in hiding, they became bold witnesses to their deaths. Their lives were eternally changed. This ongoing encounter with the Risen Christ started with them and continues today all over the world, in every culture, to people from all kinds of backgrounds and personalities. **This is the greatest evidence of all.**
2. **Remained loyal to Jesus as their Messiah** – His followers overcame the potential scandal of following a crucified, dead messiah. When a messiah failed to deliver as promised, the followers would either abandon the cause or find a new messiah. Either way, a failed messiah is a forgotten messiah. However, the followers of Jesus believed that He rose and appeared to them and were willing to suffer and die for Him. They grew in number and devotion, experienced persecution and martyrdom. Jesus first followers were devout Jews who knew if they lead people to follow, worship and die for a false God they would be violating the first two commandments which would sentence them to eternal hell. They gave their lives to feeding the poor, caring for widows and orphans and helping the hurting and needy. People are not going to invent a story that's going to be embarrassing or potentially discrediting to them. **Would you die for a lie?**

3. **Conversion of Paul** – (Acts 9 and six ancient sources) Once known as Saul, a leading persecutor of early Christians – after a personal encounter with the risen Christ, he was transformed into the great Apostle to the Gentiles. He is credited with writing 13 letters that became books in the New Testament. He was martyred during Nero's persecution of Christians around AD 65.
4. **Conversion of James** – James was Jesus' half brother, a skeptic converted because of a post resurrection encounter with his risen brother. He went on to be a leader in the Jerusalem Church, writing the book of James. (1 Cor 15)
5. **Establishment of the Church** – Early Church preaching centered on the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection and turned the world upside down. The debate was not about if the tomb was empty, but why it was empty. Resurrection is preached in 12 of the 28 Chapters in the Book of Acts. There was no comeback or refutation of Peter's Acts 2 sermon because the empty tomb was still empty for all to see. The enemies of Christ had every opportunity to disprove the resurrection if it was possible. It would have destroyed the Christian movement. Instead, the Church is now a fact of history.
6. **Worship Changed** - Most of the early Christians were Jews. In celebration of the Resurrection the day of worship was changed from the Sabbath, sacred to the Jews and the 4th Commandment, to Sunday, the Lord's Day. Their object of worship became Jesus, as the One True God. The early church rejected the observances of the Jewish Law because it had been fulfilled in Jesus. The law was no longer binding in the same way. They no longer performed animal sacrifices. Their Messiah was no longer a political figure but someone who had died for the sins of the world. Abandoning cherished beliefs they had held for centuries, they moved from monotheism to belief in a triune God, instituting two new sacraments: Baptism to remember His death in their place to sin and being raised to new life in Him, and Communion to remember His death and resurrection.
7. **Explosion of new Worldview** – The belief system that became the Christian Worldview appeared full blown on the scene, overnight, immediately following his death. It was a set of beliefs that in the light of the culture was unthinkable. Jesus had a resurrected body, not a resuscitated body. His resurrection guaranteed their resurrection. Very unique views – out of nowhere. Massive shifts in worldview normally take years of talking, writing, debating, considering, musing.....Not this time. There was no process, no development, no debate or discussion. Just his disciples and followers, telling what they had seen and heard.

If there was no Resurrection, what caused these cultural and religious shifts in such a short period of time? How did a group of 1st Century Jews suddenly begin to worship a human being as divine? The Jews believed in a single transcendent, personal God. It was blasphemy to suggest worship of a human being.

Yet overnight they did. And they all died for it.

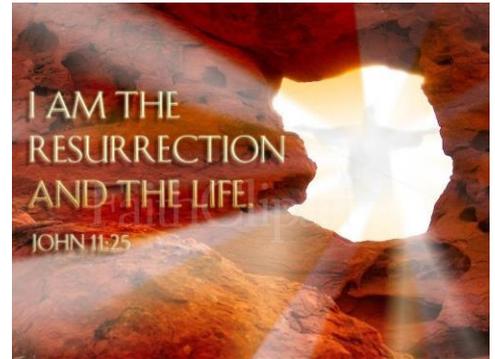
The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the core teaching of Christianity, remains one of the most historically attested facts of ancient History. It's not a matter of if it happened. It did.

As Jesus himself said to Thomas in John 20:29: ***"You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."*** NIV

For Additional Study:

Below is a list of books with great information on all aspects of the Resurrection.

