

# *My Journey into Christianity*

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# *THANK YOU*

I would like to thank my loving wife Kara Kelly for keeping me motivated to keep writing throughout this project.





## *Embarking on a Spiritual Journey*

*I* have been saying for a few years now that I need to re-examine my spiritual beliefs. I can't say that I am a practicing, believing Christian. Do I believe in God? In a way. Do I believe in Jesus? In a way.

I grew up going to church on an inconsistent basis, but still had a generally Christian upbringing. I was more than fine to believe it up through elementary school. Then in Junior High I decided to "explore". I tested the waters with mostly naturist religions, but none of them really made sense. I went back to blind Christian faith and just accepted things. Then a bit later in college I really questioned everything. And over lots of self-reflection I decided it didn't make any sense.

I sat with logic and experience as my religion. I rejected the idea in general that God could exist. I rejected the idea that there could be a resurrection. I rejected the thought of an afterlife. I thought I had come to some logical conclusions that others just hadn't reached yet. In short I truly thought that at twenty some odd years old, I had progressed spiritually more than the millions of people throughout the world who have religious beliefs.

As I clung to this idea I continued to mature. And through this process I became more open to larger ideas. Through certain experiences that I could not explain through logic and beliefs I had that my mind could not fully grasp I found that there was room for more than just what I could see and feel. It was this time I realized, that I was not smarter and more developed than nearly every person in the world. No, if there are millions of people who believe in God, I am missing something. There is a conclusion I have not come to, something I haven't realized yet.

So, I started to look, started to question all over again. It probably has a lot to do with my upbringing and the community I live

in, but I tended to go back to Christianity. Sure, I looked into some eastern religions, and pagan religions, but Christianity is what keeps drawing me.

In the last few years, I have been asking people why. Why do you believe? What makes you keep that faith and not sway? And the question that has been really intriguing me, why the Bible?

This last one is something that I tend to not find answers to. There seems to be a lot of “just because” answers. What is it about the Bible that they believe is Divine? Or is it just that is what is taught. Is it just the trust in the priests who canonized it or do most people feel their faith as they read? And what about the Apocrypha? Could there be anything not canonized that is just as divine?

After a while I started to realize that although I keep asking, and truly listening to what others had to say, the one thing I hadn’t done was take the leap. I had not decided to go to church and read the bible and see if it speaks to me.

Now, I am not a jump in head first type of person. My first foray into this attempt was to try to put trust in God. I tried to thank God and do what I felt I should to praise God.

This was not the smartest thing to do first. With a lack of real belief, I felt like I was playing make believe, but everything in my life got better, quickly. Got a new job, met some great new friends, finally could pay our bills again, and even were able to give our kids a good Christmas. Then, as usual, I started to forget to focus on God and things started to slide back to not as good.

The new plan is to try again from a deeper perspective. My family and I have started going to church and I am going to start reading the Bible. I will use this as a medium to share my experience, my discoveries, my confusions...

But before I jump off I think it is important to define where I am starting from.

My belief in God... I believe in an all-powerful being. But, I do not believe that being is sentient. I see this being as energy. All the energy in the universe is what I think of as God. I see this energy as having a purpose, but not a self-awareness.

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My belief in the Bible... I always saw the Bible as a collection of stories passed down from person to person in an attempt to make sense out of the world. More or less I felt they were fairy tales.

My belief in time... I feel that time is not necessarily linear. I always found it hard to explain, but I will give it a go. I picture existence as a flip book. You know, when you draw a picture on a bunch of pages and can create animation through flipping those pages? Imagine that in three dimensions. Where every possible outcome for every decision ever made is already pre-existent. It is a massive three dimensional flip book that from a stand still just looks like a jumble of mass. But if you could fly through this clog of confusion, or flip the pages, you would see motion and life as we see it. This was always my way of explaining the idea that a divine plan exists, which always made sense to me, while at the same time we all have free will, which I also believe.

My belief in Jesus... Yes, I believe he lived. Yes, I believe he was crucified. Yes, I believe his followers believed he was the son of God. No, I do not think he was the son of God.

Well, that felt blasphemous. I better get started before I'm stuck by lightning.

Bible Read: Haven't started yet

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## *The Old Testament*

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# *Genesis*

## *Genesis 1 – Courage....*

*I* started! Go me! Now, truthfully, I only read the first chapter of Genesis and there was no ah ha moment. There were no questions that arose leaving me wanting more guidance. There was nothing more than the same old same old on the first day stuff that I have read a thousand times.

BUT!

I did want to talk about courage. Just deciding to write this has given me a new respect for people wearing their faith on their sleeve. Whether you believe or not, there is a lot of hate out there.

I am not saying I have any negative responses or reactions to what I am doing, but I was wary about writing it in the first place. I have a lot of family and a few friends that are Christian. Seeing as how I grew up in a somewhat of a backsliding Christian household, I felt I was risking a lot by bringing light to the idea that faith hasn't resonated with me. Not so much worried about being disowned or anything like that, but worried about people looking at me different.

On the other side, I also know a lot of people who are generally anti-religion. I know people who are very confident in their lives and opinions who feel that religion is nothing but fairy tales and wishful thinking. And for those people I was nervous to let them know. I was nervous to have them think I was endeavoring into non-sense. I was nervous that I would kill my credibility with them.

In the end I said, I am doing it as it matters to me. I want my children to grow up with a confident father who can speak on his faith. I want to be at one with my own faith. And I want to be able to speak to others about my own beliefs and help them through anything I can.

But as I was trying to decide if I should take the plunge publicly, it made me realize that Christians are ridiculed a lot more often than I had thought. It seems popular media, movies, news,



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celebrities, and countless other venues like to use Christianity specifically as a whipping post for their jokes and mockery. Not something that really bothers me, as I tend to like sharp humor, but again it made me build more respect for those who are open about their faith with any and every one. And especially respect those who will proselytize with strangers.

Bible Read: Genesis 1

Adam, Eve, Just Little Kids?

I figured out today that if you read 4 or so chapters a day, you can get through the Bible in less than a year. WOOT! So I am off and running.

I've read the first 4 chapters of Genesis, see a theme here?

Something I thought was confusing; in Genesis it says that God created the sky to separate the water. I understand the water in the oceans, but what about the water above the sky? I remember one of my priests growing up believed that before the great flood there was a sphere of water that surrounded the earth. He had a PHD in some sort of science, biology or physics which he got before he went to seminary. But he tried to explain how it would have extended life spans and lowered UV... I don't really remember what all he said and it was way over my head at ten years old, but the passage reminded me.

Now, I know that a lot of people are strict believers that the Bible is 100% literal and others feel it is metaphoric and seeing as how I don't know a ton about it, I can't say either way or if I even believe what it says. BUT I was reading the story of Adam and Eve...

It struck me as a metaphor for growing up. With being carefree as a child and then when you grow up you understand the difference between right and wrong, you see your own sins, and are banished from the carefree world of childhood.

I don't know exactly what eating the apple represents in my metaphor, maybe sex, which is what came to mind. But I feel funny

thinking of the Bible being that suggestive with symbolism as crude as a serpent convincing Eve to eat the apple would be.

I find that to be a comforting idea though. It makes it feel as though the land of Eden wasn't really torn from humanity as much as it was something that had to go away, something that is grown out of when we become more aware. And in that way it makes sense that Eden is viewed as something lost as childhood is something that is always missed once you lose it.

Bible Read: Genesis 4

## *Hermitness*

Last week in church the pastor was speaking about belonging or the importance of being involved in a supportive, religious community.

One of the reasons I continue to get drawn into religion is because each time I give it a chance I receive messages that are actually useful to me personally. Remembering this idea, I believe this was a good and important sermon for me to hear.

My wife is big on friendships and getting involved. I, on the other hand, am not very fond of knowing or hanging out with large groups of people. I consider myself a homebody and prefer to have a small number of friends. If I could choose to go to a party with twenty people I know or having a nice conversation with one or two people I know, I will pick the one or two people 99% of the time.

So, when it comes to church I have always disliked the idea of socializing at church. In my own head, I thought it was somewhat disrespectful to God throwing in your personal social time into the time set aside to worship him!

The sermon last Sunday was largely about the importance of community and how having supportive and likeminded people around you as you take this spiritual journey can aid in your discoveries. On top of that, he expounded with the benefits of having people in your life that care. He talked about how it can help in your life when other issues come up. He talked about how it can help in a financial crisis or to help your children make friends.

After we left and throughout this week while I have been contemplating the lessons from the sermon, I realized how it can also help you to grasp onto one of those common Christian principles.... Love thy neighbor. Building a large group of friends and getting to know them and help them would most likely increase my opinion of humanity. And why would you not want to form your own circle of

people with those who aspire to be as loving and good as they can. (I am not saying they all will achieve this or even understand it fully, but it is the thought that counts, right?)

This all hit me pretty hard. I know it is a normal thing for most people to want to have a large circle of friends, but my introvertedness pushes me in the opposite direction. And, my hardheadedness has in the past convinced me that it is better for me to foster this seclusion because it is just who I am. I have a history of discouraging my own growth.

It is a simple positive of focusing on religion in my life that I focus on growing as a person in more than just one way. It helps me keep my eye on the ball and become a better and well-rounded person.

Bible Read: Genesis 14

## *I Guess No One is Perfect*

When I was younger and I would read parts of the Old Testament, I would always come away with the comment of “God is mean!” As I’ve gotten older I can see more into these scriptures and although some of the time God seems a bit insecure with the “testing” of his faithful, he does seem to be a forgiving and giving God. But, now as an adult, the question that keeps popping up in my head is how can these fathers be so mean to their children?

I am sure this is somewhat of a generational gap, but I could never do half the things to my children that the men in Genesis do to theirs.

I am afraid I am having an issue with reading the Bible, in which I am only reading it from one person’s perspective as opposed to seeing it through the eyes of everyone involved. I appear to have a tendency to only see things through the eyes of who I see as the victim.

Like in Genesis 27 where Jacob pretends to be Esau to steal his blessing, I as a reader feel complete contempt for Abraham for not loving both his sons equally, for Rebekah for making her son Jacob deceive his father, for Jacob for going through with it, but not for Jacob. I feel nothing but sympathy for Jacob.

This is one of those things that confuse me with the Bible in general. I tend to have a lot of negative emotions while reading these stories, when I assumed I would be feeling more love towards all the characters.

Bible Read: Genesis 31

## *God Personified*

*A*t church yesterday, the sermon was about making changes on the inside.

He said that just going to church more does not make you a better a person, a better Christian. But that it is change in your mind and heart that actually affects the person you are. He said that quitting drinking or going to church weekly or not cheating on your spouse are just outward changes and if there is no change within your mindset you are not growing spiritually.

He used the metaphor of a corporation. If a corporation that is run terribly, bad to their employees and customer decides to remake their brand, only changing their logo and remodeling their stores, they are still a terribly run corporation. They did not change who they were just how they appeared.

He said to change from within it needs to begin with an abounding love for God. You should ask and pray to God to help you learn of him and change for him. And that would be the way to have true spiritual change.

I like the message. It speaks to me as I want to truly understand. But, I am having some slight issues with the passages I have recently read.

It seems as though a love for God is not enough. I am quickly falling under the impression that to follow the messages of the Bible you need to vocalize your views on God. You need to speak, literally, to God and walk your faith as much as you believe it in your head.

I have been moving this way because of a few specific stories. Adam and Eve eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge and then hide themselves as they become aware of their nakedness. It is the hiding of their nakedness that tips off God. He asks Adam why he is hiding

before he says what Adam has done. Then in Genesis 22 when Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac, God lets him nearly kill his son in order to test his obedience or devotion to him.

These passages seem to speak against a long held belief I have in Christianity. The idea is that God hears your prayers. God hears your thoughts. And that God knows what is going on with you. I am not sure where this idea came from, but it seems apparent in Genesis that the people were not heard by God in their thoughts. They had to speak out loud to talk to god. They had to prove things through their actions as opposed to God knowing their intentions.

A simple idea such as this moves God to a more realistic venue in my mind. As an actual being who needs the affirmation and relies on direct communication makes sense to me. It also morphs what I thought I would find in the Bible. I was hoping to bring the God that I trusted in as a child back to the forefront. I wanted to lie in bed and pray, in my mind, to God and feel the comfort that I am handing over my problems that I can't handle to someone who could help.

I am not saying the Bible has hurt all those aspects of this vision, but it seems as though things are changing in ways I didn't expect.

Bible Read: Genesis 38

## *There is Something to be Said for Tradition*

*T*he church we have been attending is non-denominational. I think I may have said before that it is largely music, Christian Rock, and a sermon.

I appreciate this to a degree as it doesn't feel monotonous and repetitive. It always feels like a different day. The music is different from week to week, sometimes with different musicians on stage. The sermon of course changes from week to week and still gives you a glimpse into the scriptures.

But, seeing as how I grew up in the Episcopal Church, I am used to thinking of "church" as a full mass every week. Full mass in the Episcopal Church being a reading from both the Old and New Testaments, plenty of hymns, a sermon, communion, and some standard prayers, found in the Book of Common Prayer. Now going through the Holy Eucharist every single week takes a toll on you, especially as a child. Church seems boring, to say the least.

Now, I find myself missing the full mass. We have been going to church for about a month now and the lack of standardized prayer, communion, the reading of psalms, the sitting, the standing, the kneeling, well, I kind of miss it. Now don't get me wrong I do not want to do this every single Sunday, but I think it is a good experience every so often.

It could be my curiosity of history and how I love seeing how things were done way back in the day. It could also be my need for some kind of structure. Either way I think there is a lot to gain from a congregation led in prayer. I think there are great experiences that can be had singing a hymn along with a choir. I think kneeling before a



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cross and taking communion can be as eye opening as anything else in religion.

I need to start finding one day to go to traditional mass. Maybe on Wednesdays, I know there are churches that do that on Wednesdays. I don't want to go every week, maybe once a month, but not on holidays. I never understood the holiday only church goers.

I think I need some of the tradition to feel more connected to God and the Bible. Otherwise it almost feels as if the God I am reading about is not the God I am going to church to worship.

Bible Read: Genesis 42

## *To Love Your Child*

*I* read my first Bible story that really spoke to me. I believe I had said I don't know a lot of Bible stories and I wasn't kidding.

The story of Joseph was absolutely amazing. The reason it was so moving was because of the emotions that I went through in reading it. Having his brothers, his own family, sell him off and claim him as dead was heart wrenching. I cannot imagine family turning on me.

Then he goes to Egypt and makes his way out of prison to rise to power as the interpreter of dreams. I really felt the redemption for his life. But, when his brothers came as he foretold I was ready for the vengeance. I had got used to the stories of the Bible being full of Karma and revenge, but Joseph was different. He brought his family back and reunited them and overlooked their faults because he could see his greater purpose. He understood that it had to happen and he saved thousands instead of having an easy life. Finally, an amazing tale with forgiveness.

The thing is, it was more than that. There was so much respect for talent in the story with the Pharaoh trusting in Joseph. There was love between families and for those who had wronged each other. And, most of all the interaction between Jacob and Joseph and his sons really cemented the reality of the story.

It was so invigorating to read Jacob bless Joseph's sons. Although I earlier felt that the men of the Bible were mean and harsh to their children, I see the difference now. The respect from son to father AND father to son was so great in this book that the harsh punishments were reactions to a disrespect to the most deeply rooted love for one another. It seems these were done as man who is hurt by betrayal.

I don't feel today there is such an expectation of children that there was in Genesis. And in the same, I don't think there is as much

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of an expectation of parents either. The idea that a blessing from the father meant the world to these people really says something.

Bible Read: Genesis 50

## *Status Report Day 7*

*I* am seven days into reading the Bible and I have finished the Book of Genesis. I always thought the Book of Genesis was about the beginnings. Specifically, the beginning of man and the world, but it is truly about the ancestry of Moses and the origin of the Israelites.

The stories are all over the span the interest. There are boring ones, sad ones, scary ones, and a great one. The book ends well and, as much as I didn't expect it, it is very inspirational. It is one of those books that make you glad to be a human. Probably even more glad to be an Israelite.

The first five books of the Bible are supposed to be written by Moses. I always thought that was just speculation, but in reading, it makes sense. The Book of Genesis is a family tree of sorts. I have personally enjoyed making a family tree and collecting stories of my own ancestors and that is what this is. Moses has recorded the stories of his family. All the "begat"s make sense because he is recording the tree.

My views have not changed drastically. I have not had a bad day since I started reading though. I still question if God exists. I still feel there is a great possibility that the earlier stories in the Bible are old word of mouth myths. But I'm starting to think that only is true of the first half of Genesis.

Adam and Eve seem to me to be the Big Bang Theory or the Theory of Evolution of its time. I am currently thinking it is a theory that was generally accepted over a large period of time over a large consensus of people. The stories of Noah probably refer to real events that were manipulated incidentally by the story coming down over years and years. But as you get closer to the years of the author himself, the stories are closer to first and have had less time to skew

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from memory.

I am enjoying the journey and hope that it continues to surprise me. I also hope there is a little more explanation about a couple things.

1. Why God seems to refer to himself as we at times?
2. Who are the Nephilim?

Bible Read: Genesis

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# *Exodus*

## *Non-Confidence Just Like Moses*

*T*here is a bit of a transition from Genesis to Exodus. The story continues, but in a different way.

The action moves slower. The longest story of Genesis is less than ten chapters, while seven chapters into Exodus, it appears the story will be going on much longer.

We see the introduction of physical miracles. In Genesis we see unlikely things happen, but Exodus has scientifically impossible things happen.

Also and possibly the most interesting part we have the introduction of Moses who is insecure. He does not question God as much as pleads with him to let someone else do it. This is a huge detail. I hadn't realized it, but in Genesis all the people that were the focus of the stories seemed to follow God's orders without reservation.

I understand that this is most likely just an omission, but the idea that Moses is trying to get out of being the leader gives him a very humanistic quality. I would have to think that if I was told to go to a Pharaoh and tell him to release all his workers, who are being oppressed and abused, I would be nervous. I would want someone else to do it for me.

Just as it was nice to relate the first people, Adam and Eve, to the idea that they were vulnerable to sin through the tree of knowledge, it is nice to see a biblical figure such as Moses self-conscious and nervous about his calling.

But in the end he does as he is asked. Currently I am not through the story and great things have not come of it, but I know they will. I have a small understand of the Book of Exodus and am confident things will turn out well.

I am taking this as an example of why you need to work towards what you know is the right thing to do. If things don't go

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well, keep going anyway, persevere towards the goal. Don't let doubt and excuses get in the way.

Bible Read: Exodus 7



## *You Die Because He Sinned*

*I*t seems as though, in the Book of Exodus, God is torturing people. He has told Moses to go and convince the Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt to go worship him.

Good so far.

He has given Moses the ability to perform miracles of a sort in order to show the Pharaoh that he is really a messenger of God.

Still good.

But after the first couple times, if I am reading it correctly, God does not allow the Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave. Each time the Pharaoh starts to give in, the Bible says “God hardened the Pharaoh’s heart” and then he does not let them leave.

Wait... WHAT?

I don’t understand why God would do that? He consistently inflicts plagues across Egypt, but makes the Pharaoh reject the offer. Not only has it kept the Israelites in Egypt longer continuing to be oppressed, but it is a constant punishment for the Egyptians as they are inflicted with gnat, fleas, and frogs. They endure powerful hail storms, their crops all dying, and even their families dying in the night. Why would God force these things to happen?

Maybe it will make sense later. The other issue I have with this and it is probably a modern view, but why do all the Egyptians have to be punished when it is just the Pharaoh that is making decisions? I don’t understand the idea of guilt by association.

I am hopeful that it will make sense to me. It is just like my earlier question of parents being terrible to their children in Genesis; it may dawn on me later as to why it was written the way it was.

Bible Read: Exodus 12

## *Passover... Frightening*

*A*fter reading the story of Passover I am a little disturbed. Passover was one of the many holidays that I remember being celebrated in church. Passover, Lent, Easter, Christmas, Palm Sunday, Ash Wednesday, and I'm sure there are others.

Of course I never knew what most of those were for. I understood Easter was the day Christ rose again and Christmas was Christ's birthday, but other than that I just knew they were holidays.

Growing up in America I was under the impression that everything Christian had a loving message behind it. I always thought that the point of everything was to worship God and love your neighbor. I never considered anything could be a celebration of death.

While I was reading of the plagues of Egypt, I kept thinking, "Wow, these are lame." I mean... Frogs? Really? I can see gnats being annoying, the flies would suck, and the hail/bloody river are all scary or at least a torment. But, the frogs, just strange. Not to mention in the middle of a famine, frogs should help with the lack of food.

Then, I got to the final plague. God decided to kill every first born of every home in Egypt. The first born of their livestock as well as their family were differentiated from the Israelites because they put blood on their door posts.

Finally God flies over Egypt and kills what I assume is thousands if not more children! Again it comes back to the idea that God is vengeful. So, it is called pass over because he passed over the Israelites and didn't kill their firstborns.

I really find these types of stories discouraging to my view of Christianity. It seems mean, evil, and downright horrible. I can see where the hellfire and brimstone sermons come from and why someone would fear God. It just isn't the God I expected to find.

Bible Read: Exodus 21

## *God Among Gods*

One of the things I remember from the Episcopal Church I went to was the mention of one true God. In this I understood it as there was only one God that existed, everything else in the eyes of the Church was fiction.

I understand that I have not come anywhere close to finishing the Bible, but at the point I am at, it seems as though the Bible does not claim that there is only one God. It actually seems to suggest that there is more than one.

I had mentioned before, early in Genesis, that God referred to himself in the plural. It has been pointed out to me that it is a translation issue which is fine, but I still question it. Then, there is the Nephilim which the Bible says are the sons of gods. Again I am noting the plural as opposed to the sons of God. It mentions other people, not Israelites, worshipping other gods. It also says in the Ten Commandments that you shall not put other gods before him. Again it doesn't say false gods (just false idols) which would suggest they don't exist. It instead says other gods.

It makes me think in the terms of Genesis and Exodus the Bible is far from claiming that the God of Abraham and Jacob is the only god.

Many people will feel this is wrong and the Bible is the only true testament of God, but if the Bible is historically accurate it makes sense to me that other ancient texts could be true also.

If there was a time when God walked among men, the sons of gods walked among men, unfathomable miracles were performed in the presence of man, and people spoke directly to the divine, then it is completely fathomable that the Gods of the Wiccans, Romans, Greeks, and Native Americans walked the Earth also.

I can actually see this as a battle on Earth for the hearts and minds of people. Not a physical battle, but more a political battle

where the gods were vying for power.

Again this is something that helps legitimize the Bible to me. It always seemed a ridiculous statement to say that this collection of books is the only accurate description of a supernatural power on the Earth. When unbelievable happenings such as the parting of the Red Sea and a plague of frogs (sigh) is considered possible, but Zeus sitting atop Mount Olympus being impossible seems illogical.

Beyond that it makes the God of the Bible more desirable. From my own knowledge he seems to be the god who is giving the power to man. He allowed man to perform the miracles and live great lives while the other gods seem to be keeping the power for themselves and making man seem more like their pets or slaves more than their children.

Maybe this is the type of thought I needed to put realism to God being vengeful. If he is competing with other gods it makes sense that he has to appear powerful. It makes sense that he has to commit horrible acts to convert people to his followers. If the Egyptians were worshipping other gods it would do no good to be nice to them. It would appear as though their own gods are protecting them. God would have to protect his own people, punish the others, and make it be known those who follow him will become his people and be protected.

Bible Read: Exodus 27

## *-More on Tradition-*

*I* remember people saying that can't read the bible because all the "begat"s in Genesis are too boring. Let me tell you, the "begat"s in Genesis are golden literature compared to the descriptions of the tabernacle, curtains, altar, vestments... in Exodus.

This is the most boring part I have run into the Bible and seems to be never ending!

I would just skip over it since it really has no bearing on my life or my opinion of the religion, but I said I am reading cover to cover and that is my plan!

I understand the point of it. I understand that it makes a big difference in how traditional churches operate or at least how they decorate, but it makes it hard to get through.

I have had people tell me the rules are hard to get through, but at least with the earlier rules, they apply to me. Don't steal, don't lie, don't kill... those are useful.

It also brings up another question. Does this make modern day churches blasphemous or at least not appealing in the eyes of God? If this information was in some Apocrypha writing I would understand not doing it, but it is in Exodus which is a part of every Bible that I know of.

I guess it takes me back to the tradition. It was there for a reason.