- The Reason for God by Timothy Keller
- Evidence for Christianity by Josh McDowell
- The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel
- The Case for the Real Jesus by Lee Strobel
- Doctrine by Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears
- The Resurrection of the Son of God by N.T. Wright
- The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus by Gary Habermas and Micheal Licona
- The Son Rises by William Lane Craig



Quick Review – Simply Put:

Jesus lived
 Jesus certified dead on cross,
 Jesus buried in garden tomb
 Tomb secured (stone, seal, Guard)
 Disciples and followers in hiding
 Tomb discovered empty by women
 Roman Guard reports empty tomb to Jewish leaders
 Jewish leaders bribe soldiers to say disciples stole body
 John and Peter observe empty tomb
 John believes at sight of grave clothes undisturbed
 Jesus appeared to women – not credible witnesses
 Jesus appeared to disciples
 Jesus appeared to large groups
 Jesus appeared to his brother James and He believes
 Jesus appeared to Peter
 Jesus ascended
 Appearances stopped 40 days after Resurrection
 Tomb still empty – no one produced body
 Tomb not enshrined
 Disciples transformed and followers increased rapidly
 Church founded
 Worship changed
 New Worldview created
 Paul converted
 Disciples persecuted and martyred
 Church persecuted
 Church grows
 Still growing

Questions:

Did Jesus live? Did Jesus die? Was the tomb empty?
If the guards were sleeping how did they know what happened to the body?
If the body was stolen, how and why leave the grave clothes and spices undisturbed?
Who were the eyewitnesses to his resurrected body?
Were they credible? Do we know who they are?
Was Jesus recognizable? How did they know it was Him?
No group of Jews had ever worshipped a human being as God. Why did this group do it?
Why did Christianity emerge so rapidly and with such power?
No other band of messianic followers in this era ever concluded their leader had risen from the dead. Why did this group do so?
What caused bitter enemy Paul to convert?
What caused skeptical brother James to convert?
Do you have a philosophical bias?
How early were the Biblical accounts written after the actual resurrection?
Were the witnesses still around to verify or dispute the accuracy of the published or spoken information?

Your turn:

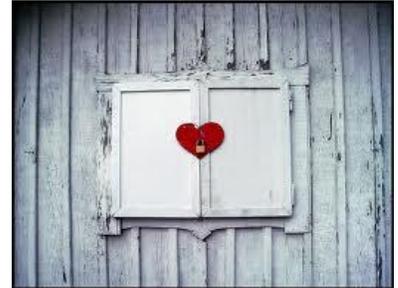
In the last journey unit we discovered that Jesus was a real person and God at the same time. Now we see that he came to earth to die and then was resurrected. His disciples didn't comprehend this at first. We still have difficulty comprehending this today. What made the difference for them? What makes the difference for you?

journal

6.7 Nitty Gritty

1. **Only God is good.** If there is no God, where does good come from? Remove God from the equation and human rights disappear.

2. **His goodness breeds generosity,** giving to all in a way that has no mercenary motive, not limited by what is deserved, going way beyond in order that those He blesses are blessed. And our true response to His goodness is gratitude and thankfulness.



3. **In God's dictionary** - the Highest Good is that which draws us closer to Him, into deeper fellowship, greater knowledge and trust.

4. **Jesus died so we could have the Good Life.**

5. **Sin is more than just breaking the rules of God,** sin is violating our relationship with God.

6. **God is patient** because He does not want anyone to perish and be eternally lost.

7. **Service helps us replace our natural tendency towards pride** with Godly submission and humility.

8. **If Christ did not rise from the dead, then Christianity is simply false.**

9. **Extra Credit Reading Recommendation:** [The Case for Christ](#) and [The Case for the Real Jesus](#) by Lee Strobel.

closure

Because it matters what we think about God

We have come to the end of **Good and Ready**, the sixth of the 12 OmniInfinity™ Journeys. This journey has caused us to **Remember** "*The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made*" and **Read** Matthew 5-7 and Exodus 20.

We **Analyzed** by comparing the Old and the New, **Investigated** God's Goodness and Patience, and **Practiced** Service. We took **Inventory** of What Drains Us and then What Fills us Up, and went **Adventuring** to Pay It Forward. We were challenged to Strengthen our Core by understanding the Truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in **More Cool Stuff**. And finally, **Lyrics** spoke to our hearts and souls as we pondered the impact of God's Goodness and Patience to us and with us through music.

The **Journal** guided us through discovering that not only do God's attributes and our lives collide, but **He rubs off on us**, impacting us at our very core. While we are made in His image, we still have this **problem with evil** and many use the existence of evil as **evidence against God**. But if there is no God, why is there so much Good? Shouldn't the **existence of Good then be evidence for God**? And who decides?

We further discovered that God is not only the source of all Good, **He is Good to the core**. Good is the essence of all He is and the motivation for all He does. It predisposes Him to be kind, benevolent and generous. It is the **reason behind why Jesus came** and why He died, all so we could have the Good Life. Love is Goodness in action and the **Highest Good is whatever draws us into a closer relationship with Him**, even if we don't appreciate it at the time.