Bible Read: Exodus 28

## *Mandatory Weekends*

*F*inishing up Exodus, I am starting to get into the laws. From my modern day perspective they seem to be odd at best.

There are some that make sense. If you kill someone you should be killed. I get that. If you injure someone you pay for their lost income while they heal. Makes sense to me. If you have sex with a virgin you try to marry her. Thumbs up.

There are rules about slaves, which apparently is not what we think of a slave today. It appears as though a slave in biblical times is more of an indentured servant. A slave is to be let free with no debt on their seventh year of servitude. You can't kill your slave. You have to help them out when they have finished serving you... These are not very applicable to my life, but sure they sound like good rules.

These are all fine and dandy, but then there are a couple rules I got to that are at least a little unsettling.

The first is that you should be put to death if you have sex with an animal. Ok. That is creepy and gross. Sorry, but that is not an issue I think of as something that needs to be pointed out. It makes me glad I did not live back then if that was a common issue that had to have a law set against it.

The other is the rule of observing the Sabbath. It says if you do work on the Sabbath you should be put to death! This is because you are observing the fact that God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh. That seems really harsh. I guess it is nice in a way. Religiously, you can't work seven days a week, but death?

The thing is, it isn't just don't go to work. Based on the story of the Israelites eating the manna given from God, it means no work at all. They were to relax to such extents on the Sabbath that they were supposed to gather their food for the Sabbath the day before. I am taking this as you should not do anything! No cooking, no cleaning, no working, no nothing. Sounds like you should sit in a dark room and

just be.

But that kind of brings me to something else. It says you can't kill, but if someone works on the Sabbath they should die. Is it god that will dole out the punishment? Or does God look the other way if you kill your neighbor for a biblical reason?

The more I read, the more I think that these stories are not perfectly applicable today.

Bible Read: Exodus 33

## *A Conversation with God*

Moses had a relationship with God that makes me think another of my assumptions about him is wrong. In specific I was always under the view that God was all knowing and therefore unwavering.

I assumed that God only did good, was all knowing, and therefore never wavered as he saw everything from every side every time. He would know the most positive way of going about something because he would see it from every side and know better than man if it was the moral thing to do.

When Moses was on the Mount with God and God was going to destroy the Israelites while they were worshiping the golden calf, Moses asked God not to do it. He reminded him of his promises to his ancestors and asked for mercy.

Then God changed his mind.

That is a huge statement. God redirected his plan from the wishes of man. He listened to reasoning of man and let it sway his decision.

I am starting to believe that reading the Bible is going to redefine everything I think about Christianity as that would not have been possible in my previous ideology.

There is so much just in the first two books that make God a being as opposed to an idea that it floors me. I have considered God in the past as not a being but as a force that did not think, but only guided things in the right direction. And I thought that my theory was possible within scripture. I can see that it isn't appropriate for scripture because it appears even God can change his plan.

These parts of the Bible seem to be a pretty big chink in the armor of predestination. If God changes destiny from the words of man, how can everything be predetermined?

Bible Read: Exodus 40



## *Status Report Day 14*

*T*wo books down and a whole bunch to go.

I have to say that Exodus was more disappointing than Genesis. Not in the beginning, Exodus starts out very strong with another great tale of Moses being chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt through miracles and overcoming self-doubt.

But once they cross the Red Sea the book turns into an instruction manual. There are a few more interesting happenings and some informative rules, but there is a huge portion of descriptions about how to make curtains, an altar, vestments...

I am sure this was all important information at the time, but is not useful for me and it doesn't have a spiritual impact on me. What has made a spiritual impact on me is just the constant thoughts I have about God.

During most portions of my life I have tried to expand my understanding of the world and how it works, but only when I was very young did I think about the possibility of God being the creator. Today, even though I am still questioning, I am finding a peace in the world.

Driving to work today I looked up and saw some birds flying in the wind. Their patterns of flight displayed across the cloudy sky gave me a feeling of warmth. There is a beauty in nature that I had let pass me by without notice.

Reading the Bible with the stories of men putting a faith in something greater than themselves has made the small details of the world seem more miraculous.

On the other hand, it has also made me feel separated from nature, or God, or life in general being stuck in a cubicle. When the world you see is nothing but muted colored walls, unnatural noises of telephones, and the scent of industrialized sanitizer, you begin to feel like you aren't a living being. There is a separation from the world we

come from that is not great for your soul.

It is a strange and big step for me. I have always been an anti-outdoor person. I don't like heat, bugs, noise, grass... So, feeling unnatural indoors is new for me.

New questions after Exodus

1. If the tabernacle was recreated would God come to it?
2. When God is the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire has he completely changed form or is he creating the pillars?

Bible Read: Exodus

## *Leviticus*

## *One Sin, One Dollar*

*L*eviticus is very descriptive about what sacrifices you need to make for sinning. A bull here, a sheep there... It makes me think two things.

First it makes everything in the Bible feel very Pagan. Now, I don't have a real definition of Paganism, but in my own mind it involves sacrificing things and doing all kinds of rituals to appease the gods.

There is so much detail in how to sacrifice to God that it feels like a Pagan manual. It seems disturbing to me in today's world. I cannot imagine a situation where I would place my hand on the head of an animal while it is killed, then taking the blood and anointing horns on an altar, cutting off the fat...

It is probably my modern day city boy mentality, but it feels scary. I started to think this in Exodus when it described how to make Aaron and his sons priests. It talked about placing blood on their earlobe, thumb, and big toe. It almost feels like it is going to start talking about bonfires, naked dancing, killing virgins, and chanting in low tones.

I think if I grew up on a farm I may have a slightly different perspective. It also may have a lot to do with growing up hearing that Jesus died for my sins. That idea makes all this sacrifice talk seem primitive.

I also don't fully understand why something must die if I sin. But it makes me think about sinning in the constraints of economics.

It seems as though you should not sin because it is a bad thing to do, but knowing that you have to sacrifice something every time you do it, I start to think about how much I can afford to sin.

How big is my herd of livestock? How much time do I have to spend during sacrifices? It almost seems that if I have a lot of time and a lot of animals, I might just sin because of the benefits I will get

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from it.

To me it seems like this approach doesn't instill the idea of being good as much as make being bad a scarce resource.

Bible Read: Leviticus 5

## *Big G God as a Little g god*

*I*n the past I have heard people say that God is an alien that created us. This has always been pushed into the corner of my mind that is reserved for insanity. But I can see where that logic is coming from.

As I have wrote, it seems very likely to me that the Bible is not claiming that God is the only god and that he may be a part of a larger group of being, a species of sorts. Adding in the Nephilim and the miracles, God being an alien seems to be rational explanation for the unexplained events of the Bible.

If God was a species and created man's DNA to mimic his own it would be expected that the science he possessed could be capable of defying the known laws of physics. Not defying the all the laws of physics, just the ones we know of making everything seem beyond the realm of possibility.

It would explain some of the things I have talked about already. But, I am not ready to jump on that band wagon. Plus, it leaves lots of questions for the creation part of Genesis.

But, I don't think it is important. If you believe God is a physical being then what does it matter if he is an alien? Technically if he is from heaven and heaven is a physical place whether it is in this dimension or not, he is an alien. It just sounds crazy to phrase it as such.

That also brings up the question of science. I have never understood the idea that science and religion don't mix. I would think if anything religion gives science goals. If you believe that all the events of the Bible are historic facts then that should give science something to strive for.

It should give scientists something to explore and try to explain. At one time, the idea of space travel seemed beyond our reach. The splitting of an atom was an impossibility. Then why can't the miracles in the Bible be scientifically explained? I am not saying

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they would be statistically probable, but they could be a possibility in the real world.

I for one would rather not understand a miracle. The idea that life can produce for you, no matter how impossible, is rather uplifting. To understand how everything works and doubt the possibilities of God feels backwards.

Bible Read: Leviticus 7

## *Suffer for the Cause*

*T*he sermon at church on Sunday was about the sacrifice one faces in giving your life over to Christ. He was comparing the sacrifice one gives in the giving of their money, time, or work the sacrifice Paul gave while being imprisoned.

Now, I know nothing of Paul and what he did as I have not got to the New Testament, but I get the point. The obvious question is why you would do this. My guess was to have a deeper connection with God. But that isn't the direction the Pastor went. He spoke about the expansion of the Gospels.

This seemed like a radical statement to me. I understand saying this to a group of Bishops. I would get it if you said it in seminary. But, to a congregation at church?

How many of the people who are at church feel so strongly about their faith that they will sacrifice portions of their life to spread the Gospels? He spoke about people who have risked their lives and received torture to spread the word of God. But for me, sitting in the church thinking about a book that I don't even know if I believe in, I couldn't imagine risking something of such great importance to my own selfish life to spread the word of Christ.

He talked about how great Jesus suffered for his people and how sacrificing your own possessions and parts of your life to spread his word displays to others how sacrifice is a part of the religion. He said that seeing such sacrifice for them shows them the love and passion of God.

In our selfish times I think this almost would be a deterrent for someone to turn to Christianity. Why would sacrificing your own life make someone else want to join your cause?

There are certain things in any religion that make things feel a little cult-ish and this was one of those.

But while I was sitting in the church the stories of the Israelites



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that I have read so far came to mind. The sacrifices of Joseph and Moses to do God's will. The greatness that these men rose to through the serving of God seemed fitting for the sermon. And for those men it wasn't a desire to sacrifice, but a willingness to for the returns that God promised.

Maybe it is the same today. People sacrifice for the kingdom of heaven. Maybe it is still a selfish motivation. Maybe people do what they do because of the promises they believe will be fulfilled.

It is a less inspiring thought, but feels realistic. Just as the Israelites questioned Moses and cursed him for driving them out of Egypt to certain death, I wonder if the kingdom of heaven came into question for the people who sacrifice great things to spread the word of Christ. Would they also question the value of their sacrifice?

Bible Read: Leviticus 9

## *Don't be Greedy with God*

*I* was listening to the radio show *Coast to Coast AM* the other day and they had a guest on named James L. Paris. He wrote a book called *How to Pray for a Financial Miracle*. The interview had a lot to be desired as the callers weren't interested in asking questions, but he had something to say that floored me.

In the past when I have decided to pray, it involved me saying thank you, please do this and please do that. He started off by saying that is the incorrect way to pray.

My first response was to tune him out. But, he followed that by saying praying isn't a one way communication, but a conversation with God. And, asking for this or that is not the way to go about it.

He talked about having a, few hour, prayer session on the beach where he told God the outcome he wanted and filling up a pages of a notebook with God's ideas of how to achieve his goal.

This is groundbreaking to me. I keep going through the Bible seeing God as a being that actually communicates with people. He changed his mind because of Moses input. He convinced Moses to do things he did not want to do, but wanted the eventual outcome. Joseph in the end thanked God for putting him through what he went through because the end result was so wondrous.

If the Bible is telling me anything, it is telling me that God is not an unseen power that takes support tickets through prayer just to fulfill them in the order they are received. It is saying that God is a being that loves his followers and will help them reach righteousness through support, like that of a parent or mentor. He will push you past your hesitations and worries to achieve outcomes that everyone wants. So, my prayers from now on will not be me asking for God to give and give, but for me to ask God how I can give.

Bible Read: Leviticus 11

## *-Jiminy the Clean-*

*I* have always heard that the Bible says you can't have pork. I have reached a verse that says you can't eat pork! It is kind of fun to find the verses that you always hear about and see what it actually says.

According to Leviticus pork is unclean and you shall not eat unclean foods. I think this is a little sad as I do enjoy some crispy bacon for breakfast, but it isn't the biggest deal. But what else is unclean?

Just to name a few, on the land you can only eat animals that chew cud AND have a split hoof. So, the Bible tells me not eat Camel, the Rock Badger (no idea what that is), pig, rabbit... Ok, that isn't that bad. To the best of my knowledge, I can still have my beef.

For the fowl it says no vultures, no owls, no osprey, no eagle... It goes on for a while, but it doesn't mention chicken, turkey, or pheasant, so I think I am good there.

For the sea anything that does not have scales AND fins. That eliminates shell fish. There is another sacrifice, but at least I can have my trout.

In regards to animals that swarm. You aren't supposed to eat the weasel, the mouse, the gecko, the alligator. I think there were a few more. Other than alligator I can't imagine people wanting to eat these.

The winged insects are all unclean except for those with a bend in their leg over the foot. WHAT!? Insects? No thank you. And insects have feet? That could be a translation issue, but it makes me think of Disney characters. Like Jiminy Cricket walking around with a top hat and shoes on. Speaking of Jiminy, he isn't unclean. You can eat crickets, grasshoppers, and Locusts.

My modern day mind is running wild again wondering how pigs are unclean, but crickets are not. That is just unappetizing.

I am glad that I don't seem to have to worry about most of

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what I eat. Just pork and shrimp for the most part.

I wonder if there is a correlation between the amount of pork eaten and punishment from God. I've noticed an increase interest in bacon over the last couple years. Not sure of the general level of acts of God.

Bible Read: Leviticus 12

## *The Ever-Expanding Testament*

*W*hy is it that there are never any more books added to the Bible?

I understand that the Bible is supposed to be divinely inspired or divinely written, but why is it that only books from thousands of years ago can have that designation? If God guided the hand of man to write the Bible, I have to think he may still do it today.

The Vatican still canonizes saints why can't they canonize new books of the Bible. I have to believe that there are books out there being written today that espouse the beliefs of God and Christ. I have to believe that there are events today that are guided by God, that defy the odds, and are a holy miracle.

Specifically, I wonder about the creation of America? From the pilgrims coming over and signing the Mayflower Compact, which dedicated the new government when arriving in America to the Glory of God and the advancement of Christianity, to the tiny colony defeating the world's strongest military and forming a nation based on God given rights and truths. To me this seems like a miraculous story that helps promote the idea of God and the accounts and diaries of the time could be considered for canonization.

On the other hand, I wonder how the Bible inspires literature. There are the obvious books that are retellings of the biblical stories, but what about the obscure things.

What about Twilight? When Moses came down from the mount after facing God he was glowing. Twilight vampires sparkle. Coincidence?

Bible Read: Leviticus 13

## *Vacation Time!*

**R**eligious holidays have always been something that I thought employers should let you celebrate. If you need to take a day off because you believe it is necessary to celebrate or not work, I always thought that was appropriate.

Nearing the end of Leviticus I ran across sabbatical. Just as you are supposed to not work on the seventh day of the week, you are not supposed to work on the seventh year. Suddenly, I don't think many employers are going to be very accepting of religious practices.

Don't get me wrong, I am all for taking a year off every seven years. I could really use a whole year off every seven years, but I do not know of any employer who is going to allow this.

Sadly enough, IF your workplace had to allow you this time, it would probably convert more people than the promise of everlasting life. It is a sad state of humanity, but I would bet the number of people going to church every Sunday would increase dramatically if that meant they could have a 365 day vacation every seven years.

Who cares about the kingdom of heaven, the life of a good man, the love for your fellow man, and the sacrifice that is taught from the Bible? Who cares when you can sit on your butt for a year?

I could be wrong and if so I would feel better about the state of our world today, but I think that kind of promise goes further today than promises of the future.

Bible Read: Leviticus 26

## *Status Report Day 20*

*I* am finished with Leviticus and not a moment too soon. That was a painful book to read. Sure, there are some interesting things in there, like God killing Aaron's sons for not following directions, but it was tough to get through.

I have had somewhat of the opposite effect of Leviticus as I did from Genesis and Exodus. After Genesis and Exodus I felt closer to nature, closer to God, and more at peace with the world. After Leviticus I feel more at odds with life. The severe amount of rules and regulations just made me realize the amount of hardships that exist in life. But, it isn't just the natural hardships of food and shelter. It is also the hardships created by society with taxes and the need for money.

I found Leviticus to be boring and kind of depressing. I am hoping we are done with the lists of rules for a while. I need something more inspiring than what I can and cannot eat.

### New Questions

1. Why does God need so much attention? He has required his people to sacrifice things constantly and celebrate him many times throughout their lives.
2. How much livestock do these people have?

Bible Read: Leviticus

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# *Numbers*



## *-What if... God Lost?-*

Going back to my theory that the Bible is the historical record of God battling with other deities to win the souls of man, I have to pose a question.

What if God lost this battle?

It is a similar question to what if Germany had won World War II. The answer is always, “we would be speaking German”. But I think if you look at the Bible in this way it makes that question much more profound.

If God had lost his battle to the gods of the Greeks, we would not have the “Christian” America that we have. I don’t know a bunch about Greek mythology, but my guess is we would not have the morals we have. If God lost his battle to a religion with more bloodlust we may not have the questions of science versus religion. I think that the idea that Christianity made the journey from Adam to today is what has given us as much freedom of thought and action as we are accustomed to here in America.

Bible Read: Numbers 1

## *Government is a Modern Day God*

So, God has instituted a draft of all me, twenty years or older. This is a big deal to me. It is ok to fight for you God if you are twenty, but today it is ok to fight for your country if you are eighteen. There seems to be a problem here.

The Bible is pretty harsh on people. God kills people and incites plagues for sins, but even he does not think an eighteen year old is old enough to die for their beliefs. Why then does our country feel that is old enough?

When I was young, I thought nothing of the age to join the military, but now I find it a little sickening to think that we let kids who are not even two decades old go and die for their country. I would think as a people we would want to protect our children longer and fighting for your government doesn't seem like the best way to do that.

It makes me realize how much we have raised our government up as our god. We are willing to send our children to die for it, we tithe to it through taxes, and even let them tell us what we can and can't ingest through drug laws.

The Bible has not made me believe in God as of now, but it has made me less proud of where we have come. No matter if God exists, I do not think we should be putting the decisions of men on a pedestal and treating it like the word of God.

Bible Read: Numbers 6

## *Didn't Your Mother Teach You Not to Swear*

*T*he Bible says you shouldn't swear to God. It also says you shouldn't curse your parents. I can understand these as being good ideas, but I do not believe they mean what we take them to mean today.

I think the ideas behind swears and curses of the Bible are more in the literal sense. It isn't the same to be frustrated and say "I swear to God if you don't clean this room..." as it does to say "I swear on the Lord my God, I will avenge!"

I think the idea behind the swearing to God is more along the lines of you should not gamble your faith. Just as I would never risk the life of my child for anything, one should not risk their faith and love for God for anything either.

The idea with the parents is the same thing. I think when the Bible says don't curse your parents I think it literally means don't curse them. Don't try to literally damn them to Hell.

Maybe the idea is that love is greater than passion. Maybe the idea is don't let emotions control you. Maybe the idea is to keep cool, calm, and remember the bigger things in life.

I think our language has evolved to a point where these words don't mean what they once did. But then again, it seems fairly plain that God, in Genesis, does not hear the thoughts of people. He had to have vocal confirmation of their actions and thoughts, so, maybe the intention of the words isn't important. Maybe a huge portion of the population should be put to death because of saying things just to blow off steam.

I can hope not, but maybe I should say it out loud, just in case.

Bible Read: Numbers 14

## *-Could He be Mortal?-*

*I* can see why Moses is so celebrated in the Jewish faith. If it wasn't for him God would have eradicated the Israelites multiple times. He convinced God not to kill them all when he was on Mount Sinai and they were in the forest worshipping a golden calf. Later, in Numbers, he convinced him not to again when they were complaining about living in the wilderness.

I still find it odd that man is the voice of reason to God, but the Bible has continuously surprised me. I guess if I was an immortal, all powerful being I would probably abuse those powers some as well. But, this does highlight the idea that he is a vengeful God as well as a compassionate God.

But as I go on I am noticing that God does not appear to be immortal. He has an entire tribe of people guarding the Ark of the Covenant which I believe is where he resides while he is among the Israelites. And also Moses tells him to go away when enemies are nearby. This to me is not the way you treat an immortal. You would think with an immortal God you would want him to lead the charge.

As my preconceived notions of Christianity all shatter one by one, I am thinking that the Bible might commonly be misunderstood. Thus far I am coming to the conclusion that the Bible suggests, God is not the only of his "species", God is not always right, he is not immortal, God does not hear our thoughts, and the words curse and swear do not mean the same thing today that they did in the Bible.

I know there is a lot more to go, but I am shocked where it has gone so far.

Bible Read: Numbers 15

## *Welcome to the Matrix*

Creationism and science always seemed to be at odds with each other. It seemed that science was becoming its own religion where the idea of a creator was nothing more than nonsense.

Enter *Constraints on the Universe as a Numerical Simulation*. This study, authored by Silas R. Beane, Zohreh Davoudi, and Martin J. Savage, talks about the behavior of cosmic rays. Apparently cosmic rays move in a way that leads them to believe that reality is quite possibly a number simulation. Or, that this reality is just a designed simulation that we are experiencing.

Now, I am not going to pretend I understand the science behind this. I have read a few articles about it and am coming to the conclusion this is main stream science at this point. And for once you can quickly see the connection between science and religion.

As boring as the abstract is, this makes me rethink the Bible. If everything is a simulation and was designed by someone, I'm going with God, all the miracles and world altering events start to make sense. Understanding that everything is coded in, you could easily use the code of the simulation to create impossible happenings.

If everything went out of control you could flood the world and restart. You could ban everything from Eden and restart. If the point is to reach positive conclusions you could always restart or destroy the things that are keeping you from achieving your goals (Sodom and Gomorrah).

But then if everything keeps going back to the wrong outcome you might try a different idea. You might let the corruption appear and create a new character that tries to sway everyone, someone who can perform the miracles, someone who is a friend and teacher, someone who would sacrifice themselves for the simulation itself.

Sure sounds like the Matrix.

Ok, all seems too far overboard, but an interesting idea. But if

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this idea is continuously researched and they find it to be more and more likely, then the evidence for God seems to become more and more real as well.

Bible Read: Numbers 20

## *Talking Donkey, No Big Deal*

**B**alaam is riding his donkey to go attack Israel. An angel stands in the road with a sword drawn and the donkey stops as he sees the angel although Balaam does not. Balaam wants to go forward but the donkey will not, three times. So he hits the donkey.

Then the donkey asks Balaam what he ever did to him. Balaam is so angry that he tells the donkey he would kill him if he had a sword.

I'm sorry, but if I am riding a donkey and it talks to me my reaction is not anger. My reaction is fear or astonishment or greed for what I can get for a talking donkey. How is it possible that this guy is not amazed by the talking animal?

Maybe once he sees the angel, which happens shortly after, he puts two and two together, but before that... These types of passages in the Bible just seem unrealistic. I know, I know, donkeys don't talk, but let's assume this one did. I don't know of anyone who would just reply as if it were normal.

I also am intrigued by this passage because it is the first time I remember that an angel appears before man. Seeing how most of my assumptions of the Bible have proven wrong, I am curious as to what the angel looked like. I picture a golden woman with a flowing robe floating in the middle of a dirt path brandishing a sword straight up at her side. I picture it as something that is so bright it is hard to look at. But there is no real description. So, as of now I will assume I'm right and be shocked later.

It is also curious to me that the donkey saw the angel first. It wasn't until the donkey spoke some sense into Balaam that he saw the angel. It kind of speaks of the phrase blinded by hatred. When he was off to kill the Israelites he did not see the messenger of God, but when he calmed down the angel was in front of him.

Over the last few years I've noticed that the world is a better

place and nature is more awe inspiring when I am in a better mood. When I have bad days or get upset in the car or just feel angry, the world feels like it is beating me down. I think this story speaks to those ideas, that we need to, as people, try our best to keep a positive frame of mind. We need to affirm that we are going to have good days and not be angry at the world around us.

So, I think I will try to hold onto the phrase “the ass saw the angel” as I think there is a good lesson there.

Bible Read: Numbers 24



## *Death to Your Followers! What Does that Mean for Your Enemies?*

God is obviously a vengeful god. He wiped out the Earth with a flood. He banned man from Eden. He allowed the Israelites to be enslaved in Egypt. He made the Israelites live in the wilderness with very little to eat. He burned two of Aaron's sons alive for not following directions. He opened the ground and killed 250 Israelites... He has had no qualms about killing his followers. He almost wiped out the Israelites twice, but was talked out of it by Moses.

This makes me wonder how terrible it is to be an enemy of God. If he is willing to do these things to the people who follow and worship him, what will he do to those who oppose him? I guess we can look at the plagues of Egypt. Those got pretty bad, but beyond that he forced the Pharaoh to reject Joseph's pleas forcing him to endure more and more plagues.

I could be wrong, but today it feels like there are fewer and fewer Christians. And seeing how wrong I have been about the Bible, I am guessing that most people who think of themselves as Christians are probably misunderstanding what they say their religion is. My guess is the number of true Christian followers is probably very small.

With this being said, maybe it makes sense why we have so many problems today. There are countries that have fully oppressed their people. There are constant wars, constant hunger, widespread disease... I could see how today's problems could be the wrath of God. Maybe everything we do is so offensive to God he has cast plague upon plague on us. Of course we explain it all with science and say that it is just natural for all these bad things to occur which would anger God even more. At least from his temperament in the Bible, that is how I would guess he would react.

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It makes me want to follow the Bible word for word to see if I become protected from the horrors of modern day, but that feels like the wrong motive. I would hope that those who do follow the Bible don't do it out of fear. I would hope the overriding morals and lessons are what drive them.

But I guess it all depends on the motives of God. Is it by any means necessary?

Bible Read: Numbers 29

## *Status Report Day 25*

Numbers was better than Leviticus, but not as good as Genesis. I am coming to the conclusion that the Bible is incredibly repetitive, some in the stories, but mostly the instructions of sacrifices and such.

Since Sarah, the Bible has more or less ignored women. But in Numbers it mentions women a few times. When God wanted the Israelites to kill their foes he let the girls who hadn't slept with a man to live. Which makes me think being born is the right of passage for a male, but sex is the right of passage for a female. I don't really understand this, but it isn't the first thing that hasn't made a lot of sense to me.

It also says that a man will be held to his word, but a woman will not while a woman's father or husband will be held to her word. And if he doesn't like it he can essentially take it back. I think that there is a cultural issue with me not understanding how women are looked at in the Bible. In an age of equality these types of passages really confuse me.

The Bible is incredibly inspirational, but only so in the stories, the over abundance of instruction takes away from the inspiration. When I go for days without reading a story and just get instruction it makes the whole thing feel antiquated and useless.

I am looking forward to finishing the first five books of the Bible as I understand them to be different and sometimes considered cannon in themselves.

### Questions

1. Again who are the Nephilim?
2. Who are the Anakim?
3. How many more rules can God make?

Bible Read: Numbers

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# *Deuteronomy*

## *How is Any of this Positive?*

*T*he Old Testament is beating me down. Where is all the love thy neighbor stuff? I was hoping to feel better about humanity and see why so many people feel the love of God. I have not found that.

The message I have got out of the Old Testament thus far is man is a horrible creature who is prone to self preservation and supremacy over their fellow man. God is the leader of some men who drives them to kill those who are wicked, to take their lands, and destroy their families.

There appears to be no love except the love demanded by God from the Israelites.

From people I've talked to about this I get a few specific responses. The first and most common is "it was a different time". If that is true then the Old Testament is outdated. If it was written for a different world then it isn't speaking to the people of today. If that is true, then the Church shouldn't be continuing to use this as a way to spread the word of God.

The second response is "it is justice for sinning against God." If this is true then I understand where the hateful groups, that condemn homosexuals and bomb abortion clinics, get their motivations. Thus far God has used man to kill and make examples of people who have sinned against him. He has told the Israelites to stone anyone who works on the Sabbath. He has guided the Israelites to invade other people's land and kill their army, murder their sons and wives, and to only keep the daughters who have not yet slept with a man.

The third response is "the Old Testament is a bunch of fables and isn't the real crux of Christianity". This is the only response I've heard that gives me any hope. If the Old Testament is essentially a bunch of myths that could be cast aside with the lessons of the New Testament then I have some hope that I may get some good out of this project.

I am quite disturbed by what I've read so far. I feel the stories, although do have some good lessons within them, have generally terrible overriding stories.

Yes, the story of Moses is positive. The story of Joseph was very uplifting, but it is only the stories of a few men. And it wasn't God that made those stories great. God consistently wants to do things that are heart wrenching and painful.

I just don't see how this creates a love of God. I truly hope this isn't what the Bible is about.

Bible Read: Deuteronomy 10

## *I Don't Like the Name Barney, You are Now Named Swarley*

One of the pointless things I've noticed about the Bible is the renaming of people. The first time it happens is when God renames Abram to Abraham. I understand this as the point where God decides to give land to the people of Abraham. He also renames his wife. She is no longer Sarai, she is now Sarah. I actually thought Sarai was a much cooler name.

Then we get to Jacob. Jacob is renamed Israel by God. His 12 sons become the 12 tribes of Israel.

Then Moses gets in on the action and renames Hosea. He becomes Joshua. Which I thought was rather unsettling that the renaming of Joshua wasn't directly from God. Maybe God told him to, but it feels more like modern day where people are trying to clone animals and essentially playing God. Seeing as how this name change idea is something that has only been done by God at this point, seems like Moses may be playing God a bit himself.

The Bible does tell you typically what the new name means, which is fine, but this seems pointless. If someone is going to be a great leader why would you change their name from "Stan" to "Great and Powerful Leader"? If you left it alone then the name Stan would eventually become synonymous with a great and powerful leader.

This is obvious today. How would the average person react to someone named Adolph? Regardless of how much we want our minds to control our actions, a simple word association like that will keep most people on edge.

I don't have a problem with the name changes, I am just saying they seem silly.

Bible Read: Deuteronomy 23

## *Well that was Random*

*I* love the fact that there is verse in the Bible specifically for if a woman tries to help her husband in a fight by grabbing his opponent's genitals. How common can this be?

Now, I would highly suggest no woman does this as the Bible says you must cut off her hand. But, it makes me wonder what kind of fights these were. Did men fight naked back then? Did women watch closely for their chance to goose the other man? Is she being punished for attacking genitals or for touching some that are not her husband's?

This isn't the only odd, random verse from Deuteronomy. The best is the strange ritual of the House with One Shoe.

More or less if a man dies before he has children, his brother is to marry her and sleep with her. They are to have a kid and name it after the dead brother so his lineage will continue.

But if the brother doesn't want to... That is the fun part. The woman is to take the brother to the elders and tell them he won't sleep with her, which is funny and must be humiliating. Then she is to take off the brother's shoe and spit in his face. Then she is to tell him that he is refusing to build his brother's house. Then he will be forever known as the house without a shoe.

What kind of strange rituals are these?

I understand the idea that you can't go to the restroom in camp. You have to leave camp and bury it, that is just good hygiene. And the whole thing about shaving parts of your hair if you have boils or itches, sure, the medical knowledge was a little lax back then, that is logical. But really? Spit in his face and steal his shoe?

Bible Read: Deuteronomy 27



## *Sinners!*

So much has been said of how the Bible is anti-gay. And yes I have read upon it a couple times. If a man lies with another man as he lies with a woman they both shall be put to death. Or something like that. But, there seems to be a bit of contradiction also.

For example, one of God's chosen was Jacob, renamed Israel, who had 12 sons born from four different women, his two wives and their two slaves. Somehow this is ok, but the Bible is quite clear of not committing adultery. Maybe I don't have the right definition of adultery. I thought it was to sleep with someone other than your spouse.

It does go into more detail. If you sleep with someone else's wife, you should be killed. If you rape someone, killed. If you sleep with someone's fiancé, killed. If you sleep with a virgin, non married or engaged, and are caught, pay off the dad and marry her. But, if you sleep with a virgin, non married or engaged, and are not caught, if the woman is caught later she'll be killed. This makes promiscuity seem a bit dangerous.

The point is that God set all these harsh penalties for adultery but chose Jacob who had four partners. But, I could be reading it wrong. I guess multiple wives are fine, I haven't noticed it being a problem, and maybe slaves aren't included.

If that is so, then it makes me wonder about the penalty for working on the Sabbath. As I have mentioned before, if you work on the Sabbath you are to be put to death. In that sense being homosexual is about as bad as doing chores on Sunday.

Of course the Bible mentions the Sabbath sin many more times than homosexuality. It mentions it more than having sex with animals as well. Makes me think the biggest sin is working on Sunday. Which I think a lot of people are guilty of.

I don't mean to harp on this issue, but it was one of the major

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things you hear about Christianity. I think it has been blown way out of proportion.

Bible Read: Deuteronomy 31

## *-Seven by Forty-*

*A*nyone who says the Bible is 100% literal is really missing something. There is a very common theme with numbers in the Bible. I am constantly reading the numbers 7 and 40. I have no idea what this means, but it is everywhere.

I remembered from being a kid that it rained for 40 days and 40 nights with the Noah's ark story. But 40 comes up a lot as does 7.

40 days on Mount Sinai, 7 days of creation, 40 more days on Mount Sinai, 7 days to consecrate Aaron, 40 days in the ark after the rain ended, 7 feast days of the Lord, 40 days Moses face shined from seeing the face of God, 7 branches of the candlestick in the tabernacle, 40 years the Israelites lived in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, Noah brought clean beasts in by sevens...

It is nonstop. Every time something is repeated I expect it to go to 7 or 40.

I am assuming there is some meaning in here, but I have no idea what it is. I always wondered why there were seven days in a week, it doesn't seem to be astrologically tied, so why? Maybe the answer is because seven is a likable number. Maybe that is why God is all about 7s.

Bible Read: Deuteronomy 32

## *Status Report Day 30*

*M*oses began the Book of Exodus as a man who did not want God to use him because he was a bad speaker. Moses ends the Book of Deuteronomy by giving a speech to the people of Israel before he dies. This contrast is the type of thing that makes the Bible inspiring.

Through God, Moses takes his fears head on and ventures into a scary place in his life, but becomes better because of it. These are the kinds of things that I have hoped reading the Bible would help me do. I would like to feel a love and faith in God to the point that I will take the big jumps, take the risks to do what I know I should.

At this point, I am not there. At this point, I am still reading these stories with great skepticism. At this point, I am where I started.

The first five books of the Bible have good points and bad ones. There are some very good stories with inspiring messages. There are also a lot of pointless and depressing passages.

If you are going to read the first five books of the Bible, but aren't concerned with reading every word, just want to get the message out of it, I must suggest you not read all of it. The Book of Genesis is very good. After that you can pretty much skip straight to Deuteronomy. The story is summarized, the rules are summarized, and all that is really left out is the directions for the construction of the Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant.

Overall, I am not in a bad mood, but am not refreshed from what I've read. I am indifferent.

Books read – 5

Days reading – 30

Chapter read – 187

Outlook on God – Questionable

Bible Read: Deuteronomy

## *Joshua*

## *The Lord Your God or the Lord Our God*

God consistently thus far has said that he is the god of the Israelites.

When he talks of people living with the Israelites, he does not say he is their god. When he talks of the Canaanites, Jebusites, Hivites... He does not say he is their god. He has chosen a people to be assigned to him. Through small mentions of the other groups of people, it appears everyone has their own god.

It makes it sound like there is no converting to the religion. You can follow his rules, you can live with his people, but you cannot become one of them. This seems very depressing as it appears that you are either one of his chosen people or you are not. If you are not you may be destroyed if he gives your land to HIS people.

If this is true, then reading the Bible has almost no point for me. As far back as I can trace in my genealogy I have no Jewish descent, at least not in a paternal lineage. And if I have no Jewish heritage then I am not one of God's chosen people. I do not have access to anything they have access to. Of course there has been no speak of eternal life or entering the kingdom of heaven, but I am assuming that is coming sooner or later.

Instead it appears that I am condemned to be judged as one of fellow non-Israelites. I am to go about my life and be killed because I am a part of a group of people who God dislikes.

Hopefully God will give access to others at some point in the Bible.

Bible Read: Joshua 4

## *God the Thought Cop*

*A*s Joshua is leading his troops into the land of Ai they are defeated in their first attempt. 36 of the Israelites die in battle and they are pushed back into the desert.

When Joshua pleads to God as to why this happened he is told it is because someone among them has sinned. Achan had taken some gold from the city they destroyed before and God was punishing him as they were to burn and destroy everything. Achan is stoned to death.

I really dislike the idea that one sin is typically punished by death. I especially dislike that a single sin which is not harmful to anyone else is not only punished by death, but the death of 36 other men who did nothing wrong, or at least nothing wrong that has been revealed to the reader.

I don't think I will ever get the guilt by association decrees that God continuously hands down, but the punishment for the victimless crime is another hard one.

I guess the point is that destruction of another person's life is not that big of a deal. It is not as important as the destruction of one's own faith and morality. From the perspective of God, I kind of get it. If he is trying to have the perfect behaving society, maybe, but it just feels cruel.

It all reminds me of 1984 and the thought crimes that are talked about. If you think about something that you shouldn't you are punished. In the book, people have to be careful not to show visual clues that they are thinking the wrong thing or the scanners all around will pick it up and they will be imprisoned for rehabilitation.

I never considered that the Bible could be a historic dystopia book, but that is the way it seems to be coming together.

Every time I tell someone that I am being discouraged by the Bible, they tell me to read the New Testament. I will get there, hopefully not completely discouraged by then. It does give me a bit of

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hope that there is more love and harmony in the latter half of the Bible.

Bible Read: Joshua 8



## *I Shall Smite the Wicked*

*T*he people of the Old Testament are constantly being punished for doing the wrong thing. Anytime the Israelites become blasphemous they are punished by God through death, disease, and oppression. Anytime the Israelites are good, God gives them land and power over others through war, death, and oppression.

I've tried to make peace with this idea. But, what keeps coming up as a constant question is "Does God still do this?" Looking at the rules of the Old Testament, people today are horribly blasphemous. We in general do not sacrifice every time we do wrongs. We as a whole have issues with adultery, creating idols, and coveting.

It seems clear to me that if this was biblical times we would be demolished by God. We are likely somewhere near the levels of decadence of Sodom and Gomorrah. We quite possibly are at the levels of sin that the world saw before the great flood.

And today we see great tragedies and atrocities against people. The big question... Is this the work of a jealous and vengeful god? Today we attribute everything to nature or psychology. We say that hurricanes and earthquakes are the work of the natural processes that are not created as punishment for bad morals. We claim that wars, oppressions, and horrific attacks are the result of crazy people who have essentially lost their mind.

What if these people are being guided by God as a punishment for our terrible behavior? Could the tsunamis, hurricanes, and meteorite strikes be a message from God? Could September 11<sup>th</sup>, mass shootings, and beheadings be people who are carrying out the message of God trying to get our attention?

I have heard before that science is the work of the devil. If these terrible events are the work of God, it would be fairly clear that science is a blasphemous idea. Even when God sends a message, we

ignore it and claim that it is not him.

It all seems to be a vicious cycle. You do bad things, God punishes, you claim it was not God, and God punishes again. There is nothing that makes people become better. Maybe we should look at the horrible things that seem to happen more and more often and look at who we are as a people and attempt to repent. Maybe what we need is to look at where we have gone wrong and try to find morality again. Maybe we need to stop blaming chance.

Bible Read: Joshua 20

## *-Only the Good Die Old-*

**E**arly on in the Bible people live for hundreds of years. As you go through the stories people start to live less and less years. At the end of Joshua, he lived for 110 years.

I find it interesting that as we slowly move closer to today, people start to live a more reasonable life. People today could live to 110, but most live to around 80. I don't know why people may have lived fewer years as the Bible goes on. I don't know if anything changed in the food or something, but I do find it interesting.

I think today it is logical. We process our foods, we ingest large amounts of things that are not good for us. We even have altered the DNA of vegetables to be easier to grow. I am surprised we live as long as we do.

It makes me wonder if the better someone is the longer they will live. I think it is a fair assessment to say that people in the Bible lived holier lives than us, and maybe they were rewarded for it. Maybe we are punished for it.

But is it worth it? Billy Joel was fairly forthright with his opinion in his song *Only the Good Die Young*. "I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints." I guess he would prefer today compared to ancient biblical times.

Bible Read: Joshua 24

## *Status Report Day 34*

*T*he book of Joshua continues the pattern of about half the Bible being boring and full of useless detail. We get a dozen or so chapters of story with Joshua taking over the lands across the Jordan. Then we get a dozen or so chapters telling us which lands go to which clans of which tribes.

The amount of war, death, and destruction that is included in the Bible has been discouraging. I think of war as hatred and I think of hatred as evil. With that type of association, the Bible does not do much to make feel like Christianity is a positive influence.

I keep falling back to the idea that the Old Testament is not a historical document as much as it is a book that was created to explain to people why the world sucks so much. Looking at the Old Testament as a fictional explanation as to why horrible things happen is much more uplifting than to look at it as a true documentation of how God treats people.

Regardless, I am continuing with my mission to read the Bible.

After Exodus I watched birds fly in formation and felt an appreciation for God and how beautiful the world is. Today I saw another formation of birds which still a beautiful sight, now I wonder how long God will allow such beauty exist while the people continue to be ignore him. Gone is the appreciation of the amazing world around us and it is replaced with fear and sadness.

New Questions:

1. Is the Bible supposed to be so depressing?
2. When will the war and hate stop being so prominent in the Bible?

Bible Read: Joshua

## *Judges*

## *The Bible Ain't No Nursery Rhyme*

Reading the Bible, I expected to read stories that I knew. At this point that is few and far between.

Sure, I know Adam and Eve, the parting of the Red Sea, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Noah's ark. But that is about all the stories I've known so far. All that I know of that I haven't got to yet are David and Goliath and Job. I guess it isn't that I expected to know more stories, as I have a real lack of knowledge in Bible stories, but I think I expected these stories to be longer.

Most of the stories I knew were in Genesis and they were only a dozen paragraphs or so. There seems to be very little description. I think I am used to modern day writing where motivation and detail are large parts of the story. It almost feels as if these stories are written for children since they are so simple. Of course they are largely dark and scary which I would not really want to tell my children about.

But it is similar to *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie. Peter and Wendy is the story of Peter Pan, the boy who wouldn't grow up. Nowadays it is considered a children's classic thanks to the adaptation by Disney, but in the original book there are many things that would be frightening to children. There are pirates, bears, alligators, Indians, and other things that delight in killing each other. There are passages about blood lust and kidnapping.

There is even a very sad portion where the parents of Wendy cry in her room after her and brothers leave for Neverland. They sit in the room staring at the open window feeling that they should have done more to protect their kids, but they had been kidnapped and there was nothing they could do to see them again.

The point is the Bible is similar in having themes that are too scary for the mind of a child, although it is written so simply that a child would understand it. God committing plagues on Egypt and murdering their children, floods that wipe out the Earth, wars that

obliterate entire peoples... But maybe it is the same as Peter and Wendy.

Peter and Wendy was written at a time when an eight year old may be done with school and be working on the farm. If the father had died for some reason it is possible that a ten year old boy may become the man of the house. So, the book was written for a demographic that was still impressionable enough to fantasize about a place where they could be a kid forever, but also hardened enough to handle the idea of murder, kidnapping, and torture.

The Bible was also written in a time much different than today. Most likely a child could handle the things said in the Bible at a much younger age than today. It makes me question how much we shelter our children. We like to think that we are protecting them, but maybe we are stunting their development.

Could it be possible that the amount of thirty year olds who still live with their parents and are accepting of being taken care of well into adulthood is a reflection of our trying to protect our kids? Maybe the reason the Bible surprises me in its ruthlessness is because I was sheltered too long. Maybe I would know and understand it better if I was thrown into the real world sooner. I am not saying that we need to re-instate child labor, but maybe we are trying to keep the terrible truths of life from our kids for too long.

Bible Read: Judges 7

## *Oh, That Again*

Yesterday I talked about the Bible stories and the fact that I haven't known many of them thus far. But what I didn't mention was how unmemorable they have been.

Seeing how the Bible is one of the most famous books in our society, I expected some greatness out of it. I wanted to be inspired page after page as I learned of these great stories of great men. And to be fair, I have been impressed by a couple. The overall arch of Moses was very uplifting even if he never got to the lands promised to his fathers and the story of Joseph was amazing. But, as a whole the stories are often bland and boring.

Setting aside my dislike of all the wrath of God stuff, the stories are similar to each other. Joshua is invasion, invasion, invasion... Judges thus far has been, Israelites are bad and they are punished. They whine and then God helps them out. I can't keep straight which Israel leader led the people into which country and which people they became sinners with.

It feels repetitive and pointless. I get the idea that if they sin against God they get seven years of torture. I get when they are good they get 40 years of prosperity. But to tell me the same story over and over with the names changed is redundant. I would think that the constant repetition of things like this would hammer into the reader what is bad and what isn't. But that doesn't seem to be the case.

If that were so you would think Christians would be most careful not to worship other Gods and not work on Sunday. Those things are harped upon consistently. But from the Christians I know, they are typically more concerned with love thy neighbor and attending church. Maybe these are mentioned more in the later books, but as of now those are almost afterthoughts compared to two over-mentioned sins.

But it isn't just the sins that are repetitive. The miracles seem



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to repeat as well. God brought them out of Egypt, helped conquer people, and conquer people, and conquer people. He caused plagues of flies, and gnats, and frogs, locusts. He parted the red sea and later he parted the river Jordan.

It just doesn't seem so memorable. I feel like I am reading the same things over and not getting anything out of it the second, third, fourth, and fifth times.

Bible Read: Judges 11

## *Morality is Technically Subjective*

*M*y morals may be off kilter. It would be my assumption that going to war to defend a criminal is worse than missing a meeting. I feel fairly passionate about that too. As I do with my feelings that not observing the Sabbath should not be a sin punishable by death.

God's morals seem to be the polar opposite. I am referring to the Battle of Gibeah.

To summarize for anyone who doesn't know. A Levite man was traveling across the land with his servant, donkeys and concubine. He stopped in a town in the tribe of Benjamin. He stayed the night with an old man. Some people within Benjamin came to the house of the old man and demanded he give over the Levite so that they could rape him. The old man offered up the Levite's concubine instead.

They rape and kill the concubine. Some stuff happens, but essentially all of Israel rises up against the rapists except Benjamin. So the rest of Israel goes to war with the tribe of Benjamin. They nearly eradicate the tribe, but then decide to let some live. They have a big assembly to talk about how to let the tribe of Benjamin to survive since they have vowed to not allow any of their own to marry a Benjamin male. One town sent no representative, Jabesh Gilead. So, the whole of Israel goes into Jabesh Gilead and kills everyone in the town except the female virgins and gives them to the tribe of Benjamin as wives as some sort of equal justice in punishment of the town and a way to allow the tribe of Benjamin to continue its existence.

In the long run it appears as though the greater sin between harboring a fugitive and missing a meeting is the latter. This is just another in a long list of examples regarding the ranking of sins.

I would have assumed that harboring a fugitive would be worse, but who am I to say? I would have thought attempting genocide on a tribe of people would have been the worse sin of all in this story, but that sin was urged on by God himself. It seems as

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though sins are ignorable when they are suggested from high as a mission to his people.

I think the issue is that I am too well grounded in my physical reality. My spiritual side seems to be all in my head right now, so finding sins against God seem to be less harmful than sins against man. Although, it appears that God cannot sin against man, which is a little confusing. This is an area that I need to think about as I continue on.

Bible Read: Judges 21

## *Status Report Day 37*

*J*udges is a dark book. It covers a time in Israel where bad things happen time and time again. This seems to reflect pretty well my thoughts on the Bible up to this point.

I was hoping that writing all this would be uplifting and full of new lessons, but it has been more depressing and full of questions for God. I want to move forward seeing the positives from the Bible as opposed to seeing the positives from the Bible as opposed to all the bad things.

It also has made me very glad I live in the time I do. Life sounds horrible in the world of biblical Israel. You not only have to worry about your sins against God, but also the sins of your community. Time and time again people have destroyed cities and killed man, women, and children.

Today we still see people who group people together and murder large groups based on their decisions as whole, but it is done by governments. It seems more reasonable for a country to war with another country and kill its citizens than it does for God. I am not saying it is ok for countries to do this, but when you think about man you assume he is flawed, you assume he makes mistakes. But for God to do this it seems as though he is making a flawed decision. But you want to think of God as infallible.

But maybe this is all a message to the people of today to not tolerate wickedness. Maybe this is telling us that when a country becomes a menace and an evil presence we should not tolerate them because of innocents in their land. Maybe we should put them to death at the means necessary to reach the leader. Then again maybe the killing of the “innocents” IS necessary. If the evil leader has left his ideology behind it might be important to eradicate his followers as well. I don’t know for sure, but this all seems to be so sad.

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Days Reading: 37

Chapters Read: 232

Books Read: 7

Percentage Read: 17.33%

Overall Opinion of God: Negative... And possibly Extra-Terrestrial

Bible Read: Judges

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# *Ruth*

## *Honor Thy In-Laws*

**R**uth was a Moabite who married into Judaism. When her husband dies the mother-in-law tells her to go back to Moab and return to her parents, but Ruth says she will stay. She says that she will live with her mother-in-law and accept her people, accept her land and accept her God.