It all started going downhill in the Garden when the Serpent set out to separate Adam and Eve from God and His Goodness. Satan knew that **if He could get Eve to doubt the Goodness of God, it would be easier to get her to disobey Him** and follow her own human wisdom instead of His revelation and instruction. As a result sin came into being as the beginning of the corruption of Good, the crack that ushered in the wisdom of man that let loose evil.

God in His Goodness countered this with a solution only He could provide, the **Goodness of God provided the Good News of Jesus**. Now He is waiting for mankind to respond and in His infinite Patience, He is restraining his Wrath and the punishment for sin and evil, all because **He does not want anyone to perish**. His patience allows Him to bear with the sin and evil that causes misery and suffering, letting it continue, as He waits for us to respond to HIM. He will not wait forever. He provided a way out, a solution, a free gift....we only have so many opportunities to accept it before His perfect patience perfectly deals with evil.

We are to emulate His patience. Not just the Patience of Job, but the Patience of God.

Now it's time to **think back** over this part of your journey and **reflect** on what you have discovered and learned. The sections below may help jog your memory. **Describe** the details of any areas that **apply** to you.

New Things I Learned

Old Things I was reminded of

Questions I have

Areas I was challenged in

First steps I took

Areas I would like to study more

“AHA!” moments

Dreams and visions



appendix

- [About the Journeys](#)
- [About Remembering](#)
- [About the Practices](#)

about the journeys...

Welcome to **OmniInfinity™**.. a series of guided journeys leading to greater knowledge and understanding of the attributes of God and the Spiritual Practices necessary to gain this knowledge.

The only requirement is a willingness to learn and discover through a variety of activities. Some elements you may naturally be drawn to, some will challenge you, and some may be way out of the box for you. It is important to do them all, in order, completing one journey before moving on to the next.

There are twelve journeys or units, **each designed to be completed in two months** - either by yourself, with a friend or in a small group setting. It is important to remember we all start from different places, we start with what we know and move on from there, but we are all traveling together.

journey elements

The following elements make up each journey and should be completed in order. Some of the elements require some advance planning, so you might want to review the entire contents of each journey before you begin. Use the Table of Contents to check off your progress.

Remember: One or more Bible verses to memorize for each journey unit.

Read: Throughout the twelve journey units you will read some of the most profound and well loved chapters in the Bible.

Analyze: A variety of Bible Study methods will be offered to help you analyze in greater depth a section of the Reading above. The goal of this section is to familiarize you with various ways to greater understand God's Word.

Investigate and 10 things: Each journey unit focuses on a group of God's attributes, defining terms, and completing a directed investigation page.

Practice and Why?: Part of growing in our relationship with God is the intentional practice of skills that have helped Christians from the beginning. Each journey unit will focus on one or more of these with instructions for developing each discipline skill. Some Practices involve doing a specific activity, while others require we stop doing certain things.

Inventory: A personal inventory will be completed regarding areas related to the attributes and skills studied in each unit, reviewing your personal history and evaluating your current practices and beliefs.

Adventuring: This section guides you to venture out into the world with a specific assignment to observe, interact with or impact your surroundings and neighborhoods. The intent is to allow God to reveal Himself through nature, media and other people.

Lyrics: You are encouraged to read the included song lyrics as poetry for your inspiration, go online and listen to the actual recordings and then reflect on the questions that follow.

Journal and More Cool Stuff: The author has included some musings and further information pertaining to the subject of each journey unit for your consideration, personal response and reflection.

Closure: At the conclusion of each journey there is a place to recap where you've been, what you learned, new thoughts, challenges, growing pains.....

enjoy the adventure ...

about remembering...



Think of this exercise as a necessary foundation for future excellence – like practicing scales on the piano or doing wind sprints or swimming laps, taking your vitamins, or eating your vegetables.

We actually recall or remember all kinds of things we've memorized without really even trying. Can you think of any?

How about your phone number, email address, street address, zip code, social security number, birthday, names of your family, how to get to work, how to drive a car, that secret recipe...or how to spell or multiply, song lyrics, movie scenes, jokes, what someone was wearing, what car they drove, sports statistics, what chocolate tastes like, what the ocean smells like, and on and on.

Why do we remember what we remember?

Recollection is just the tip of the memory iceberg. Within our marvelous and mysterious brain the memory works in collaboration with us and the world – it uses all our senses and emotions. We associate smells, colors, places, rituals, symbols, landmarks, even people, with memories and when we sense the trigger, we remember.

There are tremendous spiritual benefits from Remembering Bible verses:

- Strengthens our faith
- Shapes how we view the world
- Makes God's Word immediately accessible
- Guards our minds.....and that's just for starters.