This is a powerful statement. When I think of marriage, I realize that I am married not just to my wife, but her life as whole. When you marry someone you are taking on their family as your own. Things you do affect those people whether you would like it to or not.

Growing up I was always very aware of the idea that the things I did reflected my parents, but it did not dawn on me until I had been married a while that my actions now reflect my in-laws. Not because they had a hand in raising me, but they had a hand in raising my wife. The people she has decided to let into her life are a reflection of her parents and therefore their actions say a lot of her judge of character.

Ruth in the just the first few lines of the book has taken that thought process beyond. She has accepted her mother-in-law as family and in what becomes a great tribute to her dead husband has continued the life he gave her.

Finally I am finding something else uplifting in the Bible. I would like to think that people today would do the same. If you spouse was ripped from you would you honor their memory by celebrating their family and keeping those connections? I would hope so. I hope I would at least.

Bible Read: Ruth 1

## *Status Report Day 38*

*S*ometimes you can feel when something big is going to happen.

That is the way it feels with David coming up. The book of Ruth is a cute story that is much happier than the previous books, but there does not seem to be a lot of point to it.

I enjoyed Ruth's love of her mother-in-law and the kindness of Boaz, but the happenings within this book seem irrelevant other than it is the story of some of David's ancestors. The last few verses draw out the lineage to David making it seem important for that reason only.

But just as I feel this in the Bible, it seems to happen in real life at times as well. Many times when something huge is going to happen in my life I start to feel antsy. I never have been able to tell what it is, but often times it is a precursor to major news. Sometimes good, sometimes bad.

I wonder if this has been the case with others. Did the people of Germany feel the impending terror? Did they feel anything just before the Berlin Wall fell?

I have had an odd feeling for a while now and I keep thinking something big is on the horizon. But then again maybe it is just the uncertainty of life and getting older.

Favorite book of the Bible so far: Genesis

Favorite Bible story so far: Story of Joseph

Favorite small detail so far: Moses face shining for 40 days after seeing the face of God

Bible Read: Ruth



*Samuel I & II*

## *The Sounds of Silence*

**B**right Eyes have a song called *When the President Talks to God*. It is a modern political song that condemns the actions of former president George W. Bush. The theme is not the point as much as the punch line, if you will. In the end of the song they ask if the president is not talking to God, but talking to himself.

I always liked this idea, that it questions prayer and if it is possible to speak with God. And as I wrote before, it appears in order to speak to God you have to actually speak. Thinking you are talking to God in your head may not work seeing how the people in the Old Testament speak out loud and God does not seem to know people's actions until he has verified them.

So, maybe in order to talk to God you have to actually talk. But, what about when God talks back? The Bible is not very descriptive on what the voice of God sounds like. Moses, Abraham, Israel, and Samuel seem to speak directly to him and hear his words. They have actual conversations with the being and it is my assumption they are truly hearing the words.

This always brings up visions of schizophrenics. There are people today who hear voices, but we put them into a category of people who are broken. We assume that hearing a voice means you are insane and should be removed from society. I think part of that problem is we associate voices with serial killers who think they are being told to kill. This isn't at odds with what God tells people in the Bible. He is constantly telling men to kill and destroy entire communities. So, maybe the reason the world has so much evil in it is because we aren't letting those who hear the voice of God go and do the things they want. Or, maybe those people are truly crazy. I would like to think God is willing to talk to me, but I have never HEARD him speak.

Joseph spoke to God through dreams. When he would have a

prophetic dream, he understood it as God speaking to him. If this is the case today I think most everyone dismisses it. We take dreams for granted nowadays and accept the scientific explanation that dreams are made up in the mind.

Jonathan asked for a sign as opposed to having a conversation with God. This, in my opinion, is the most likely way people today think they hear the word of God. I think it happens more often than people want to admit, but it seems as though people are often talking about small synchronicities that seem to defy chance.

When you are at a stop light and a song comes on you don't like, you change the station, miss the green light as well as the semi that ran his red light and would have plowed into you. When you think of an old friend and you run into them later that day. When you have been pondering an issue of life and listen to a sermon at church or a speech on the television that seems to speak to you. These all seem to me to be signs from God, but we have chocked them up to chance or coincidence.

I think we should keep a more open mind. I think there is a possibility that God speaks to us in many ways, but we have trained ourselves as a society to ignore it. As often as I think when I want to hear God's voice and I hear nothing but silence, I am afraid when God speaks to us he is ignored and he hears nothing but silence in response.

Bible Read: Samuel I 8

## *Fairy Tale Inspiration*

*I*t seems in modern day cartoons there are a lot of basic ideas that are borrowed from the Bible. When a hero holds his power from a sword he carries or when a character holds a specific power from a random object, it reminds me of the story of Sampson.

Sampson had great strength which was a result of his hair. And when his hair was cut, he lost his great power. It is very similar to *Disney's Tangled* where Rapunzel's hair is the thing that is keeping Gothel from aging.

Cinderella was the reject of her family and when the prince came knocking she was an afterthought to be someone who could wear the glass slipper. In the story of David, when Samuel came to Jesse to find the next king of Israel, David was the small underappreciated son. Jesse presented all seven of his other sons to Samuel before he even considered that God would choose David.

Even Robin Hood who was known to steal from the rich and give to the poor seems to be a vigilante version of some of the teachings of Christ. Although I have not got to that point in the Bible, I know that Jesus spoke of giving away your money and letting the poor live better. What is the quote? It is easier to thread a camel through the eye of a needle than a rich man reach the kingdom of heaven. It is something to that effect.

The thing I find humorous about all this is we live in a world that we consistently try to remove religion from everything. We have been slowly removing religion from government, it has been removed from school, and it tends to slowly leave television and children's entertainment. But in all the work that modern day man has put forth to remove the influence of God from life, it appears the Bible is constantly an inspiration for art.

Bible Read: Samuel I 16

## *-Goliath's Stoning from God-*

*I* always thought of the story of David and Goliath as tiny man taking on a savage giant. I pictured David as the victim and Goliath as somewhat of an animal that was too stupid and slow to catch David. Now that I have read the story from the Bible I realize it was another bad assumption.

Goliath, who is nine feet tall, is the champion of the Philistines. Goliath challenges any Israelite for their freedom. He says if an Israelite will face him and kill him they will rule over the Philistines, but if not the Philistines will rule over them. This is not the bumbling brute I pictured as a child.

David, the small and underappreciated son of Jesse, steps up and states that he will kill Goliath with the help of the Lord. This is not the tiny man I pictured who was running for his life in my head.

The rest is as I pictured it. David slings a rock at Goliath and kills him. The interesting part is the Bible says that the rock sunk into the forehead of Goliath. It was not a barrage of pebbles being pounded upon the only vulnerable part of the giant, but a single stone that takes him down.

I think this shows the story is the story of a miracle and God himself battling Goliath, not David. When David slung the rock it should have bounced off the head of Goliath, or possibly cracked his skull. That is something that bends the laws of physics and if the story is an accurate account of a historical event, I think it is one of a miracle.

I also like the idea that it was a stone that slain the giant. Although God could have killed Goliath with lightning, an earthquake, or even the sword of David, he chose to have him killed by a stone. It seems appropriate since Goliath is most likely a heathen and the punishment for much of the sins of the Bible is being stoned to death. It makes me wonder if all stonings were acts of miracles or if they

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usually were someone being pelted with thousands of stones until they died a horribly cruel death.

Bible Read: Samuel I 18

## *A Little Less Saul A Little More David*

When you have a leader, you would hope he would not become power obsessed. Just as today we hope our president does his best for the country for four or eight years and then steps aside for the next man, I would think the Israelites hoped their king would lead in their interests until it was time to step aside.

Saul was the king who was destined to fail and be replaced by David. The story of his fall is not the most interesting part here. He refused to commit genocide as commanded to him by Samuel who was giving the message of God. But, the more interesting story is what happened when Saul realized that he was to be dethroned by David.

Saul became power obsessed. He tried to hunt down David in order to hold onto the throne. During this David had a chance to kill Saul and take the throne through violence, but he held back. David did not assassinate Saul and instead went to him to tell him that he will not attack him. He tells him that he had the opportunity and was being pushed to do it, but he would commit murder against the chosen king of the Israelites.

In my opinion David is quickly becoming the second truly inspirational character of the Old Testament. Joseph was the first in his willingness to sacrifice the enjoyment of his life to do God's will. David being willing to risk his life to abstain from killing his king is now the second.

I would like to think that leaders today are as great as David, but I fear they are more like Saul. Although I am sure it happened before, it seems that ever since Watergate, presidents have been trying to cover something up.

I am sure there is more to it than us citizens know of, but it seems that presidents do a lot of work to keep themselves in power.

Whether it is election fraud, money laundering scandals, illegal wars, or bad use of intelligence it feels like we have been led by a long line of Sauls.

The character of the president seems to have been forgotten. Whether it be republicans or democrats the greatest men seem to be sinners and power mongers. From what I've read Washington seems to have been a great man who tried to live a holy life. He willingly walked away from lifetime of power as president of the United States even though he was nearly guaranteed election for life. He led a war that was almost certain suicide to stand up for his beliefs. He should be the measuring stick for our leaders.

The Bible has made me realize, that yes, man is fallible, but some men are greater than others. Even if every man in the Bible has sinned and made mistakes, there are a few great men who have better hearts and are able to avoid sin more than others. It seems those people are few and far between today, but I would like to see someone take the office of president who is the opposite of how we think a politician today.

Bible Read: Samuel I 25



## *Death is Sad*

*K*ing Saul had sinned against God. David had been chosen to replace him, but when Saul died David mourned him. This is a good message of compassion.

Even in the biblical times where death and destruction is handed down from God, David still found sorrow for the death of his predecessor. He did not immediately bathe in the glory that would be his reign over the Israelites, but instead did the good thing and honored the life of Saul through his tears.

It is a good reminder that these stories are about people and their when they are killed for the good of God or the people, it is still the death of a man. There is sadness for everyone's loss.

I hope that today we feel the same thing. When a leader who we do not like dies we should still feel for the loss of life. I don't know that we do. When Saddam Hussein was killed most people rejoiced and in a sense they had a right. They had the right to rejoice for the end of their nightmare, but at the same time, a period of mourning should have preceded this. In fact David did rejoice in his rise to nobility with sacrifices and dancing, but only after he mourned Saul.

It is the same thing with the death of Osama Bin Laden. As much as he was an evil man in our modern day views and even though he was an enemy of the country I live in, his death was still a death. The fact that life was taken by the hand of man should instill some sort of sadness, if not for what the man lost at least for his family and God. We should be sad that a life had to be removed in the way it was and that he was never able to reach redemption from God for his crimes.

I can't say I felt any sorrow for either man. I skipped the appropriate sadness and went straight to the rejoicing. My heart was closed to any sympathy for them as it is what felt right at the time, but I refused to recognize them as people. I know it isn't a popular idea to

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mourn a man overcome by evil, but I think it is right to mourn the man  
and only condemn the evil.

Bible Read: Samuel II 6

## *Do as I Say Not as I Do or Actions Speak Louder than Words*

*T*ime and time again God has commanded his people to attack cities, kill the army, kill all the women and children, and burn down their buildings. From what I have gathered, God is willing to condemn an entire people based on the actions of the majority. I can't imagine that because a city in general does certain things that every single soul in the city, including their infants, are all guilty of the same crime.

In a sense it appears as though guilt by association is a fine proposition in the eyes of the Lord. As we go along in the Second Book of Samuel, the house of David wars with the house of Saul. There is a lot of death and destruction. Saul dies early on and David becomes the new king of Israel. At some point Recab and Baanah go and kill Ish-Bosheth, the son of Saul. They present the corpse's head saying here is the head of your enemy's son.

David is upset with them as he says the son of Saul was an innocent man and he has been murdered in his own house. So, he has Recab and Baanah killed. This was a point where I wanted to throw up my hands in frustration. Why is it ok for God to command the death of infants of heathens, but it is not ok for men to kill the son of a king who was essentially ousted by God?

It feels like a double standard, but the way I can reconcile it in my head is that God did not tell them to do it. It does say not to kill, but it seems to be fine when done by the command of God. So, if you kill in honor of God, but not by his decree I am guessing that is wrong.

But what does that mean about intention. I always thought that if you led what you believed to be a good life then you would be rewarded as far as heaven is concerned. This passage says the exact opposite. It isn't the intentions that matter it is the actions.

Recab and Baanah thought they were doing the right thing by

killing the son of their king's enemy, but in David's viewpoint they were committing murder and breaking one of the ten commandments. I guess that is uplifting in a sense, showing that murder is bad even if for a good reason, but it also is depressing. It shows that you can't just believe you have to walk the walk. It also means you can't misinterpret. You have to do what the right thing is whether you know it or not. It is unfortunate because that means if you dedicate your life to God and do bad because you think he wants you to you will be punished.

Bible Read: Samuel II 7

## *The Ark of Notre Dame*

*V*ictor Hugo's *Notre Dame De Paris*, today known as *The*

*Hunchback of Notre Dame*, is one of the best books I've ever read. There is a theme in the book that the farther you get from God the less holy you will be. In the book, it is as if God is housed within the Cathedral of Notre Dame and as each character physically gets farther away from the church, the more sins they commit. When they are within the church they have bad thoughts and consider horrible acts, but they are drawn back to being good.

I thought when reading, it was an amazing yet subtle theme within the book. I thought it was an original idea. But as I go farther into the Old Testament I realize he took it directly from these stories.

If you pay attention to the Israelites in the Bible they tend to commit more and more sins as the stories go along. Early on with Abraham, Jacob, and Moses the men would sin against God early on. As they spent more and more time with God they would fall in line. It was the same with the Israelites as a whole. The more Moses spoke to them about what God said, the less they would sin.

In Judges after the Ark of the Covenant has left the lands of the Israelites their lives become worse. They do bad things and are punished for seven years. When they repent they have forty good years. This happens over and over with the Israelites continuing to commit sins as their God is not walking with them in their lands.

When Saul and David come around God is with them early on and they both begin with good and honest reigns over their people, but as time goes on they slowly minimize their communication with God. Saul becomes obsessed with protecting his power and stops consulting God for what he should be doing. David begins to make decisions for his people without the help of God and he falls into adultery then war.

The point is, as each man removes themselves from God they become less God like. They make mistakes and show the fallible

nature of man. It is as if the evolution of humanity is destined to try to be its own God. And I believe that today we have removed ourselves from God to a point that most people don't understand who he is or even how to talk to him.

Victor Hugo saw all this and baked it into his novel. As you watch the history of France move forward you see the characters of the book leave the church and become evil.

It is almost as if David and Frolo are one in the same. In the Bible David begins by doing, almost solely, God's will. He rarely makes his own decisions and defers everything to the Lord. In Hugo's *Notre Dame De Paris* Claude Frolo in his youth makes his decisions based on what he feels is the righteous thing from his judgment of others to his adoption of Quasimodo. David eventually commits adultery and then makes decisions to protect his subjects from their sins without consulting God. Frolo becomes obsessed with Esmeralda, wants to break his celibacy as well as falls into alchemy to control his own fate.

What can I take away from this? It seems plain to see that God is what keeps us good. The world and our nature will drive us away from a holy life and only the consistent presence of God will keep us in line. The moral is backsliding is dangerous.

Bible Read: Samuel II 16

## *Idols, Idols Everywhere, But Not a God to Worship*

Great men lead lives just like everyone else. Just because they were remembered for something great doesn't mean they did not have normality in their life. It doesn't mean they never did anything wrong. Typically it means they did something that had a lasting effect.

The Bible seems to be good at letting us know that great men still sin. When it pointed out that David, although a great leader, committed adultery and I would assume used his power in some capacity to do so. It shows us that Moses killed a man before leading the Israelites out of Egypt. It shows this time and time again.

It makes me wonder of other great people throughout history. If I read a biography of George Washington, Martin Luther King Jr., or even Mother Theresa, would I get the faults from their life or would it just be the good parts?

I would like to think that we should appreciate in our own faults. We should be proud to display them next to our victories as a way to show people that no one is perfect. We should show that no man is a god.

In Orson Scott Card's *Speaker for the Dead* he utilizes this idea. A speaker for the dead is essentially someone hired to do a full investigation of the dead's life and give an honest eulogy. He does not try to hide their life or change who they were. He is there to honor the person for who they were good and bad.

I feel the Bible has done that for the men it has chronicled. There has not been a character that the Bible has tried to hide their character in order to make them look better.

Truthfully, it would be a disservice to hold up a man as greater than he was. It not only undermines God, but it also makes him identifiable to the common man. If all you hear about is why a man

was great and don't hear about his day to day struggles, you have made him no man at all.

In essence the way we teach our children and the way we make monuments of lives and careers, we are immortalizing men. We are making them false gods and removing their humanity.

In public schools children are taught of leaders throughout history. They are told of their triumphs, but not their failures. When they learn of Christopher Columbus, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and even through JFK, they are not shown how these men are just men. Our children are not being given real people to aspire to, but fictionalized idols who have such summarized lives that no one could ever live up to them.

In our sports and entertainment, we build statues and dedicate halls of museums for our icons triumphs. We have murals and legends of people like Babe Ruth, Frank Sinatra, and Marilyn Monroe that create a dream for people who want to live forever in the minds of man. But we do not publicize their faults and their difficulties.

I am not saying these things are documented. We have actual biographies of people that show their hardships, but that is only in the deeper research of people. The tales we tell of things past are overly one-sided and not the whole story at all.

I admire the writing of the Bible which is good at presenting the whole character of a man.

Bible Read: Samuel II 22



## *Status Report Day 43*

*T*he two books of Samuel give a good representation of the first two kings of Israel. Both Saul and David have their strengths and weaknesses, but it is their ability to stay connected with God that either makes them or causes their eventual decline.

One of the things that stuck out to me is that God did not want to make Saul the king of Israel, he wanted to be their king himself. But he bent to the will of man and treated them as his children. Even though he knew that it was a mistake, he gave Israel the strong and well bred ruler they wanted.

I have been very forthright about my displeasure in God's constant punishment of the Israelites. It always feels harsh and uncalled for. It seemed like things that a father would never put upon his children. In that sense I am grateful for the books of Samuel. God finally acts as a father to his people. He gives them what they want as best he can and even allows them to make their own mistakes.

Even though the books of Samuel are dark and are largely about bad times, it still became an uplifting read with God showing his love for the people and respect for their free will.

### New Questions:

1. How tall are these people? Goliath was nine feet tall, how big was the gap for that fight?
2. Does God live inside the Ark of the Covenant or does he just follow it around?
3. Is any of this history provable? Do we know from any other documentation that Saul or David were actually kings?
4. And what year is this?

Bible Read: Samuel I & II

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# *Kings I & II*

## *Why, Why, Why?*

*H*eaven at this point in the Bible has pretty much been ignored.

Unless I missed it, there has been no promise of everlasting life in the kingdom of heaven. So, the question comes up, why worship God at this point?

Growing up, the promise of heaven was the reward for having a good Christian life. Even though I should have wanted to understand the world, have a relationship with God, and just be a generally good person, I saw religion as the dues to a very exclusive club.

I think my thought process was par for the course as far as a child goes, at least in our reward driven society. It is kind of like when a child asks why.

I did this a lot. I would ask why, why, why. And my parents were pretty good at answering.

-Why does dad go to work?

-To make money.

-Why?

-So we have a place to live and food to eat.

-Why?

-Because we will die otherwise.

-Why?

-Because the body cannot survive without food.

-Why?

-Because God made it that way.

-Why?

-No one knows. (Eerie silence)

These conversations were common. I don't think I ever asked, but I remember questioning why people go to church, read the Bible, and try to be good. I could always answer that question myself and the answer was, to go to heaven.

It is a selfish reason, but it sufficed at the time. I truly think there are many people who follow that thought process as adults. They aren't necessarily interested in being a better human or understanding the not understandable, they simply want the best possible after life just as they want the possible current life.

This leads me to the question... At the time of King Solomon, the Israelites have a covenant with God, but what is their reward? There has been no mention of an afterlife where they get to sit with God himself. There has not been mention of a hell that could be avoided with good deeds. There hasn't been mention of much of anything outside of known conscious reality.

I can only assume that they did it for protection. To have the best possible current life, they traded their bad behavior for safety. But, the covenant was so oppressive that they constantly broke the rules and when that happened not only were they not protected by God, they were punished by him.

It seems as though they did not get any real protection because when they sinned God became a temporary enemy. Without God, they would have had their geographic enemies, but with him they also have to deal with his wrath.

The most logical answer to me is they did it because God made them. Just as he hardened the Pharaoh's heart, he may have opened the Israelite's minds to him. In order to have the great story of the rise of the Israelites, God may have implanted the idea in their head.

This seems very logical. It was God's message to Joseph that he would rule over his brothers that caused them to sell him to Egypt. It was God's message to Abraham to leave the plains of Sodom so he would not be destroyed. It seems that God could have made the Israelites make the covenant.

I assume the promise of heaven will be included at some point,

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but I don't know why. If it was part of the deal why wasn't it part of the deal in the beginning? And what of the souls of those who were not promised it, but died and passed on?

Bible Read: Kings I 5

## *God's Plan, Not My Plan*

Solomon resolves a dispute between two women who are both claiming to be the mother of a child by threatening to cut the infant in half. The real mother pleads for him not to, the other says, go ahead. I thought this was a great tale when I was younger because it has a dark tone to it. But when I read it in the book of Kings my first thought was, what if they both said it was a good idea.

If I had been posed that question two months ago I would have thought that they would have taken the child and given it to someone who wanted it, but after reading of the brutality of God, I think they would have just killed it.

It shows my how my view of the Bible has changed. For a while it seemed as though the Bible was not compassionate and almost evil in some of the deeds carried out in it. But, as I go farther I am developing a tolerance of sorts to the barbarian style justice.

If that had happened maybe it would have been more compassionate to the child to be killed rather than grow up with warring mothers. Maybe the child was born just to be a lesson to others. Maybe I am wrong and they would have made the new baby the next king of something unexpected.

The poem, *Light Shining Out of Darkness* by William Cowper puts into perspective how my view has changed. In the poem he talks about how we can't understand God's plan and it is all done for a reason.

The line most people will know is "God Moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform;" This was where the phrase, God works in mysterious ways, comes from. But the line that speaks to me, "Blind unbelief is to err, And scan his work in vain; GOD is his own interpreter, And he will make it plain."

This is the piece of the puzzle I was missing. I did not question Abraham being led out of Sodom to avoid destruction or Noah

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building an ark for an unknown flood, or Joseph being sold off by his brothers to be a leader in Egypt. I did not question these because the reason became clear quickly. But I question other actions of God because the answer is not in the next paragraph. It has not occurred to me that I am not as intelligent as God and maybe I can't fully understand.

This doesn't mean I won't continue to question it, but it puts a little solace there. I just need to remember, "GOD is his own interpreter".

Bible Read: Kings I 10

## *Devil Said Knock You Out*

*J*ust as there has not been mention of an afterlife in heaven, there also seems to lack any recognition of Satan. I have been told that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was Satan, but the Bible has not said that. That is just someone's interpretation as far as I am concerned.

The Bible has mentioned over and over other gods that are worshipped by heathens. This could be Satan. He has not been mentioned although a handful of others have. But, regardless of if Satan himself has been mentioned, the talk of other gods shows that man is being pulled in different directions in the Bible.

It makes the demands of God seem to be more difficult when you start to consider other deities that have some influence on the people of Earth. How can God expect the people to stand up against these great beings?

Today, Christians don't believe in other gods, as far as I know. But, many do believe in Satan as a powerful being that draws everyone to evil.

Growing up, the idea of Satan scared me, but I never gave much attention to the suggestion that he is powerful. I always saw him as an underhanded swindler. More like the Devil from *The Devil Went Down to Georgia* by The Charlie Daniels Band. But as I go along in the Bible and see how God deals with people, I start to think that the Devil, or other gods in general, is/are most likely attempting to influence people in similar ways as God.

This leads me to a song lyric. In the Disney animated film of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Frollo is singing to Mother Mary in an attempt to break what he perceives to be a spell cast by a gypsy. He has fallen in love with a gypsy he thinks is evil and does not understand why it has happened since he believes he is such a good man.

The answer he eventually reaches... "It's not my fault. If in



God's plan, he made the Devil so much stronger than the man.”

This is an idea that I had not considered in the early parts of the Bible. If I understand the idea of Satan to be a fallen angel then he would be stronger than man. The couple of times that angels have shown up in the Bible they appear as a dead end to someone's attempt to do something God does not like. They are utilized as a way to keep the people from doing something at all costs.

Now looking at Satan, if he is acting in his own way and not the way of God, how could man possibly stand a chance? It kind of goes back to the idea that every man sins and it almost gives an excuse for it.

This is all thoughts based on past beliefs because as I said, Satan has been absent thus far from the Bible. When and if he shows up, it most likely will change all my preconceived notions of him.

Bible Read: Kings I 16

## *-Or You Could Just Tell Me What to Believe-*

*I* have been told to read a great number of companion books to go along with my Bible studies. I don't understand the idea behind this.

What I have been told time and time again is that I need something to explain to me what God is trying to say. How could it be possible that God, the creator of everything, is not articulate enough to explain himself in his book?

I have specifically been staying away from companion books as I do not want to hear someone else's interpretation of what the stories in the Bible mean. I am reading the Bible to find out if it speaks to me. I want to know if there is inspiration within the pages when it is just me and God going over them.

I appreciate everyone's input, but I think a big problem with many Christians today is that many of them have not read the Bible. They listen to what others tell them and make their assumptions from the hearsay.

Sad, but it is the way things seem to be.

Bible Read: Kings I 20

## *Kevin Spacey as Baudelaire*

*F*or some reason, I woke up today in a poetic mood. It is something that I've always liked, but rarely am in the mood to deal with. But today is different. Today I have been walking around thinking about song lyrics and poems that I remember from my past.

There is a poem in prose by Charles Baudelaire called *The Generous Gambler*. It is about a poet who bets and loses his soul to the Devil, but in being such a good companion to the Devil for the day, he gives it back and promises him great riches and power through his life.

The last line of the poem is the poet saying a prayer. "My God, my lord, my God! Do let the Devil keep his word with me!" It is a humorous comparison of someone asking for evil from God, but it does not seem to be far from what man does.

I believe it to be common for people to pray and ask for things that are not godly. People will ask for money and fame and luxury and life to be easy. But these are not the things that God pushes for the people of the Bible. In the Bible God rewards those who are selfless, modest, and do the hard tasks when asked.

He rewarded Solomon for asking for wisdom as opposed to riches. He rewarded Moses for doing the hard task to confronting the Pharaoh. And he punished those who created idols and questioned the hard life.

It becomes fairly straight forward that if everything God wants is good and everything else is bad, then money, fame, luxury, and simple wanting are all evil. It shows that we as people should be asking God for guidance and following his orders as opposed to asking for him to give us the easy way through life.

It brings into question just how good technology and progress is. As we continue to develop new ways to live life in simpler more comfortable ways we are in essence removing God from our world.

Especially in a country where the government gave away television converters when they made the transition to high definition so no one would go un-entertained.

Earlier in the poem there is another line that beats this in. “My dear brethren, do not ever forget, when you hear the progress of lights praised, that the loveliest trick of the Devil is to persuade you that he does not exist!”

I think we should take heed from Baudelaire. If we are to believe the Bible and the messages it espouses we should take a hard look at modern life. Would God want us to eat mechanically separated animals? How about genetically modified plants? Would God support working in a job that creates massive wealth for corporations who go on to plaster their logo on everything we see leaving us to be in the constant presence of idolatrous symbols? How about working in marketing where the goal is to make every man, woman, and child covet the possessions of their neighbors and fellow man?

Charles Baudelaire saw these things approaching in the 1800s and could tell that they were the workings of the Devil. As time has progressed, these ideas have become more main stream. People find faith in their modern day lives and reject both God and Satan. In doing so, we condemn ourselves to following the Devil under a new name, science.

It seems to me that rejecting God and accepting science as your only faith is not just a rejection of God, but also the giving of your soul to Satan. It is believing science creates great things and ignores the idea that they are things that are not holy.

I know this seems over the top, but as is the case in poetry. It helps to look at the world from the extreme to develop ideas, but also to find truth in those extremes.

Bible Read: Kings II 7

## *These are not the Books You are Looking For*

*A*s for the other events of the reign of this random king, and all he did, are they not written in the book of The Annals of the Kings of Judah? This is repeated many times throughout the books of Kings.

It has been obvious throughout the early books of the Bible that not everything is included. If these are the stories of lives of men, then we are missing some big events. But, Kings is the first books that point out that we are missing many things.

Looking at the lives of these great men we typically get a lot of coverage. Moses got four books. Saul got a book. David got a book, but once you get to Kings, everyone gets a chapter or two. Then they say it is ok because the other things are covered in The Annals of the Book of the Kings of Judah or Israel.

I am guessing that means we only need to know these few stories of each king. That everything else they did was not inspired by God. Does this mean that as we go along the kings turn to God less and less? I think that is quite possible. But, it also makes me think that these kings are just farther removed from Jacob and therefore farther removed from God.

Someone had told me that I should pay attention when the Bible repeats itself. They were claiming that if the Bible feels the need to repeat itself, it is trying to put emphasis on that particular message. If that is so, then I should see if the books of the annals of the kings of Israel and Judah still exist. But then it makes me wonder why they weren't included in the Bible itself.

One of the problems with reading the Bible is that you end up questioning which books were included. I know there is a ton of research that can be done on this subject, but, from a fairly ignorant background on the subject, it seems like there should be a well

communicated reason that would be included in some kind of introduction to the Bible.

It seems as though if a book is included and it references other books, those books should be included as well. Otherwise it seems that the church is intending on hiding something. What could those books say that would keep them out of the Bible, but their reference stays in?

I may read a few of the books that were considered for the Old Testament when I am done with the Bible. Specifically I have heard a lot about the books of Enoch, Jubilee, Meqabyan, and Odes. But, I do not know why they were not included in the canon.

To be fair, I am reading the Catholic Bible, so there are a few books I will be reading that many people of the world do not consider being included. I do not know if these were removed by denominations or if the Catholic Church added them later. Just to be open, the books I will be reading that some may not know about are, Tobit, Judith, Maccabees 1 & 2, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch. There also are a few additions to Daniel and Esther as well as a handful of extra Psalms. But it isn't just the Catholics that disagree about the books of the Bible. There are different inclusions with the Orthodox, the Syriac, and the Ethiopian Orthodox.

I find it sad that the Bible is not agreed upon as it confuses whether or not the entire work is written by the hand of God. I wanted to read the Bible to feel the words of God as so many others already have. I wanted to experience the inspiration of faith this book has been known to give. But, with so much discrepancy about what the Bible is made of, I don't know how anyone can have that faith.

Bible Read: Kings II 15

## *The Ancient Spam Mail*

Since I started this whole thing I keep thinking that God is mean. That he continuously punishes the Israelites for their mistakes and destroys their lives in the process. But after talking to a couple of Christians I am starting to see a new side.

As I said before, if there are competing Gods then it makes sense that God punishes his people. He has to appear strong to his enemies. He has to make an example. He has to show those who do not follow him that they should fear him.

But when it comes to the Books of Kings the punishment of the Israelites is not an example for anyone else. In the Books of Kings God has separated Israel into two factions, the Israelites and the tribe of Judah. It is these two factions that have competing Kings and go to war with each other constantly.

It is the slow story of the disbanding of Israel and the removal of them from the Holy Land. My viewpoint has been that he is not making an example when he sends them out of the Holy Land because there is no one, but themselves involved.

It was pointed out to me that all this takes place in a small area. It all takes place at a time when there is little communication outside your immediate community. And, this all takes place as predicted by God earlier in the Bible for a reason.

The point is regardless of whether or not there is anyone around, this is still done to inspire faith and fear among others. And, how else would the word get out in such an ancient time without dispersing the Israelites back out into the world.

This is a big deal to me. It gives a positive reason behind what feel like detestable actions. It reminds me of modern day guerilla marketing. That is where people market products and services by doing unexpected demonstrations and shows in public (flash mobs, pop up demonstrations, graffiti murals...).

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Just as Christians today proselytize the Israelites had to do the same. The word had to be spread throughout the world in some fashion and in sending the Israelites out with stories of the power of their god, he does just that.

Bible Read: Kings II 22



## *OMM, Oh My Moses!*

*T*here seem to be times when God does questionable things in the Old Testament. The most recent I have come across is when Elisha encounters some young boys and they ridicule him. They call him names and Elisha curses them in the name of God. Then two she-bears come out of the woods and maul 42 of the boys.

And just as I have done time and time again, my response is “Holy crap! Is that necessary?” And I think the answer is no, it is not necessary. Is it just? I think the answer is no.

But something has happened in the Bible by this point. Men who follow God at this point use him mostly as a prayer device. They find guidance from him as well as use him for their own personal gain. This is part of the fall of the Israelites.

The difference is, earlier in the Bible, Moses did not treat God in this way. Moses had a relationship with God. They had a give and take. He asked for help and guidance, but he also gave help and guidance to God. He did God’s bidding when he led the Israelites. He gave advice to God when he pleaded with him twice to not destroy the Israelites and instead give them the land he had promised Abraham.

I feel this is what is missing in the Book of Kings. God no longer has someone with him to keep him focused. He does not have the voice of humanity that keeps him from being all hellfire and brimstone. I think there is a difference between God and man in the way they show compassion and love. I think God’s compassion is leading people or almost forcing them into the ways of good, while man’s compassion and love is for their life and their consciousness within their struggles.

This makes the Ten Commandments needed in order to have the covenant with God. If you follow the Ten Commandments, you will have the human compassion needed to be a partner with God and therefore can work with him on making life as good as it can be.

God can get you where you need to be, but he will do it in the most direct way, even if that means killing and stealing. But if you follow the Ten Commandments and talk to God about how you love you fellow man and have compassion for their strife that you would inflict on them, he will help you in more round about ways.

This to me is why God inflicted the plagues of Egypt and he did not have Moses build an army to kill them. Moses was the perfect partner. Other men followed God without questioning him and committed genocides in the name of the Lord.

It seems anti-everything-I've-been-taught, but I believe the Bible is telling us to question God. I believe it is telling us to partner with him, not to blindly follow him. I believe it is telling us that God needs us as much as we need him if this world is not to be a pool of death and destruction.

Bible Read: Kings II 24

## *Status Report Day 50*

*A*s much as I like the Book of Ruth, I disliked the Books of Kings.

The story is important. The Israelites sin a lot and God more or less kicks them out of the Holy Land.

It is a big deal, but it is hard to follow and very dry. There are too many kings and stuff happens too quickly. It is hard to follow and overall not very inspirational.

This is another book of the historical books of the Bible, hopefully when I get through them, the books of wisdom are more inspirational. This is the first time I have really felt like I was reading a text book. There is very little to identify with and more just a list of major events.

They are called the Books of Kings for a reason, because it is about the kings of Israel and Judah. But, I still found some inspiration in the words after I compared them to earlier books of the Bible. Instead of focusing on how God is tearing apart his chosen people, I focused on why it was happening. And in doing so I realized that we can use the acts of the kings as a guidebook for the pitfalls of backsliding.

Least favorite book so far: Leviticus

Least favorite character so far: Goliath

Bible read so far: 25%

Chapters read so far: 338

Estimated finish date at current rate: August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Bible Read: Kings I & II

Richard W. Kelly

# *Chronicles I & II*

## *Choose Your Fate? No, Choose Your Journey*

“*W*hen the President talks to God, does he ever think maybe he’s not? That voice is just inside his head, when he kneels next to the presidential bed.”

That is from the Bright Eyes song *When the President Talks to God*. It is an anti-George W. Bush song that contends that his choices were not godly. My political persuasions aside, I loved this song. The idea that any president could not be in communication with God because they make horrible choices is intriguing to me.

The song says choosing who to pardon or what country should be invaded must be the decision of man because they are not good things to do. The farther I get into the Bible the less intriguing this song is. I am quickly realizing that the writer did not know very much of the Bible.

In the Bible, God suggests genocide on a fairly constant basis. In the Bible, God punishes men for years and their ancestors for generations. It starts to become obvious that if the leader of a country is a world power, they just may be talking to God.

The real question is, “Does the president question God?” I know talked about this already, but this idea makes free will make sense.

As I said before, if God does not have the same type of compassion that humans have then he will give guidance that may seem evil in our own eyes. But as Moses proved if you question God, he will give you a better option that answers your complaints. There is more than one way to do things and that is what we need to ask of God.

People always answer hard questions of Christianity with the answer that God gave us free will. And I always felt that was a cop-

out and was a little paradoxical.

The first issue is the hard question. There is a conundrum in Christianity called the problem of evil. It goes like this...

If God is all powerful and all good, then evil can't exist.

If God is all powerful and evil exists, then God cannot be all good.

If God is all good and evil exists, then God is not all powerful.

This is the paradox of religion. The common response is that God gave us free will and he allows evil to exist for our own sake. This does not fix the paradox. If God is ALL good then he could not allow the existence of evil.

But, I think the whole thing is faulty in design. I realized by my understanding of God needing the help of man that good and evil don't exist in nature. Good and evil exist in the minds of men.

God only sees order. Things work in the way they work and obedience keeps those forces of order in line. It isn't about what is right and wrong. If it was about what is right and wrong then there would everlasting harmony.

The second issue is that the free will response is a cop-out. I say this because anytime someone disagrees with God they say it is man's fault. They claim that God loves us and wants us to make our own decisions, but at the same time follow God's plan.

If God wanted us to make our own decisions he would have fed the apple to Eve. But, he did not, he wanted us to be ignorant. He did not willingly give us free will, we took it against his wishes.

But we still have the divine plan, which hasn't been mentioned so far in the Bible. It makes sense to me that God can have a divine plan for the world. But it doesn't mean that our lives are decided, it means the destinations we arrive at are predetermined.

When I play Super Mario Bros. I have free will to play as I want, but this does not mean that I will take Mario to ancient Babylon. It is not within the limitations I have been set with. I believe God's divine plan is similar in that we have free will to do as we please within a set of limits. We will eventually reach the destination he

## My Journey Into Christianity

wants us to, but how we get there is up to us.

We can be “evil” or we can be “good”, it does not matter to God. They only exist within the world as we interpret it.

I am not saying it is ok to do bad things, I am saying it isn't a bad thing in the eyes of God. To be a murderer you are becoming an abomination to your fellow man. Just as a bully is still loved by his parents and sometimes even considered justified by them God still loves all his creations. I don't think his love is the same as ours, but it is there.

Bible Read: Chronicles I 10

## *Holy the Lonely*

*I* tried to pray today.

It was lonely.

There was nothing to say.

Not from the Holy.

I really did try to pray. I feel like I am doing it wrong. It had been a long time since I tried, but I sat in my car and addressed God directly, out loud.

I thanked him for the world in which we live, the life I have and the lives I've touched. I told him I was sorry for my failings I've had and that I needed guidance.

I waited. Silence. I felt more alone than ever.

I don't know what it was, but day to day I feel like God is often there. I feel looked over and directed quietly and discreetly. But today, I felt alone. I felt God was not there, not in that car, not this morning.

I will try again, maybe in a different way.

I think my issue is that my mind is slowly forming the idea that God does exist, but then when I try to speak to him in the same fashion as Abraham, Jacob, and Moses I feel nothing. It is disheartening and discouraging. It makes my mind race and wonder if I am wasting my time.

But, maybe it isn't that God isn't there. Maybe, it is that I don't have his attention. But how do I get his attention?

I don't have it in me to sacrifice something to garner his attendance. And I don't even know if that would help. I feel a bit lost today.

Words and stories drive my mind  
Towards the glories of the divine



## My Journey Into Christianity

A lifeless nothing is what I find  
When my best loving is what I try

Bible Read: Chronicles I 15

## *-Not This Again-*

*A*n old Latin proverb says, “Repetition is the mother of learning.” I can understand how this can be a good thing. If you are trying to learn about something you just aren’t grasping, but for boring Bible stories, I would rather not try this.

Unfortunately, now that I am a few chapters into Chronicles, I can tell you that the Books of Chronicles are nothing, but a retelling of Samuel and Kings. This is very de-motivating because I thought the Books of Kings were very hard to get through and now it appears as though I have to reread them.

It seems logical to think that if the Bible is repeating itself then it is important. But, these are the stories of the Kings which are already repetitive. The King does good, the people do bad, and then the King does bad. God punishes. I got it the first time around, I don’t want to read it again!

Bible Read: Chronicles I 18

## *Could a Wrestler be an Angel From God?*

*A*fter attempting to pray, nothing happened. I felt discouraged and confused. A few hours later I had a strange thought. I was looking at Weight Watchers thinking I needed to lose some weight again. I have used Weight Watchers in the past and it worked, well it worked for a while.

But as I was considering going back to low calories my brain broke the normal thought process and said ‘I need to decide to change the way I live.’ This is not like me, I am not typically the self help, feel good, life changing kind of person.

I thought it was odd and I brushed it off a bit. Just minutes later I was reading through Twitter and I clicked a link that I did not mean to click. It was an interview with Diamond Dallas Page, former pro-wrestler and now yoga instructor, called *Wrestling, Movies and Yoga?* by Patrick Hickley Jr. He was talking about his yoga program and in it Page says, “It will help you change your life in a much more positive way than a conventional diet that is only temporary.”

The words almost scared me they rang so reminiscent of what I had just thought. Taken aback, I started looking into his yoga program. Everything I could find pointed to the idea that it is legit. So, I ordered it from DDPYoga.com.

I am waiting on it to arrive, but I keep wondering if this is how God speaks to us. I was disheartened by the lack of response that they get in the Bible and was quickly becoming dismissive of all the messages in the Bible. But then there was that very odd coincidence. It seems to me, that it is a bad thing I was so quickly ready to turn on everything I read, but also intriguing to think that when I was turning away something happened.

I mentioned this to someone and they asked if I thought it was

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a miracle. I don't think coincidence is a miracle, although possibly more than just chance. I will let you know if it was a miracle after I get into the yoga program.

I can't believe I am trying to do a workout program... This is very much not like me.

Bible Read Chronicles I 18

## *From Ancient Prayer Break to New Exercise*

Every day that I read the Bible I want to find a nugget of truth. I want to find a new passage, a new message that will help me grow as a person. But, as I move into the second Book of Chronicles, I am reading a retelling of the Books of Kings.

The first Book of Chronicles was a retelling of the Books of Samuel. I got to reread the reigns of Saul and David. Now, I am up to Solomon again. And once again God has given Solomon wealth and riches because he asked for wisdom instead of material things.

This story said a lot to me the first time, but this time it just feels like rehashing. I do not fully understand why all of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are all included in the Bible. It seems as though it would have been logical to not include a retelling of other books immediately after those books.

I am guessing the repetition will help me remember the stories, but it makes my search for enlightenment harder to continue. At least as far as reading the Bible is concerned.

On another note, I had an amazing experience with my yoga yesterday. As much concentration and work that it took to do the yoga I found myself much more at peace afterwards. I was relaxed, energized, happy, and I felt much closer to God.

It reminded me of dramatizations of people praying in biblical times. The large body movements and the squat and lunges seemed very reminiscent of ancient prayers and the descriptions in the Bible where people press their head to the floor. Maybe that connection means there is more to yoga than just exercise and relaxation. Maybe, yoga can really bring you closer to truth.

As much as I have thought yoga to be silly in the past, it may have taken my biblical journey to find a deeper appreciation for it. If

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it wasn't for the Bible and my weak attempt at prayer I would never have found it.

Bible Read: Chronicles II 1

## *Do You Want a Million Dollars? Ummm, YES!!!!*

*I* find it curious that the Bible tells us not to covet yet the story of Solomon continuously talks about all the riches he had. It talks of his wealth and how common he made gold in Israel. It talks of his 12,000 horses and 4,000 stables. It talks of the great collection of spices he received.

It feels like this part of the Bible is written to create coveting in the reader. I understand the idea that he was rewarded for his selflessness, but focusing on the details of his reward seems to send the wrong message.

What am I supposed to think? Should I try to be more selfless so I can be rewarded? That in itself IS selfish. Should I just be happy for Solomon while I continue to have trouble with small money budgeting? I don't think that is in my personality.

It feels like the Bible is trying to get me to sin. It feels like the beginnings of the story of Solomon do nothing but cause bad thoughts.

I'm sure many people look at it as a motivation to be a better person, but their motive is still bad. They are obsessing over gain. They just see the path to get there as different from others. But then again, God does many things in the Old Testament for a righteous reason even if the road to get there seems to be filled with sin.

The punishments, the murders, the disasters all seem to be the work of something evil. But, I guess, the ends justify the means.

Maybe he needed Moses to tell him it would do no good to give Solomon all those riches. I know that Solomon wasn't going to tell God that.

Bible Read: Chronicles II 9

## *Pope Francis I*

Yesterday we saw the election of Pope Francis I. I know nothing about this man nor do I know much of anything about the office. What I do know is that papal elections seem to be a major event. Many people tune into their televisions to see who the new leader of the Catholic Church is going to be regardless of their own faith.

I am not sure why this is a big deal to non-Catholics. The pope now-a-days seems to do very little that is impactful for the average person. I am sure if you are a member of the Catholic clergy there is some real impact by the pope, but for the average person...

I have been led to believe that Catholics think the pope has the most direct communion with God. If this is the case, why do Cardinals choose him? Why don't they set all the eligible people out in a square and see who is rain on first? Why don't they have a foot race? I don't understand how having all the Cardinals gather and vote is reminiscent of God choosing his person.

I also wonder if this is similar to Aaron being the first priest of the Israelites. If the pope does some ritual wrong will God strike him dead? Does the average Catholic have a right to go to the pope and ask for him to sacrifice a ram for them?

For some reason the current papal election process does not seem like it is the same thing as God choosing a leader. If it had been done in the Old Testament, it would have been the first person to see a bear or find a frog in their pocket or something odd like that.

Either way, we have a new pope. And he is not from Europe. He was a cardinal in South America. So, if the pope truly is chosen by God, I guess it shows that you do not have to be of his chosen people. No more is it just the Israelites who are protected by God. Today it is South Americans too.

Bible Read: Chronicles II 16



## *It's Not Yo Momma's Sin*

*I*n the Second Book of Chronicles they quote a law from the Books of Moses. "Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor children be put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin." I didn't remember this from the first five books of the Bible, but it is Deuteronomy 24:16. (It is one of many things that I didn't seem to catch the first time around)

The logical question that then arises is that God has punished many children for the sins of their fathers as well as rewarded them for the virtues of their fathers. God said early on that those who lived by the laws of God would be rewarded for a thousand generations, but those live in sin by the eyes of the Lord would be punished for four generations. That is a summary from memory so it may be slightly off.

The first issue is that God hasn't followed his own rule. But the second question I have is, why is that it didn't make an impact on me the first time around.

I came to the revelation a bit ago that God doesn't follow the Ten Commandments because that is man's duty in the covenant, but this rule does not feel as much like a rule for man. This rule sounds like an eternal truth.

I can understand how this can be used for men to keep them from killing others, but it seems more that it is the way of the universe. More like you will not be judged for your father's life. And if that is the way it was meant, then why is it that God could punish people for generations with guilt by association and still keep true with the judgment of their soul.

The other big problem is that I didn't recall reading that the first time. Which I understand is probably my mistake, but what does that say for the Bible. It seems like that should be a pretty big deal and if that is so how could I have missed it.

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With the size of the Bible there are going to be things that are missed, but it can't be a major rule or theme. Otherwise the whole thing may be badly interpreted. It seems to me that if the Bible was written by the hand of God then every person should be able to pull the main concepts out of it the first time around.

It would be a miracle if that happened, but God makes miracles..... Right?

Bible Read: Chronicles II 25

## *Don't Read the Last Page First*

*T*he crux of Christianity is the life and resurrection of Jesus.

Knowing this, the Bible feels like it is just giving me a bunch of back story because the real important stuff is coming in the New Testament.

But to consider the Old Testament to be less important seems incredibly backwards. The Old Testament is about God and his words, while the New Testament is about God's son. Shouldn't God be more important than his son?

I know this brings the trinity into question with the father, son, and Holy Spirit. But, I am not going to start trying to interpret that now as it has not been mentioned in the Bible yet. And, with all the assumptions I've that were destroyed by just a few verses in the Old Testament, I am not about to take something as vague and complicated as the trinity and stick with assumptions.

I think that it makes more sense to put the emphasis on God rather than Jesus. If God did not exist, neither would Jesus. And, if Jesus didn't exist, neither would Christianity.

But, the Old Testament feels farfetched. It also feels made up in parts. It feels like parts of it were written in drastically different eras... But again. No God, no Jesus. No Jesus, no Christianity.

This is the train of thought I've had time and time over when I started to question my decision to read the Bible straight through. The Old Testament is tedious at times and the more I read it the more I think it is more fable than fact. But, it is the foundation for the New Testament. So, every time I think I should skip to the New Testament that is what I tell myself.