Experts say that we will forget more in the first hour after our memory event than in one day, and more in the first day than the first month...What we remember for one month, will probably stay with us.....so the idea is to remember regularly for one month and we've got it.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started. We all learn differently – so don't be afraid to try some of the more unusual methods. Not only do we need to remember the verse, **we need to remember to work on remembering the verse.**

- Write the verse on several post it notes or index cards and put them where you will see them such as the car, the bathroom mirror, the kitchen sink, a bulletin board, your computer screen saver, your cell phone, by your bed.....
- Make plans to spend five minutes, twice a day (usually as you get up and before bed) to review.
- Say it slowly, 15 times in a row, emphasizing each word.
- If you have already learned it in another translation, review that one. Once you know it in one, look it up in a couple of other translations to see what is different.
- Review it when you are waiting in line, or on hold on the phone.
- Sing it – make up a tune to go with it
- For extra credit, add the verse before and the verse after.

about the practices...

The Spiritual Practices put us in a place where we are better able to interact with our environment and God. God can then reach inside our spirits and transform them.

Just as our body needs to eat, breathe, exercise, drink, sleep, etc., so our spiritual self needs to make sure it is being sustained, cared for, and trained.

The results include spiritual growth, a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, evidence of the fruit of the spirit, and the ultimate goal, living life like Jesus did.

The Spiritual Practices are not:

- Meritorious laws that earn favor with God
- A way to show how spiritually mature we are
- Unpleasant or difficult

Instead, they are:

- Intentional
- Activities we do that when practiced allow us to do activities we cannot now do.
- Adaptable to work with our temperaments and gifts
- Adjustable according to the rhythm and seasons of our lives

There are two kinds

Practices of Abstinence - when we stop doing something that is perfectly normal to allow ourselves to focus more on God, His Word, and growing in godliness. These also help us resist our tendency toward sins of commission (when we do something we shouldn't do). We withdraw to breathe in all that God can provide to us, breaking the hold that the world has on our lives. Practices of Abstinence help ready us and create room for the Practices of Engagement.

Practices of Engagement - when we do certain activities that help us grow in Christ and obey his commandments. The Practices of Abstinence have opened up the time and broken up the preoccupations so we are now free to learn of, focus on, and practice those things that God commands us to do. These assist in keeping us from our tendency toward sins of omission (not doing the things we should do). We engage to breathe out all that God commands us. ¹¹

As their name implies, the Spiritual Practices are not one-time events, but skills to be learned and developed over time. So don't be discouraged in the beginning if you struggle with them or find them difficult. Make them a regular part of your life. In our Journeys we would rather **emphasize the actual practicing of the Practices** and not so much the reading about them.....and let you discover the benefits as they appear in your life.

credits

1. Ann Spangler, [Praying the Names of God](#), Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, page 62-73. This book is a wonderful presentation of the history behind the names used for God in the Bible and works well as a daily devotional.
2. Arthur W. Pink, [The Attributes of God](#), Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1975, pages 77. Another classic.
3. A. W. Tozer, [The Knowledge of the Holy](#), San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1961, pages 84. This is one of the classic concise explanations of the attributes of God. A must read for those who want to grow in their knowledge of God.
4. J. I. Packer, [Knowing God](#), Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1973, page 162.
5. Stephen Charnock, [The Existence and Attributes of God, Volume 2](#), Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005, page 246. Originally published by Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853.
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9. John Wesley, Rule of Conduct, [Letters of John Wesley](#), ed. George Eayrs, p. 423.
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11. Dallas Willard, [The Spirit of the Disciplines](#), San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1988, pages 182. This is a more in depth discussion on the subject of practices of abstinence and engagement.
12. Richard Foster, [Celebration of Discipline](#), San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978, page 126.
13. John Ortberg, [The Life You've Always Wanted](#), Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, page 115. A very user friendly book with personal, practical modern interpretations and applications of the spiritual.
14. Dallas Willard, [The Spirit of the Disciplines](#), San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1988, pages 183. This is a more in depth discussion on the subject of practices of abstinence and engagement.
15. Rolf Løvland, music, and Brendon Graham, lyrics, "*You Raise Me Up*", 2002. Originally recorded by Secret Garden and then various artists, including *Josh Groban* and the group, *Westlife*.
16. Paul Simon, music and lyrics, "*59th Street Bridge Song (Feeling Groovy)*", 1966, Performed by *Simon and Garfunkel*.
17. Stephen Schwartz, music and lyrics, "*For Good*", from the musical, [Wicked](#), 2003. Performed by *Kristin Chenoweth* with the *Boston Pops Orchestra*.

All scripture references noted by NIV are taken from [The Holy Bible, The New International Version](#), by International Bible Society, 1984, Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids.

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so what now?

Continue your OmniInfinity™ adventure with

- Journey Seven: Bright, White and Right**
- Journey Eight: Hot, Hot, Hot**
- Journey Nine: O Mercy Me**
- Journey Ten: To Die For**
- Journey Eleven: Up Close and Personal**
- Journey Twelve: Perfect Ending**