Bible Read: Chronicles II 26

## *War Ship!*

*W*orship. I have never really thought about it, but I don't know what that means. I would have defined it as what people do when they pray to their God(s). I guess it would be praying and singing and communion.

Dictionary.com says, "Reverent honor and homage paid to God or a sacred personage, or to any object regarded as sacred". Taking out all the big words it means, "To respect, honor, and acknowledge the worth of God or a devoted person."

If you had asked me yesterday if I thought it was good to worship a person, I would have said no. I would have said that you shouldn't elevate a person to a God level. But that isn't really what it means. I am now thinking it would be good practice to worship people.

God said you shall not have other gods before me. God said you shall not have false idols. God said you shall not make graven images. He did not say, as far as I remember, that you shall not acknowledge good people.

I think next time I go to church I will try to take a moment to worship a good person as well as God. Is that blasphemous?

Bible Read: Chronicles II 27

## *Tonight We're Gonna Party Like it's BC 99*

*W*e tried a Unity Church on Sunday. It was an experience.

It was a very small church with a small congregation. It started out similar to most churches with a song and a prayer. Nothing too exciting. A little bit of chanting came around. But then we hit the point in the service where to shake people's hands and say good morning.

This started with a song called Namaste. During the song people began to dance, and sing, and walk around, and bow to each other. It was strange, but the kids loved it. Then when we said good morning to each other people walked across the entire room to say hi to new faces. Some people shook our hands, others hugged us. People chatted with our kids and made them feel very welcome.

Then the Sunday school teachers came in and told us about what they were doing in class and we all sang a song about kids. The kids sang back and marched out of the chapel.

Then there were announcements and more songs. We prayed, we chanted, we meditated. We sang and clapped and danced. People held a conversation with the reverend or minister or whatever...

Then kids came back and we all joined hands and sang about peace. It was different.

At the beginning I was shocked and confused. It was very welcoming, but also very offsetting. But, as it went on I realized it was nice and casual, relaxing and fun. I really enjoyed it. It was entertaining and enjoyable.

They called the service a celebration service which is a great description. And it got me to thinking. Usually in church I feel like I am a part of a big ritual as if there is one way to do it correctly and everyone is trying to go back in time. It always feels a bit somber and

lots of people just don't seem like they want to be there.

This felt like a celebration. But not just any celebration, it felt like a celebration of God that you read about in the Old Testament. It felt oddly more ritualistic and less orderly at the same time. I think we will go back for another try.

Bible Read: Chronicles II 36

## *Status Report Day 60*

*T*hankfully I am through both Books of Chronicles. What did I get out of it? Pretty much nothing. It was a recap of the last four books! I am getting bored and feel like I am reading a text book at this point.

I am hoping there is less repetition from here out, but I am not very confident on that one. I thought reading the Bible would be like reading little tid bits of truth every day. But, it feels like I am reading history with hidden lessons shoved in there. They are not always easy to find, but when you do they are typically useful.

My outlook on God has changed quite a bit. But, it is not as much that I believe any more or less than I did before. What has changed is what the Christian god is, how he is supposed to act, his level of compassion, and what the world was like when these stories were written.

I am still undecided as far as belief goes, but that could still change. The Bible thus far has brought good things into my life, so if there is anything about this project that has brought me to consider God as possible that is it.

### Stats

Days Reading: 60

Chapters Read: 403

Books Read: 14

Estimated Finish at Current Pace: July 25<sup>th</sup>

Bible Read: Chronicles I & II

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## *Ezra-Nehemiah*



## *Six Flags Over the Temple of God*

*I* am already half way through Ezra. It is relieving to have a short book at this point.

They are now rebuilding the Temple of God. I like this subject because there seems to always be some talk about it. From my understanding, when it is rebuilt in modern times is a signal of the apocalypse.

It could be, but I keep wondering if the apocalypse was misinterpreted and it is an event that has already happened. What if we have passed that point and we are in uncharted futures?

Either way, I like the idea that the Temple of God could be rebuilt and maybe God would once again reside there. There must be replicas of it somewhere. I could see that as a fun attraction at an amusement park, maybe at the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida.

The question is would that signal the beginning of the apocalypse also? We could easily rebuild that temple all over the world now as long as there weren't groups trying to stop it.

If they really wanted to build it, you would think they would do it in America where they could probably get it finished without it being sabotaged.

But the apocalypse wouldn't be a good thing, so I guess I am glad no one is doing that.

Bible Read: Ezra 5

## *Slow Times at Jerusalem High*

Occasionally I will read a book that appears to have no point.

Either there is no discernible plot like *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera or the events of the book have no resolution like *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. The Book of Ezra would fall under both of those categories.

In the Book of Ezra, the Israelites, now called Jews, build the second Temple of God. Then Ezra goes and realizes that the Jews are living in sin by marrying non-Israelites. The end.

There is nothing there. I understand that at one time Ezra and Nehemiah were combined into one book, so I am hopeful that after I read Nehemiah there will be something more to it. But, why is Ezra now set apart as its own book?

It is short which is nice, but there seems to be no point to it. It seems important to know that they rebuilt the temple, but could there not have been a story with it? Could there not be a tale with small lesson?

Instead, we are given a bland recollection of the temple being built and Ezra witnessing “sin”. I can’t imagine that this was ever considered a good book. I am not even sure why this would be included in the Cannon.

If nothing else this book shows us a quick glimpse into reality. In real life there are pointless events. There are days when I will sit in front of a television and watch a baseball game. That is it for the day. There are times where I will spend weeks or months working on a relationship or a habit that just doesn’t take.

I feel like I have to get something out of this book and that is about as good as I can come up with.

Bible Read: Ezra 10

## *Ancient Morons*

*I* read at one point that there was a wooden toy airplane found in Egypt made in 200 BC. Modern archeologists claim this is a toy bird. There have been carvings found in Abydos that resemble that of planes and helicopters. These are explained by archeologists as overlapping hieroglyphs as if someone wrote something directly on top of something already written.

In South America they have found small golden figurines of what appear to be airplanes complete with wings, tail fins, and landing gear. They believe them to be from 500 BC. These are explained as models of bees.

Is it possible that these ancient items are coincidence that they closely resemble modern day technology? I guess so. Is it possible that these were designs of things either built or not? I think so.

We know that both of these civilizations had built large pyramids. We still have not come to any conclusive evidence of how that was done. Our current perception of their technology tells us that they gathered thousands of men to lift large blocks that weighed over a ton to create these huge structures over the course of decades. Which in and of itself seems unlikely. It would seem to me that a feat of such breadth wouldn't be attempted.

I do not think it is ridiculous to think they had technologies that we are unaware they had. Even without electricity one can imagine a crane powered by a few dozen men that would make more sense than sheer muscle. Knowing they had these huge structures it seems very likely they could have taken what they learned from birds and leaves and other things that fly or float and built gliders to roll off the top of these structures.

Why is it that we assume ancient man was an idiot? They had brains, they could use logic to figure things out. I understand that they did not have the same archived resources we have, but big of a leap is

it to think that an Egyptian may have made their version of a child's paper airplane?

This all comes back to the Bible for me. Atheistic scientists today think that religion was just ancient man's way of explaining things they did not understand. Since they could not possibly have came up with the idea of the Big Bang, they instead said a being created man, the Earth, and the Universe.

It seems to me that if that was the case, if all the ancient mythologies were nothing but fairy tales to explain how the world worked we would have some ancient texts that are early science. We would have some ancient texts claiming that the beginnings were spontaneous generation or man was born of a seed or even that he came from apes. It isn't a big stretch to think these idiotic creatures thousands of years ago saw an ape and said, "Hey, that looks a lot like me. Maybe my ancestors were like them."

But as far as I know all the ancient writings talk of Gods or other beings that were here and did these things for us. Did things like create a species out of dirt and created light and set plagues upon groups of people. Not to mention all these things were entirely supernatural until our science caught up with the ideas. We now can make light in smaller sense. We can unleash plagues and diseases upon people. And, although I am not sure how close, we can feasible create a species out of mere atoms.

The point is ancient man obviously was not idiotic. People way back had thoughts and plans and could create just as we do today. The logical thought process we go through has been there for a very long time. We have become very egotistical in our belief that we are superior to our ancient ancestors.

I think there is a lot of validity in the Bible as a record of ancient history. And I believe that it is commonly brushed aside as ancient babble.

From now on when I see old structures such as the pyramids or the Easter Island statues or the Pantheon, I will wonder why they built it. Did they build it as a home or tribute to a god they could not see or hear? Maybe they did. But would we, today, build something of the same magnitude for the same reason? Or are they useful structure like

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our office buildings and stadiums? Maybe they are monuments to people or governments. Either way, I think we have to assume they are intelligent people who did things for a reason, not just to waste space and honor a fictional character they made up.

Bible Read: Nehemiah 1

## *Gentlemen, We Can Rebuild it. We Have the Stones.*

*T*he Book of Nehemiah has been telling the story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Nehemiah has rebuilt the walls, cancelled all debts, taken a census, read the laws of Moses, and had a feast. Again it feels like there is little story here, but combined with everything before it in the Bible, there is a lot here.

This feels like the rediscovery of the Jews. They have been lost and enslaved in Babylon and it at this point where they rediscover their heritage and have a renaissance of faith. It reminds of born again Christians.

It says a lot about God and his willingness to accept people back into his heart. Regardless of the pain and destruction that you have committed there is still room for you with God.

Finally we are back to something uplifting. I like the idea that you should not focus on the past since there is no going back. You can only affect your future. This is the first time I've noticed the idea that there can be salvation for everyone. It is not a black or white, good or bad, yes or no type of issue.

The Jews had spent years away from their god and seemed to have forgotten about the lives they were meant to live. But returning to their roots returns them to the relationship they once had.

This kind of redemption is the reason why I have such a respect for groups like AA who devote themselves to the redemption of people. It is the decision that someone makes to better their own life that allows us to not have to always be the living embodiment of our mistakes. This idea is what allows us to be an evolving being that can become better than we ever were.

In the professional wrestling world there is a rampant problem with drug and alcohol abuse. Two notorious offenders were Jake the

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Snake Roberts and Scott Razor Ramon Hall. They were known as the lifelong alcoholics who had squandered their fame and fortunes for self destroying sin.

They have both made great strides with the help of Diamond Dallas Page and his yoga program, DDP Yoga, to correct their lives. They have stepped away from their self destroying behaviors and made themselves a better person.

I have been following their stories for a couple months and feel more inspired day after day by them. I feel like the rebuilding of Jerusalem is the same type of inspiring act. To read about the Israelites returning home and reconvening with God is a great act. This, assuming it doesn't end in tragedy shortly, may be one of the most inspiring parts of the Bible I have read yet.

Bible Read: Nehemiah 9

## *-Everybody Limbo-*

*I* like the idea that you can change your life from the inside out, but regardless there are always the decisions you have made. No matter how hard you try to eliminate the wrongs from your past they are still affecting you.

I said before that I was inspired by the idea that you could move forward and change who you are. And, I do like the idea that you are not bound to your past to be the person you were.

Unfortunately, the decisions you have made will always affect how your life moves forward. Just because you repent, if you have killed a man you will most likely have consequences. If you lied to people, no matter how much you change, they may never trust you again.

The point is there is a justice in both the ability to mold one's present and the inability to wrangle in one's past. This is an idea had not considered fully before reading the Bible. I always thought that it made no sense that you would be forgiven if you repented. The idea should then be to enjoy life as much as possible and when you think it is all over repent and go to heaven.

This could in essence work if you really meant it, but seems like a loop hole. It is not. Since it is not typically known when you will die there is almost always a time left in life after the repentance. It is that time when you must deal with your past.

Although God forgives, man does not. People who do horrendous evil are persecuted by their fellow man in punishment for their past, justice. Even one's own guilt may gnaw at a conscience for the decisions made, justice. But, it is not an eternal punishment. It just may be the Limbo that many people believe in that you experience before the afterlife.

Bible Read: Nehemiah 10



## *Oracle or Scapegoat*

“*I*t says in the Bible that X, Y, and Z will happen.” I’ve heard this countless times throughout my life. I have always just taken everyone’s word for it. Now realizing that most people have not read it, maybe I should not have put so much faith in them.

I am over a third of the way through the Bible and there has not been any real prophecy yet. It has given me a good record of the historical happenings of the Middle East and northern Africa, but thus far nothing about what will happen in the future.

Maybe this is all New Testament stuff which makes me want to get there sooner, but maybe it isn’t. Maybe, all these prophecies I’ve heard over the years that were attested to the Bible are not biblical prophecy at all, but people continuing the spread of hearsay.

The Old Testament has given prophecy that came to fruition in its later books, but not knowing the historical accuracy or the dates as to which these things were written and happened, it feels a bit more like foreshadowing than prediction.

I enjoy predictions. I like to read what all the different soothsayers have to say at the beginning of the year and see who, if any, are close.

Most of the time there are no good hits on the prophetic front, nothing that doesn’t feel like a general guess. But, it is fun nonetheless.

I haven’t found this in the Bible. Where is the three days of darkness? What about raining frogs? The seas of blood, western sunrise, and the rise of the beast? I will just keep trudging along and hope they come along sooner or later.

Bible Read: Nehemiah 13

## *Status Report Day 64*

Once again a book of the Bible ends in sadness. With all the hope I had for the positive of the Israelites, we end the Book of Nehemiah with a bunch of backsliding Jews.

It gets old reading about people who get all this motivation and end up going back on their word, returning to sin. It is depressing. How is anyone supposed to be inspired by the Bible when everyone in it fails?

It seems reminiscent of life. How many times have I tried a diet or started to write a book or even read a book, just to stop at a decent midpoint? I am trying to change that behavior now. I am trying to stick with things I start, but the Bible seems to be telling me I can't do it.

It seems antithetical to what I thought of the Bible before. Why is the book which is supposed to cause great men to great deeds making me think that I am destined to fail? This is far from inspiring.

### Failures

Biggest Failure in the Bible: Cain

Should Have Failed to Read: Genealogies in Genesis

Book Containing the Most Failures: Both Books of Kings

Bible Read: Ezra-Nehemiah

## *Esther*

## *Gather 'Round Kids and Hear a Tale of Sexism and Genocide*

*T*he problem with biblical stories is that they are wildly inappropriate for children. They are full of death, violence, adultery, hate, genocide...

The Book of Esther starts out with a Persian king who wants his Queen to present herself to the kingdom to allow them to gaze upon her beauty. She refuses. To show that men are supposed to control the household and their women apparently, he makes an example of her and kicks her out.

He then orders all the young women of Persia to be presented to him so he can pick a new wife. He of course picks the Jewish girl who is hiding that she is Jewish. This was a suggestion by her Jewish friend, Mordecai, who has previously saved the king's life.

When Haman becomes Prime Minister and Mordecai refuses to bow to him, Haman figures out that Mordecai is a Jew. In punishment Haman decides to kill all the Jews in Persia.

This is where I am. Now it seems obvious that the king will find out that Esther is also a Jew and that will cause problems since he is married to her.

The point of this summary is that even though this is a Bible story it is horrific. This is not a story to be told to a child. Is it just that today things have changed and we protect our kids too much? Hundreds of years ago, was this ok you would teach a five year old?

I cannot in good conscience tell my kids a story that involves sexism, belittling of women, lying, hatred, and potential genocide. The Bible is full of this type of stuff and can't believe we teach these things to kids. Why would we teach that mankind is so horrible?

Bible Read: Esther 4

## *To Pray*

*T*he last time I prayed for guidance I was left alone. I did not get the response I wanted. But after I gave it time I was led to something that is quickly having a very positive effect on my life.

Today I prayed again. I found the same silence that I was greeted with last time. And, I hope that after some time I am led in a new direction again.

I wonder if the people of the Old Testament were ever met with a profound nothingness. It isn't as if I am sitting alone. When I sit alone I notice the world around me. I am alone, but still existing in nature.

When I pray and wait I find nothing. It is as if the rest of existence has gone off to hide and I am sitting in the presence of absolute emptiness.

It sounds very anti-God. But, just as they say the loudest sound you will ever hear is utter silence, I feel that the most profound interaction with God may be utter emptiness.

It brings to light the idea that we are living inside a shell of a body. In this world we are just visitors renting our vehicle and when we approach the divine it reminds of such.

Bible Read: Esther 10

## *Status Report Day 66*

**E**sther unfortunately ends in a blood bath. After the king agrees to let Haman kill all the Jews, he has a dream where he remembers what Mordecai the Jew did for him, saved his life.

The king goes to Haman and asks him what he should do for a man he wishes to honor. Haman thinking the king is talking of him suggests he parades him about town in the royal robes and proclaims what a great man he is.

The king orders Haman to have this done for Mordecai, who is the reason Haman wants to kill all the Jews. Then the king has dinner with his wife and she reveals to him she is Jewish and that she would be included in Haman's extermination plan.

The king is outraged, but for some reason cannot retract his decree of the massacre of the Jews. It gets more complicated, but essentially Haman is hung and the Jews slaughter tens of thousands of Persians. And this is celebrated as the holiday of Purim.

Just like the holiday of Passover, it is another Jewish holiday that commemorates the slaughtering of thousands of people. These celebrations seem to be of ill will towards men to me.

I am not sure why these are things to be happy about. We do celebrate the end of WWII, but I didn't think it was for our people being safe and thousands of Germans dying. I thought it was for the end of the horrible era in our time.

Many parts of the Bible seem to be for the war hungry, over testosterone, manly man. The idea of peace, love, and good will seems overshadowed by the relish of the death of enemies.

### Questions

1. Why was God not mentioned in the Book? Seems odd for the Bible

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2. Why is the title of this book a commemoration of Esther instead of Mordecai?
3. Is the Bible really supporting the idea of kill or be killed?

Bible Read: Esther

Richard W. Kelly

# *Job*



# *Great Deeds Deserve Great Punishment*

*J*ob is a tortured man. That seems relevant.

In the Book of Job we are treated to the story of how a great man who is nearly perfect in his avoidance of sin is tortured by Satan to prove to God that he is not as good as he seems. Although I can see how one can gather righteous meaning out of this story, it seems mostly cruel.

This is another example of how God is not all knowing. Just as God has had to receive confirmation from his people that they did bad things and asked men why they did things to understand their motive, God once again is questioning man.

If he was all knowing he would know in Job's heart that he was a good man. He would know from his soul that Job would always honor God. But, instead God allows Satan to take everything away from Job so he can see how righteous Job actually is.

This story, if true, does not bode well for people in general. I always thought that if you were a good person then God would reward you. You would have an easier life if you followed the Bible and honored God and those sorts of things. This story tells you otherwise.

Regardless of how good you are, Satan could take everything away from you in an attempt to coax you into cursing God. It seems to be a lesson in the unfair world in which we live.

I am still at the beginning of the Book, but thus far it is another in a long line of depressing books that show the Old Testament to be a book of oppressions. I was hoping this being the first book of wisdom from the Bible that maybe it would be more uplifting. I guess not.

Bible Read: Job 8

## *Worst Life... Ever*

*F*irst I tried to turn my alarm clock off with my phone. I stumbled on the way to the bathroom. I fell asleep during my shower. I lost a button on my pants. I got to the kitchen twenty minutes late. I had to chase the dog to get her back in the house. I got stuck in traffic. I was thinking it was the worst morning in the history of mornings. Then I read some more of the Book of Job.

I continue to find this book to be depressing and confusing as far as understanding why God would allow things to happen to good people, but it does put your own life into perspective. As much as I like to feel pity for myself when I am having a bad day, it is nothing in comparison to what Job goes through.

I can say that at least I don't have leprosy. I can say that I haven't lost everything. All I can say is that I am annoyed that things haven't happened the way I want.

It is the idea that no matter what goes wrong, it could be worse. I don't think this was the case with Job. I think he had the worst life of all lives. But, why does God allow Satan to inflict such torture on this man who has been a near perfect follower?

I can't imagine that I would have the convictions of Job. But, that may not be true. I have learned over the past few months that being thankful for whatever you have and being positive about the future helps. The second part is what Job is missing.

He has lost the faith in the future. He questions why he is being dealt all the pains he is and he prays for death. He curses his birth and wishes that life would end.

If there is anything in the Book of Job that seems like a mistake on his part it is his lack of hope. I think it may be why Satan continues expecting him to forsake God.

Either way if nothing else, this book has made my day better since I realize that I blew my bad morning out of proportion. Odd how

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such a depressing book can bring on some happiness.

Bible Read: Job 28

## *Can I Finish?*

*I* used to wonder why so many priests had such boring sermons. I now understand God started it. Near the end of Job God rants on and on just to make a basic point.

I can see how priests could look at the long boring discourse by God and assume that they need to aspire to that. He is God after all, but it is boring and does not get his point across quickly enough to keep everyone's attention.

He wanted to say, I am God, you are not, do not question me! But he had to talk about how he can influence animals and man can't. He says that he created the Earth and man did not. He basically demeans man as much as possible then tells Job that he shouldn't question why God does what he does.

As painful as it is to read this long speech, it makes me realize that when a priest goes on for an hour during the sermon he is just trying to be as long winded as God. No more should I sit there and think, 'Dear lord, get to your point!', because the Lord would not get to his point.

Maybe instead I should sit in church and wonder why they did not go on longer. Maybe I will sit there and think of the perfection of politicians who can manage a filibuster for hours on end.

Bible Read: Job 40

## *Status Report Day 69*

*A*s depressing as the Book of Job was at least there was a point.

The point was that God does things for a reason. Job was tortured to show other men that they do not understand God and should not judge someone because they have fallen on hard times.

God in the end tells the friends of Job that they have sinned by assuming that Job did something wrong. And they should not have assumed Job's punishment was a punishment at all, but possibly the righteous acts of a loving God.

And in the end Job is rewarded with the rest of his life being great. I am not sure it is a good trade off. Is it worth having the horror of the worst life in history for 20 years for one of the greatest lives in history for 20 years? Maybe.

I think the big lesson is to not be negative. It is important to stay positive and do as much as you can with what you are given.

### Random Observations

Satan makes a big appearance in the Book of Job

Women for some reason are not counted as people but they are worthy enough to have two books of the Bible named after them.

God appears to like some people to question him, Moses, and other not to, Job.

This was the first book of the Bible that felt anti-God. Although many of the books have been boring or almost cruel in their treatment of the characters they all made sense why they could be divinely inspired. This book felt like a fairy tale. It didn't feel divine and made me question the purity of God more than before.

Bible Read: Job

Richard W. Kelly

# *Psalms*

## *#Love #Pope #Enlightening*

*P*ope Francis is one of the people I am following on Twitter. I decided a while ago that it wasn't good enough to just read the Bible. I want to try and embrace Christianity as a whole. We have been going to church, I am following Pope Francis, @Pontifex, and I have been reading the Bible.

Comparing the Book of Psalms and the tweets by the pope I am finding the pope to be more inspiring than the psalms. Psalms seems to be a bunch of poems about how grateful people are to God. They give all the credit to God and none to themselves. This seems to be too irresponsible to me.

But the pope tweets some thought provoking things. This morning I woke up to "To experience Holy Week is to enter more and more into God's logic of love and self-giving". This is such a complex idea.

I have had issues with God in the Bible because he seems to be a very non-caring god. He harms people for small reasons, he punishes them to teach others lessons, and he kills thousands of people to expand his own people's land.

But the pope has mentioned God's logic of love. He specifically said it differently than our own love. We have emotional love. We feel each other's love, but not God's. God has logic of love. He treats us the most logical way.

It is like dealing with your children. Logically if the kid does something wrong you punish them. Every time. No matter what. But, as a parent you feel for your child. You love them and care about what they feel and think. You want your child to be happy, have fun, and love you back as much as you love them. Punishments fall by the wayside. It is nearly impossible to be 100% consistent with your kids as much as you want to be. But it is because we feel our love for our kids, we do not possess the logic of love towards our kids.

Richard W. Kelly

I guess I should pay attention to the pope. He has comforting insights at times. Plus, if I am trying to read and understand the Bible, why not pay attention to someone who the Catholic Church says is the highest point of human connection to God.

Bible Read: Psalms 18



## *Spoiler Alert: Political Discourse*

*A*ll the talks of gay marriage seem to be invading my news time.

The Supreme Court is hearing a case against DOMA or the Defense of Marriage Act. This is the document in the government which defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman. And, it defines spouse as a person of opposite gender who is a husband or wife.

This act was signed into law in 1996 by then president, Bill Clinton. In 2011 President Obama announced that he believed it to be unconstitutional and would no longer defend it from a legal perspective.

Looking at this from a biblical perspective the Bible, at least in the Old Testament, is fairly clear that being gay is a sin. But again, so is working on Sunday, lying, being jealous, stealing, getting tattoos, wearing mixed fibers, shaving your head or forehead... It really goes on and on. But, the point is gay sex is just one of many sins that are listed in the Bible and God does not seem to eradicate gay people as he does people who work on Sundays or those who make random statues.

I really believe the whole issue has been blown out of proportion. There is a group of evangelicals who want to forbid people from getting married if they are gay, but it is a twisting of the Bible. There is no reason to treat these people any different than people who work on the weekends. It is just as blasphemous to fantasize about a celebrity who is married. It is just another sin, like the person who chisels realistic statues.

My point is that Christians as a whole should be concerned with spreading the word and trying to live as righteous a life as they personally can. Their mission is not to try to forcefully outlaw sin. They have outlawed murder and theft, but those are victim crimes. If one sees homosexuality as a crime, it doesn't have a victim, at least not one any more so than violent movies, erotic art, barbershops, museums, and television.

But, the religious aspect aside I think that gay rights groups have gone about this in the wrong way. Marriage traditionally is a religious institution. It was adopted by governments to handle property rights, inheritance, medical decisions...

In realizing that marriage is a religious act, if one wants to marry a same sex partner, they probably shouldn't look to a Christian or Jewish service. But, I am sure there are many religions that do allow gay marriage. And that is where the gay rights groups should be looking.

Rather than trying to create an argument that says the constitution actually states there is a right to marriage in it, they should be saying that marriage is an act of religion. And, as long as two people are married within a recognized religion the government must recognize it or they are committing religious discrimination.

The first amendment of the constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." If any government did not recognize a gay marriage done inside a religious institution it would violating the first amendment by prohibiting free exercise of a religion.

Now at the same time it seems the wrong argument to say that all religions must conduct same sex marriages, which I have also heard, because it also would be violating the first amendment by making a law respecting an establishment of a religion.

In the end I think that people who are against allowing people to sin with no real impact on themselves are trying to do God's job. It is not man who is supposed to keep the rest of mankind in line. It is God who made the covenant with the Israelites and it is he who punishes, rewards, or condemns men based on their choices.

Did God tell Noah to create an army and force mankind to stop being blasphemous or did he tell Noah to protect himself because he was going to do it himself? Did God tell Moses to imprison the Israelites who worshipped the golden calf while he was on Mt. Sinai? Or did God tell Moses he was going to punish the Israelites himself?

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Let people do what they are going to do. If God dislikes it, God will take care of it.

Bible Read: Psalms 31

## *And on the Third Day... A Bunny with Eggs?*

*W*e made it through Good Friday. I never understood why the death of Christ is called Good Friday, seems like Black Friday would have been a better name for it. But, either way it is over and it is now Easter.

My guess is Easter is the most understood holiday by Christians. I have talked to many Christians who did not understand why they celebrated lent, Passover, and once or twice even Christmas. But it seems as though most Christians understand that Easter is the day that Jesus rose again.

I am not in the New Testament so I don't know the story very well right now. Instead I am in Psalms where I get to read men who blather on about the greatness of God.

In church last week the sermon was about what most churches teach. The preacher/pastor/minister/whatever he is talked about how the average church will display crosses. They often times will have stained glass and statues of the crucifixion and the Stations of the Cross. The most common Bible story that parishioners know from the New Testament is the crucifixion and the rise from the dead.

His point was that many churches focus on the resurrection. They build people's faith around the last moments of his life and use it as their symbol. But, it wasn't this event that made Jesus such a great man. It wasn't the return from Hell that made him the leader he was.

It was his messages. He performed miracles and preached the word of God. He led a good life and helped people try to remove their selves from sin. It was the teachings of Christ not the death that made Christianity what it is.

I am not removing the importance of the resurrection. I am only suggesting, as the sermon did last week, that we put too much

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focus on the end and not enough on the journey.

Bible Read: Psalms 41

## *-An Introduction, Three Body Paragraphs, and a Conclusion-*

*P*salms seems to go on forever. Essentially the book is full of prayers that different men from the Bible say to God. It is filled with a lot of thank you, you are so powerful, I am so weak, your glory is amazing...

This is ok in small chunks, but 150 of them in a row is a bit of overkill. It seems as though they would be a bit more impactful if they weren't thrown at you in rapid succession.

If they could implement the psalms into the other books of the Bible so we could read them as the events they relate to happen, I would think they would carry a larger impact. Instead of reading that a psalm is in reference to David when he was in the desert, just put it in the Bible while that is happening.

I know, I know, I know... You aren't supposed to change the Bible, but I don't want to change the words. I just want to change the order and mix the books together. In fact with all the repetition and instructions, the Bible could use a good re-organization.

I would love to be able to read these stories in chronological order without repeating the same thing over and over. Then take all those genealogies, instructions for buildings, and counting of people and put them all in the back under appendices.

There may be a new project that I'm looking at...

Bible Read: Psalms 70

# *White Pages... Under G... God, There it is*

*P*salms 69 is the first psalm to really feel like it is saying something to me. I hate that it turns out to be 69 since it seems like something a high school kid would latch onto, but it really is good.

It is the plea of a man, David, who is at rock bottom. He describes how his life is worthless and that he needs help. He describes his depression, his enemies, his ridicule and he pleads to God for help.

I love this, but I think it is because everyone feels like this at some point. There are bad days, bad weeks, and sometimes even bad years. So, this is a very relatable situation.

It says a lot to me that he would reach out to God at this point. It seems more common to me that people who are in a terrible place will use it as a way to place blame on God. They will not consider the idea that they themselves have walked down the path of freewill to end up at a dead end. Instead they want to damn God for allowing it to happen.

I think that David makes a mistake at the end of the psalm though. He asks God to destroy his enemies and condemn those who are less holy than him. He wants to reach the ever after without them.

This seems backwards from what appears to be the way the greatest characters of the Bible did. I believe the Bible suggests you are to ask for guidance. You are not supposed to demand things of God, but to give yourself over and trust his message. David should not have demanded persecution of his enemies, but ask God what he could do to mentally survive his life. Then if the answer seems wrong ask God why it seems as so.

During the sermon on Easter there was a small side story the speech told about. He said that humans were designed to speak with

God, to have a relationship with him. He said that we, as people, are born to face God and embrace the relationship with him.

But in giving us the gift of freewill, we have the ability to choose not to have that relationship. We can choose to not communicate with God and make our own destiny. And when we choose this path not only does God allow us to walk away, but God himself will walk away as well.

So, when we choose to ignore God he does not intervene when things go bad. He will let us suffer if that is what we choose, but he also will come back if we ask him to.

It is kind of like allowing our children to move out of the house. We let them go out with no supervision and let them make their mistakes. We turn a blind eye to their lives and allow them to let us know only what they want to tell us. But, when your child calls crying because they can't handle the horrors that life has thrown them, we are there to cradle them. We are there to get them back on their feet and give any advice they seek.

It was a powerful message. And it seems to me makes the Bible a more important text. If we have chosen subconsciously to leave home and let God only hear the parts of our life we want him to, we have to have a way to call home. If we need to call home and we have never seen a telephone we wouldn't know how to do it. So, we have the Bible.

The Bible is our life line. It is our instruction manual to let us know how to come home again. As much as I have complained about the boredom and cruelty in the Bible, I am quickly realizing that it is there to speak to everyone. Every mentality and personality has a part. It is not meant to speak to me all the way through, just in parts.

Bible Read: Psalms 73



## *I Went to God Just to See*

*I* was asked once why people believe in God. After all, you can't physical see him. I tried to respond by thinking of something else that you believe in that you can't physically see, but is physically there.

I failed.

My interpretation at the time was comparing God to gravity or inertia. But that isn't right. God is not as much a law of the universe as he is a being.

Today, I would characterize that argument in a different way. I would explain God's existence as a feeling. God is apparent to a believer in a connection that exists between two beings.

When you are in love there is a faith in a connection. Without that connection the love doesn't exist, it is a delusion. I have to see God in the same way. If someone can have this amazing connection and faith in something that is helping them live their life then it is either delusional or real.

I wouldn't take it upon myself to state that every person on the planet who believes in any God to be insane, I think that is a highly egotistical viewpoint. It seems to be more delusional to believe you have a better understanding of reality than a majority of humans.

Plus, if you consider the idea that there may be a major fault in people's perception of the world, it seems to me that it would most likely be a small error as opposed to a life defining one.

Knowing that we are all in this reality for our entire lives it would be likely that we all get a very sound understanding of it over that time. The longer we are in that reality the better grasp we get. The more we consider alternatives the tighter an understanding.

So, I would think if you wanted to know the truth you would look at philosophers who continued to think well into old age. Read the people who converted to or from a religion as they delved farther into their life.

But, I think there is a better way to decide if there is a God. Apply blind faith. I tried to put my faith in God last year. Without knowing him, without knowing how to pray, without truly believing, and without any good direction I tried to be a better person and trust in God. It made a huge difference.

Things got better and better until I fell out of the practice. I stopped trusting the suggestions of God and instead went back to believing my head first.

Things got worse again. Now I am on the path to returning to that faith as I was happy and fulfilled. This time I chose not to go in blindly. I am looking to religion to guide me. I have been hoping the Bible will be the road map, but that is somewhat up in the air.

But, if someone wants to know if God is there, they need to look for him. Give their selves over and just let him do as he wishes. Not for an hour, not for a day, but for as long as they can let their mind give in.

If he isn't there, then nothing will change. But if he is...

Bible Read: Psalms 78

## *Her*

Over the last few months I have had those eye-opening days where I realize that God is there. I have had the epiphanies that change your viewpoint. But they typically come from philosophy.

Last night I had what I can only describe as a reaffirmation of love.

I hurt my knee again the other day. Back on crutches... I was depressed that I couldn't work out. I was down because my diet was floundering. I had gained a pound after a couple days of non-activity. Indigestion was coming back. It was just a bad few days.

When I am in these depressive funks I see nothing but the negative. I wallow until I can't look out from the muck. But, last night I was being my depressed, self absorbed me, when it became so clear what my wife had been enduring for me.

Being broken again she had taken on all the responsibilities of the house and kids. Being depressed she had taken on my burdens and tried to help me back to good. Being self obsessed she had taken all my negativity and continued to stay positive.

As I lay there saw her sleeping on the pillow next to mine I realized how deep a love she has for me. It was invigorating to know that she would do what she did for me, as much as it may seem like what a wife does for her husband, without any judgment, just hope.

It is often in the modern world where you read about people's marriages and how they fall apart. We seem to be in a society where marriage is a temporary thing and people don't commit as they once did.

In this modern world of short term matrimony it is important to have these small reaffirmations of love. I hope she knows I feel the same about her.

But this isn't just a love letter to my wife. It is in the small interactions we have with each other that we see the beauty of the

creation of humans.

When you get married and stand in front of God adjoining your life with another you aren't just committing to living together for a while. You are committing to allow your life to be shared. And it is that ability within the human soul that is such an amazing reflection of God's creation.

There is a line in a song by the Smashing Pumpkins called *Crestfallen*. The song taken out of context of the album seems to be about the dynamic between two people. The narrator is asking why he deserves to be everything to the other and how his life revolves around their approval.

The line that always stuck with me was, "Your life is not your own." The huge impact on me of this line is that it was one of the first times I realized that our lives are not something that we hold internally, but something that is created through other people. And without the people in our lives we would have a different life with different thoughts and experiences.

But it is the ability of our spirit to decide, consciously, to share that life with someone specific. Not someone we happen to live next to. Not someone we happen to be related to. But, someone we choose to share every aspect of our experience with. And that is what I rediscovered yesterday.

So, this isn't a love letter to my wife. This is a thank you to God. This is a thank you for all the levels of experience that were created within us. And this is a thank you for the realization that life can be so good.

Bible Read: Psalms 81

## *Read What You Will*

Where did the idea that heaven is a separate dimension come from? I have talked to many people who believe in heaven, but not as a physical place in our existence, but in a sort of alternate dimension that is not accessible to physical beings. But where did this come from?

The Bible consistently refers to God as living in the heavens or the sky. Signs from God come from the sky. And even when Elijah was taken to heaven it was done by a fiery chariot inside a whirlwind that took him into the sky.

In Psalm 89 they refer again to God being in the sky, “For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings?”

My point is why isn’t this still the belief? And when did this belief change?

My guess is it happened at some point when we started to understand our universe. When we could look through telescopes and see nothingness out for millions of miles. Maybe it happened after we sent men into space and saw the vast amounts of empty space.

Either way it happened at some point that man saw God as a being living above us to a being that exists on some other plane of reality. If the Old Testament is to be believed as actual history then a separate dimension of existence doesn’t make a lot of sense.

These people claim to speak to God. Moses looked at the face of God. And God plays an active part in this world’s direction. How would these be possible without a physical presence here?

Then again we could look at the Old Testament as a fairy tale. Again, we assume that ancient man was nothing more than a being that had the intelligence of Cocker spaniel and these stories were just their way of explaining the confusing things in life, like genocide.

As I continue to read, I continue to realize that the modern day

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Christian has forgot the Bible. They have become obsessed with the metaphors and hidden meanings that people are taught in Seminary. It feels, today, people aren't reading the Bible, they are making the Bible what they want it to be.

Bible Read: Psalms 96

## *Morning Bells are Ringing?*

Growing up I always thought that the hymns we sang in church were very poorly written. They never rhymed and rarely had the right number of syllables to fit the music. This was before I realized that everything had been translated.

Reading through the Book of Psalms I am running across many of the psalms that were sung as hymns in church. They work better as songs, but again the beat count of the words doesn't really work.

But why didn't they translate them to be songs. Many of them are denoted as songs in the footnotes of the Bible. It even tells you what song they are supposed to be sung to.

I understand wanting to translate as literally as possible, but they are songs! They have to be translated to fit the music!

Just like the French children's song *Frere Jacques*.

In French

Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques

Dormez vous, Dormez vous

Sonnez les matines, Sonnez les matines

Ding Dang Dong, Ding Dang Dong

In English

Are you sleeping, Are you sleeping (translated from the second line of the French)

Brother John, Brother John (translated from the first line of the French with Jack changed to John)

Morning bells are ringing, Morning bells are ringing (Should be ring the morning prayers, referring to the ringing of bells in the morning calling for morning prayers, the matines)

The point is that in this children's song they adjusted the words

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to fit the tune. But in the Books of Psalms they do not do this at all.

Again, I understand not wanting to change the words of the Bible, but why not at least adjust them for Hymnals? It would at least sound better in church.

Bible Read: Psalms 100



## *I (Don't) Believe I can Fly*

*T*rout Fishing in America is an American children's/folk band. Their shows are full of fun and childishness.

As I was reading the Bible this morning I began to once again question if there is a God. I was letting my mind which has been trained through school to be scientific instead of open. Meaning, that as I grew up I was taught to think in terms of what I could prove or disprove instead of considering options that are above my understanding.

The song *Back When I Could Fly* by Trout Fishing in America covers a similar subject. It touches me in a way no other children's song does. Just as school has taught me to be stuck in physical reality the song speaks of children who have great imaginations while they are children.

Over the course of a few verses he talks about his own loss of what most consider the unreachable. He ends the first verse with "I saw the tops of everything, back when I could fly." The second verse moves to thought instead of action, "I never thought I'd have to walk, back when I could fly." Then he loses his creativity, "In just a few short years, I learned not to be a child. And I forgot the things I had when I was wild." Then he moves to his own child and how he doesn't want those amazing beliefs to disappear, "I hope you won't forget about the days when you could fly."

This song always moved me. It has such a truth for how we are formed into adults and lose the imagination and confidence that children manage to possess naturally. For me this metaphor extended beyond my creativity and confidence but expanded into the world of faith.

Growing up I never questioned the importance of schooling and knowledge, but I also never considered the importance of religion. Today I am somewhat appalled at the idea that people raise children

without some sort of religion. To allow these great gifts children have to be squashed by society without a chance to live is very saddening to me.

But at the same time I can go back to the story of Adam and Eve. The tree of knowledge could easily be a metaphor for growing up and the snake could be society as a whole. As children if we are introduced to God we instinctively feel closer to him, but as we grow up we lose that connection. We become more self-absorbed and forget the love we shared with him.

And of course we forget how to fly.

Bible Read: Psalms 107

## *Two Steps Forward and One Step Back*

*I*n the Book of Psalms each author uses God as their crutch. When times get hard they turn to God and find happiness and guidance that way. I wish I could do that.

In the modern day world I think it is more common for people to use comforting things as crutches. Maybe someone sleeps around, maybe someone drinks... These things which most of us realize are bad things is what we use as crutches to keep ourselves sane. Why is it that we can't use something as good as God as a crutch?

The problem is many of these are things we run across in our lives and we have fond memories of them. We think they are fun or at least we remember fun times we had with them. So, when things go wrong we look for that fun thing that lets us focus on enjoyment.

I, like most people, will have those times where I think I want to live the best life possible. I will try to be godlier, I try to be healthier, and I try to be more understanding. But I will backslide. I think the key is to ask yourself can you get back onboard the right path. We know we will falter, but if we can pick ourselves back up and get back on the straight and narrow we will be good.

I want to sit here and say I will not falter, but that is pointless. That is not the right thing to say because it won't happen. Instead the best I can do is say that I will try to be steadfast as long as I can and when I fall, I will get back up.

Bible Read: Psalms 140

## *I'm a Better God than You*

*T*his Sunday at church we were presented with a sermon about the importance of family. It was interesting, but it felt like they tried to pull out metaphors from the Bible that might not have been there at all.

Some of the time when I am listening to a sermon I feel like I am listening to an English major. They will look at a six word sentence and pull out twenty minutes of meaning by looking at every possible hidden meaning from those six words.

I did enjoy the sermon. It more or less was saying that man was created to have children and raise them with an appreciation and respect for religion. I don't think it is unreasonable to say the Bible suggests these things, but at the same time pulling all that meaning from, "Go forth and multiply" is a bit of a stretch.

But, the sermon bordered on offensive more than once. He went from the importance of family to an anti-gay stance. I am not arguing for or against that right now and I understand that the Bible speaks out against homosexuality, but the anti-gay statements felt forced and thrown in just to make a point.

Then it went on to an anti-GMO and anti-crossbreeding section. This felt even more forced and was a strange thing to throw into a sermon about family.

But, the thought provoking part of the sermon was that God's creations can't be made better. He was saying that crossbreeding, genetic alterations, and anything else that changes nature are all blasphemous because we are trying to change what God created by making it better.

If God created everything as it is why do we feel the need to change it? I think this is valid. Even if you don't believe in God and believe in evolution and natural selection, why would you try and cutout the natural process of evolution and natural selection to change biological things? It would seem rather egotistical to think that we

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would be better at creation than God or nature.

Bible Read: Psalms 150

## *Status Report Day 83*

*T*he Book of Psalms is repetitive, boring, sappy, and just too long.

Essentially, we get nothing but some talk about how great God is.

If you are down and want to read about the greatness of God it could be uplifting, but reading it from beginning to end is not a good idea. I would suggest reading one here and there maybe supplant a couple in between other books, but not all of them sequentially.

I am very back and forth on inspiration from the Bible. Some days I feel like I am living in the most miraculous place where I can see God in every living thing. Other days I feel like it is all a farce and I see nothing but the influence of man. And on some days I feel like God is there, but mankind has lost track of him. Yesterday was one of the latter days. I was thinking about the things the Bible tells us about how to live and realized that most people follow very few of the rules. They don't kill and they don't steal, but other than that they break rule after rule and still consider themselves good Christians.

It is a sad fact to face, but it seems overly common. People lie, cheat on their spouses, worship false idols, create graven images, eat unclean animals, covet everything... I would like to experience a day where none of those things happen. I think that if I and everyone around me could follow all the rules for just one day, everything would seem like a better place.

### Statistics

Books Read: 19

Chapters Read: 659

Verses Read: 17,316

Words Read: 436,635

Days Reading: 83

Bible Read: Psalms

## *Proverbs*

## *To Spit in the Wind*

*I*n Proverbs there is an interesting comparison between theft and adultery. I had, up to this point, been considering all sins equal in some sense. But, the sixth proverb makes a motivational difference between infidelity and stealing.

Proverbs 6:28 – 6:32

“Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?  
So is he who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her  
will go unpunished.

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he  
is starving.

Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the  
wealth of his house.

But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so  
destroys himself.”

This is a fairly deep passage with multiple implications.

One of the questions that kept popping up in my head was how can man punish each other when God is truly in charge? This type of passage speaks more to me because it shows that punishment is truly twofold. There is wrath of God that could be incurred from your sins, but there is also the wrath of man. When we break a commandment we are not only disappointing God, but we are also committing a crime against our community. And just as it is that you can repent today or give a sacrifice in the old days, it does not mean you are forgiven by your fellow man. Your actions create consequences in our physical reality while our thoughts, intentions, and regrets create consequences in the beyond.

This is really hammered in with the line about people not



despising a starving thief. It is only God who condemns this man, while an adulterer is condemned by both.

But it is more than just who the executor of the penalty is. The comparison between the coals and the adultery is very telling as well. It is completely feasible for a man to get away with adultery. It is possible that no one will ever find out and both he and the woman could take it to their grave. But, this is where God's punishment comes in.

A person who commits adultery cannot walk away without being punished as it is not something he did out of necessity. It is his own weak will that caused his indiscretion. God will know and God will recognize the sin.

The last line says that adultery is the actions of someone who has caused their own undoing. Again it makes me think that it is the actions of someone who has no self control. But, maybe it is more than that. Maybe it is the actions of someone who is self destructive.

In a biblical sense and a biblical time, a man who sleeps with another man's wife is not only risking the vengeance of the husband, but the vengeance of his God. He is laughing in the face of danger and spitting on the morals of his community.

I would like to think that there is an exception for love. The whole idea that love conquers all, but looking at the setting of this book we still see a time where marriages are mostly arranged. The woman has little to no input into who her husband is. Women are mostly property at this point. And in pointing that out, it isn't an issue of love, but an issue of coveting.

Bible Read: Proverbs 7

## *Keep Genesis, Remove Kings, and Add Jonathan Livingston Seagull*

*I* am assuming I am not alone in the feeling that not all the book of the Bible speak to me. In fact very few of them have.

I am surprised I don't hear of lots of people who don't accept every book of the Bible as divinely inspired. I could see those who are Catholic and have very stringent beliefs, but all the protestant denominations seem like they would be a little more questioning in their acceptance.

As I have read through I feel like there are some truly amazing stories that I would have personally included in the Bible, but at the same time there is a lot of text in there that feels less than divine.

I think it would be very uplifting to be a priest in a time before canonization. When you could look at hundreds of books that taught of God or Christ, depending on your time period, and teach your congregation based on the words from many sources.

Nowadays it feels like there is very little in comparison to pull from. There is only the one collection of books. Knowing that the Dead Sea scrolls included books that are now not considered a part of the Bible shows that at one time they put faith in these "non-Godly" books.

At this point in the Bible I don't feel like there is a group of people who are going to know God's word better than any other. It seems as though the Bible teaches those who seek God find God. In this idea I don't think it is necessary for each person to put blind faith in all of the books and only the books chosen for the Bible.

I may pray on this. I want to know if there is somewhere else that I can find God's message that is just as good if not better than the messages given in the Bible.

I also wonder what if some of the books that were chosen were

not holy. What if some of the books in the Bible are not actually the word of God and there have been priests and rabbis teaching lessons from it for generations?

How many teachings have Christians and Jews been drilled with because the early times of the religions decided that a questionable message was the right one?

As I write this I am thinking that it should be up to the priest of the specific congregation. I feel like a seminary degree should include all the texts that they know that exist from the times. It should include more modern day texts that people believe to be inspired by God. It should include the study of other religion's texts for a comparison point if nothing else.

I think reading the Bible is driving me away from the traditional massive church and making me realize that there is a lot more to be considered than what one large group can decide on. I am thinking that belief, religion, and a connection to God are way more personal than just what you are told.

Bible Read: Proverbs 15

## *That Sin? Oh, That One Doesn't Apply Today*

*I* winked at my wife the other day. According to Proverbs I am planning perversity.

I had heard before that the Bible tells us not to wink. I think I found the scripture that they are talking about. It is Proverbs 16:30. I don't think this is the Bible forbidding winking, but rather a warning to those who are being winked at.

Proverbs is supposed to be full of wisdom and knowledge, but sometimes the lines feel more like the observations of a teenager trying to be poetic. I don't think winking is forbidden.

In Proverbs 16 there is a line that I think has a lot to say. It is Proverbs 16:2. "All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD."

I had not really thought too much about motives of other people. At least not how they see them. It makes sense to me that everyone thinks they are good people just as everyone thinks they are good drivers. But it isn't what you think of yourself that really matters. It is how the world, God, nature... sees you.

I can't imagine a person who is trying to accomplish evil. It doesn't make a lot of sense seeing as how evil makes people feel bad. Why would someone want to accomplish bad things?

But just because a person believes that anyone who sneezes is a sorcerer and they need to be drowned doesn't make it right. The average person would see that person as crazy and a murderer. But, in their own eyes, they believe they are righteous. We can punish them for breaking the laws of man, but it is up to God to decide their fate. We are not here to judge a person's character or soul. That is not our purpose.

This idea tells us that it is not our job to decide what is right or

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wrong, but to live by the laws that God has set for us. In an age of science and logic it makes this difficult. We like to understand the world around us and we want to make our own decisions, but that is not the way the Bible teaches.

Just because we can wear mixed linens today and not see anything bad about it doesn't mean that it isn't still a sin. We have used our modern day education to second guess the importance of God and his laws. This seems to be a drastic mistake on our part.

Bible Read: Proverbs 16

## *The Boy Who Cried Jesus*

*I* wanted to be a little more lighthearted today, so take this one with a bit of humor.

Sometimes I think that I should pray to Jesus. I never do. I haven't read his story yet so I feel like I don't know who he is yet. I do try to pray to God. I have written about it and it is a very odd experience.

As ridiculous as it sounds, I would be worried Jesus would ignore me. I think of him residing in heaven and listening for his name. When he hears it, he looks to see who it is and then responds in kind.

But, I have a habit of saying "Jesus Christ" when I hurt myself, or something is surprising, or incredibly funny. Now, first I want to point out that I do not believe this is a sin. I do not believe this is the same as taking the lord's name in vain.

When the Bible speaks about the sin of taking the lord's name in vain, I truly believe they are talking purposefully damning God for doing things in our lives. If I broke my leg and then accused God of doing it to me and vowing vengeance, that would be a sin. Kind of like the opening scene of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* where he rejects God and his laws for the death of his bride making him a vampire, a creature that is not bound by God.

That was a little off topic. My habit of saying "Jesus Christ" has got me thinking that Jesus may have become accustomed to ignoring me. Every time I say his name I have nothing to say. It is always followed by laughter or awe or pain.

So, when I finally decide to pray to him why would he respond? Why would he even listen? I am the boy who cried wolf.

Maybe I'll pray to God asking him to get Jesus attention for me.

Bible Read: Proverbs 20

## *But Trust Me on the Sunscreen...*

*T*he Book of Proverbs is essentially a continuous string of advice.

There are some good suggestions, some funny quips, and even some that really make you think.

As I was reading I kept thinking that it reminded of something. I couldn't put my finger on it. Then, this morning, while I was reading Proverbs, music played in my head while I read the advice on the page.

If you have never heard the song *Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen)* you need to go find it, now! This is the modern day version of a proverb.

The song is a column from the *Chicago Tribune* put to music. It was a fictitious commencement speech which offers the best advice the author, Mary Schmich, could find to give a group of kids graduating.

Just as proverbs tell us to pay attention to the small things and realize the impact of the things that don't seem to matter, the column does the same for today's world.

As bored as I was getting with Proverbs, relating it to this song has given me more appreciation for it. It was probably just as useful in its day.

I wanted to give a couple of pieces of advice which come from the song as I think they are great suggestions. And, sometimes art like it speaks to me just as much as the words in the Bible.

"Don't be reckless with other people's hearts, don't put up with people who are reckless with yours."

"Remember the compliments you receive, forget the insults; if you succeed in doing this, tell me how."

“Understand that friends come and go, but for the precious few you should hold on.”

“Be careful who’s advice you buy, but, be patient with those who supply it. Advice is a form of nostalgia, dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it is worth.”

Seriously, go listen to that song.

Bible Read: Proverbs 23



## *To Appreciate or Not to Appreciate, That is the Question*

*M*y plan in reading the Bible to was learn from it and to let it influence my life if it was meant to. After reading for three months I have noticed a couple things.

First many things in my life are better. It has not been an immediate and drastic change, but I have noticed that I am generally happier. And, there have been good things that have happened.

When I really think about it there have been some not so good things also, but I haven't been dwelling on them as long as I used to. This seems to be a positive influence the Bible has had.

The second thing I have noticed is not as uplifting. When I started to read the Bible it was on my mind all the time. I was noticing the lessons in the Bible being very relevant to my life and I could see ways to improve what I was doing all the time.

When I reached Job I started to pay attention to the Bible only during my daily reading. I have not been focused on the lessons outside of the time that I spend with the Bible itself. Now, it feels like I am treating the Bible as nothing more than a fictional book.

As I go through my day I am not considering the lessons I have taken from the texts and instead am going about my life as normal. The inspiration and influence seems to have faded and now I am just reading a book to read a book.

I am hoping it is just that I am not moved by the wisdom books. I hope that I will again find some inspiring words as I progress that will make a real difference in my life, but I am discouraged and not so optimistic at this point.

Bible Read: Proverbs 31

## *Status Report Day 89*

*I*f there is any one thing that I have taken to heart from my readings it is the importance of being a man. I don't mean this in a sexist way, but in terms of not being a child.

The men in the Bible do amazing things. They overcome their fears and do what needs to be done.

In today's world we are children much longer than they were in biblical times. We are brought up as protected as possible. We are allowed time to play and fantasize. But, we are not required the responsibilities of adults in the same way people once were.

Today, unless you grew up on in the country, we are not necessarily taught to hunt and fish. We are not taught to farm and harvest. We are not encouraged to fight and defend. We are in a world where we are told that we need to do the best we can and if we cannot accomplish everything we can fall back on someone else.

I am not saying that people who fall on hard times have it easy, but it is easier than it once was. Today, if you cannot make money or buy food or defend yourself, we have government subsidies, homeless shelters, and police. We as a people have moved to the point where we try our best to take care of those who have trouble.

This may be a better world, but I think we lose something as people when we do this. I am grateful for our current mindset of take care of the needy. I have had to use the government handouts when I was out of work. I have created a life around the idea that I don't have to hunt or farm to live. I have taken solace in the idea that the police can be around the corner if need be. But, I feel that I am not full person that God created because of these.

I think it is time that I learn to really take care of myself and family. I don't know how I can accomplish these things living in the suburbs, but I now see how sad it is that I could not feed anyone if the grocery store shelves were empty.

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I am not speaking out against programs of aid or protection, but I am saying that we have become too dependent. Community seems to have outgrown the small idea of neighbors and blossomed into the entire human race.

Now, how to learn to farm...

Things I need to learn

How to farm

How to hunt

How to raise children who can fend for themselves

Bible Read: Proverbs

Richard W. Kelly

# *Ecclesiastes*

## *God Bless Boston*

*I* am writing a special entry here to address the Boston Marathon bombing.

As I'm sure everyone knows earlier today there were two explosions at the finish line of the Boston City Marathon. Many were injured and some were killed.

I don't think I will ever understand the senseless violence that occurs randomly throughout history. I have heard many times, when tragedies like this occur, people asking, "How can God allow such evil?" My initial reaction is to join in and wish death on the perpetrators. But, as I have read about many tragedies in the Bible, mostly caused by God, I now have a question.

Why would people attribute this to God? The Bible shows that God does not control the world in a micromanagement sense. God allows people to control their own world and only intervenes when people ask him to. I wouldn't ask why God allowed this, but thank God for it not being worse. I thank God for this being a rare occurrence. I am thankful that this is not the norm for us.

Regardless I am filled with sadness and anger over what happened. I don't like the idea that horrible things happen to people that are just doing their thing. But, maybe that is why you see so much terror in the Bible. It is life, it happens. It is the trade off we have with God for our free will. Without it maybe these things wouldn't happen, but who would want to live in that world?

All we can do now is pray. We can feel for everyone, turn to God for help, and help ourselves if possible.

Bible Read: No Update

## *All is Happiness*

*I* have heard the phrase “All is vanity” many times. I have never really considered what it means.

I don’t mean I didn’t put some shallow thought to it. I always thought it meant something along the lines of man is self obsessed. But, when you read it in Ecclesiastes you realize it is much more than a generalization of man.

The phrase “All is vanity” is spoken by Solomon to explain the unimportance in our lives. That if anything is done for more than nourishment it is just vanity. But, beyond that even our purpose to survive is vain also. Anything done that is not for the purposes of God is vain.

He says that things are nothing more than things for man to look at and that our desires to have them are pointless. He says that our work is nothing but something to spend our time doing and that it won’t make any difference in the long. It is only something to appease ourselves.

It is an interesting idea and brings a type of comfort to me. It says to me that life can be taken lightly. There is no greater purpose that I am going to miss and mess up. Everything I do is for enjoyment and happiness. And, if we take comfort in the existence of God he can guide me into this happiness.

Every time I put that faith into God and try to live the good life there is one that always increases. That one thing is my happiness.

I think there is something to this. Seems like the right book to read when life gets too hard, you get depressed and need to just sit back and realize that it is just life, it doesn’t matter that much.

Bible Read: Ecclesiastes 1

## -Christian Rock-

*I* have known the song *Turn! Turn! Turn!* by the Byrds since I was a little kid. I always loved the song.

The words felt so meaningful and deep. It seemed like every time I listened to that song it showed me a new way to look it.

To my surprise I found that song in Ecclesiastes. The words are almost pulled directly from the third chapter.

Now, I am less surprised it was so motivational. But, I find it interesting because it is the oldest rock n' roll song I know of that is truly Christian rock.

When I think of Christian rock I think of people who are too devout to be edgy. The idea of mixing religion and rock music never really made any sense to me because the images conflict. But knowing that song is a Bible verse it may give me a new outlook.

Bible Read: Ecclesiastes 3

## *It's All About... Breathe*

*I* always thought that the super devout Christians were a little crazy.

Not, priests and other members of the clergy, but the parishioner who attends church five days a week, runs Sunday school, tithes to three different churches... I always thought they were a little too religious and they were letting it control their lives.

Even reading through the Bible and attempting to let it affect my life, I still looked at those super Christians as over the top. Finally I found a place where the Bible agrees.

In Ecclesiastes, it says that one should not be overrighteous or overwise. It also says not to be overwicked or a fool. I think this is a call for man to be just what he is, an imperfect creature.

All men sin and attempting to be perfect will cause nothing but the oncoming of more sin. A man who finds himself to be more righteous than everyone who surrounds him will find himself sinning by judging others. But, at the same time, man should strive to be good. He should not seek wickedness, but attempt to be good.

I truly think this is good advice. You should not overwhelm your life with God. If that is what was meant to happen we would not be born people, but angels.

The overwise comment is important as well. Throughout the Bible there has been a theme that people should return to their roots. They are best when they live simpler lives that focus on family, health, and happiness. When they question things or go outside their human relationships things go bad. It causes depravity and debauchery.

I think the Bible is telling us not to spend our entire lives trying to seek the truth of everything instead of living our lives and making our relationships. Life is more than knowledge.

Bible Read: Ecclesiastes 10



## *Co-Authors*

*T*he end of Ecclesiastes doesn't seem to fit. The Bible is full of books that are long and sometimes varied that just seem to come to an end. The Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the shorter books and ends with a strange epilogue that doesn't match the rest of the book at all.

When there are parts like this it makes one wonder if the entire thing was written as we see it today. It makes sense that it may have been added to at a later date. I don't really like to speculate on that sort of thing, but it just doesn't have the same feel.

I guess it does not matter if it was all written at once by one person. If the entire thing is divinely inspired then it does not matter. The Bible is a collection of books written by different people at different times so a book that has multiple authors would be fine in my eyes.

Either way the book ends with a positive note. It says that no matter if what you do is good or evil, God will judge your actions in the end.

I guess this could be a downer if you do a lot of bad things, but it makes it feel that if you are a generally good person things will work out in the end.

Bible Read: Ecclesiastes 12

## *Status Report Day 91*

*I* am a big fan of Ecclesiastes. It is a good book for anyone who is feeling overwhelmed with life. It puts things into perspective.

It helped reading this book during the Boston Marathon bombing. It was a dark and depressing event and reading about how things don't matter as much as we make them seem helped. It speaks of good and evil existing side by side. It even questions horrible events and horrible people existing, but in the end of the book it points out that it is the end of our journey that matters most.

I woke up this morning in some uncomfortable heat, our AC went out. My first thought was annoyance that we have to live without cool air for a couple days, but then I thought maybe I shouldn't be mad at failing modern tech. I realized I was putting too much emphasis on my comfort and that it really didn't matter. What really mattered were the people who were in this heat with me, my family.

I would like to say that I am always paying attention to the things that matter, but I lose sight of it all the time. It was the book of Ecclesiastes that put it back into perspective for me.

Books thoroughly enjoyed

Genesis

Ruth

Ecclesiastes

Bible Read: Ecclesiastes

# *Song of Songs*

## *All You Need is Love Letters*

*L*ove letters are very nice to read, when they are about you. But, reading love letters between others is somewhat boring.

The Song of Songs is a collection of love letters between Solomon and his wife or at least I assume they are the characters. It starts out very nice and you feel like there is a great thing there is so much love between these two people. Then it keeps going.

Eventually I just wanted to move on which is why I finished it in one reading.

It was a nice contrast to Psalms. Psalms is all about people's love for God and how great he is. Song of Songs is about the love between two people and how great it is.

It is a refreshing sentiment in the Bible since it has not given much insight into personal relationships. It makes the people of the Bible seem like real people as opposed to fictional characters.

Bible Read: Song of Songs 8

## *Status Report Day 92*

**S**ong of Songs talks almost solely about the love between two people and not much about the love of God. It is a new addition at this point in the Bible. But what happens when you move onto heaven? How can that love continue?

Maybe everything is like the movie *Defending Your Life*. In that movie the main characters die and go to judgment which is a big complex where you sit and review videos of your life and explain whether or not you are ready to move onto the next level of existence or if you need to go back and try again.

If that is the case then I guess we could be in love there as well, but my visions of heaven are not like the existence we have on Earth. I see heaven as more of a plane that doesn't have shape so much as it is existing as spirits.

Maybe my images of the afterlife are too abstract. Maybe everything is more concrete than I am imagining.

I think I am just glad I got through this sappy love stuff.

Things to consider

Is heaven on a physical plane?

Does Limbo exist?

Do we reincarnate?

Bible Read: Song of Songs

Richard W. Kelly

# *Isaiah*

## *Crazy Prophecies are Like Strip Center Psychics*

*I*n the beginning of Isaiah we are treated to a speech about how horrible people have become. It makes me wonder how many people felt he was a nut job back then.

Today if a man stands up to give a speech and tells us that we are sinning against God and that we are as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah people would think he is a little off. But, if he came out and said God is punishing us for being evil he might be hated.

I have heard the arguments that 9/11 was God telling us that we are sinners and need to change our ways. I've heard that great natural disasters are warnings from beyond. I have even heard people say that we will see the destruction of our nation at the hands of God himself.

Today, these are considered crazy ideas. But, why?

There seems to be very little difference between this and the prophet Isaiah. Why should we not take heed from these people and try to become a better people? But, then again I don't believe the people of Israel took Isaiah's warning either.

Just because he warns them does not mean that they listened to him. Israel was still destroyed again, I think. So, maybe he was considered a loon of his time too.

Did the people of his day take his words with more than a grain of salt? Did he only have a few believers and the rest looked at him like he just didn't get life? My guess is that is the way it went.

I think we need to give people more credit when they talk about our past actions. We know that if we attack a powerful nation they will retaliate. So, then why would sinning against God be any different?

Bible Read: Isaiah 1

## *Be Careful What You Say*

Once again the Bible is telling prophecies of death and destruction to the Jewish people. So, whether I like it or not we are back to dark and depressing.

As I was listening to the explanations of how the people of Israel will suffer I pictured someone today standing in public speech area of a college saying these things. And, I believe that today people would still not listen.

We have such an ingrained idea of a loving God that if someone was preaching all this hellfire and brimstone most people would claim he doesn't know God. I can hear people saying things like, "That isn't my God, my God loves me." But, that is not a very enlightened view. If they had read the Bible they would understand that God will punish regardless.

The other thing that struck me was how our government would respond. I truly believe that if today someone was out in public telling everyone that God will punish them for bad behavior and they will enslaved and starving and tortured... I think someone would call the cops or the FBI on them. Most likely they would be apprehended and detained as a possible terrorist.

I am not saying this is a bad thing, it might make us the tiniest bit safer. But, it is a strange to think that a true modern day prophet may be silenced by the Department of Homeland Security as a potential threat to our safety.

I don't REALLY know the story of Jesus yet, but I am starting to understand that figures like him were persecuted because of the times. Depending on what he actually said, there is a good possibility he would have been arrested in modern day America also.

I don't recall the specifics, but I remember a sermon from when I was young, maybe ten years old. The main idea of the speech was that we should not judge Pontius Pilot because of his persecution



## My Journey Into Christianity

of Christ. We should not condemn him as a villain, just as a man who made errors just as every man does. And I remember at the end of the sermon the priest said, “Don’t be his judge. You are not his judge. Don’t be his defender. You are not his savior, Christ died for his sins as well as yours.”

It isn’t something I think about often, but it is a good point. If Christ died for the sins of all men, then he died to save his executioner also.

Bible Read: Isaiah 14

## *I Should Do That, But Dancing With the Stars Is On*

*T*he sermon on Sunday was about being a better parent, taken from a handful of verses from Deuteronomy. It was a decent sermon, but I didn't walk away with much that I haven't taken from the Bible already. It said that to be a great parent we must teach our kids about God in a lead by example type of life.

Although it wasn't new information, it is something I want to try and do. The problem is I keep coming up with things I should do to change my life and make it better, but they quickly fall by the wayside. After I finish writing for the day I move back into my normal life and forget about the teachings.

I keep telling myself that I need to find time to pray, to work on my skills, to teach my children... But, as the days drag on I find myself wanting to see the TV that I missed or read the books I'm falling behind on.

My wife decided to try and read the kids Bible stories. That is great and she already has stuck with her idea longer than I have most of mine. She read some of the Bible, a children's Bible, to them this morning, while I just fantasized about the things I could do.

I keep coming back to "technology is evil". The more technology I use the farther I am from God, growth, and my family.

I always thought the traditional Jews that I knew were strange when they would spend Saturday night with no technology. I understood that it was a part of the "no work on the Sabbath", but now I'm thinking there is a lot of good that can come of that.

Setting time aside to be a family and truly connect is an important idea, but it is lost on most families even my own sometimes.

Bible Read: Isaiah 24

## *Did God Snap His Fingers Or Go to His Lab?*

*I*t is assumed that when the miracles of the Bible took place the level of science was not as great as it is today. But with our modern day science or even the greater science of tomorrow do the miracles of the Bible lose their impact?

Thinking about the amazing feats that took place in the Bible, some of them are theoretically possible today with modern day science. Today we could have the ability to unleash plagues upon people, to kill large amounts of people with non-visible forces such as gases and radiation, to create life with test tubes... But, just because this is plausible today does that take its mystery away from the Bible?

I think this does not take the shock and awe out of the stories of the Bible, but brings it some credibility. When I was younger I thought of God as a mystical being that did these wonders through his will and thoughts, but as I go deeper in the Bible I see him as a physical being that understood how to manipulate physics, biology, and chemistry in ways that are only partially understood today.

The wonders of the Bible always were the part of the experience that made me lose belief. Thinking about the actions of God that seemed impossible made him more like Santa Clause and left me thinking that it was nothing more than a fairy tale. But, as I look at each of the actions and consider how science can make sense of it today and possibly make it reality tomorrow everything feels more real.

While reading Isaiah it speaks of God turning the sun back and making the shadows retreat. This of course is impossible today, but instead of looking at it as impossible it made me feel that God had the ability to change of the rotation of the earth, or change the location of the sun or the center of our galaxy or something beyond just a mystical

act.

Oddly enough, I think the fact that today we are trained to look at the world scientifically gives more credence to the idea of God.

Bible Read: Isaiah 39

## *-Return of the Rabbi-*

*I*t seems the greatest stories of modern day are all trilogies. Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Foundation...

This makes me feel that the Bible is missing the third part. How can the greatest story of history only have one sequel?

Now, I understand that Jesus is supposed to return again and then do the final judgment or something of that sort, but it sounds like that is the end of times and there would be no book commemorating it because the world is over.

This does not feel right.

Bible Read: Isaiah 60

## *Churches of All Kinds*

*T*he book of Isaiah has been lacking in inspiration for writing, so I think today I will talk a bit about some of the churches that have played a part in the journey I have been on.

The original inspiration came from a friend known as Hoodman Love Blind. He is quite the character, but the thing that he does more than anyone I have ever met is spread the love of Christ. Yes, he does proselytize by talking about the Bible and quoting scripture on occasion, but more than anything he spreads love.

He is always talking about accepting people and loving them regardless of their decisions. I've heard him say on more than one occasion that we need to try our best to live like Christ would and the answer to What Would Jesus Do is love each other.

He has run charitable causes where he helps clothe the homeless and he runs a small church called the Church of the Infected. This is to spread the infection of the love of Christ.

Check them out on facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/churchoftheinfected>

The church we have spent most of our time at since the beginning of the year is Pantego Bible Church. It is a non-denominational church that truly celebrates the gifts given by Christ and encourages its congregation to be very active. It has amazing children's and youth programs. It is a great place to learn and get involved. When I think of community I now think of this church. They are very large, but they also do what they can to bring everyone into the fold.

Connect with them here

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<http://pantego.org/>

We found this church because of our neighbors. They are a student pastor and worship leader there. They also are very active with the programs and even go on mission trips to help spread the word of Christ. I believe they are going to Romania this year.

The other church we have given a try is Unity of Arlington. It is a Unity Church which is more of a mix between the Bible and New Age Spirituality. It is a very fun church with a small congregation. It is one of the friendliest places I've been and is very energizing because it involves a lot of hugging, hand holding, meditation, and prayer.

More info on their website

<http://unityarlingtontx.org/>

I know it is a short list, but those are the churches that have been active participants in my journey and I hope some of you can find some inspiration and enlightenment through them as well.

Bible Read: Isaiah 65

## *Status Report Day 98*

Sometimes it is hard to believe that all the books of the Bible were chosen on similar merit. I have strong feelings for some of them and would be happy to forget about others.

The Book of Isaiah is not horrible, but did not speak to me either. It was one of the books I was excited to read since it was the inspiration for *The Harbinger* by Jonathan Cahn. But, it turned out to be more tough love from God.

As I continue to attempt to let God influence my life I find myself feeling sad for others. I feel, I am surrounded by people who don't follow the Ten Commandments and treat each other horribly.

The Ten Commandments are becoming more and more important to me because it is a simple set of rules that allow us to coexist easier. If there is one thing to be taken from the Bible as something we should all do, I think it is the Ten Commandments.

I am exhausted from the Boston Bombing stories. I don't like that I desire revenge for the horrific acts. All I want to want is everyone to move on and get on with their lives. But, for some reason I can't stop myself from hating not just the actions, but the person behind the actions.

I understand why people pray for each other now. It almost seems like it is prayers for them, but also for themselves. It is a prayer for the participant of an event, but also for the sanity of the spectator.

How much is left?

Books Left: 43

Chapters Left: 444

Days Left: ???

Bible Read: Isaiah



## *Jeremiah*

# *The God of Disney World is Mickey Mouse*

*J*eremiah 5:19, “And when the people ask, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all this to us?’ you will tell them, ‘As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own.’”

Wow, this makes sense. It is almost like saying that if you worship the god of a certain people you are adopting their beliefs and will become one of them even though you are not.

It kind of falls under the theory, each people’s god exists. If you believe in Christ you can go to heaven. If you believe in the Norse gods you can go to Valhalla. I don’t necessarily believe this, but I can see where the idea came from.

But, the real question becomes that if God said that if you worship foreign gods you will serve a foreign land then what is the god of my land?

I live in America so who is it that I am supposed to be worshipping? Some people call us the Great Satan, so maybe Satan. Upon arrival here the pilgrims dedicated the land to God in the Mayflower Compact. Maybe it is the Christian God. Of course the land was already inhabited by countless nomadic tribes, so maybe some of the Native American gods. Our capital buildings have religious murals that include images of Washington and possibly other members of our founders.

Which one is the God of my land? I will eliminate Satan because I would rather be a foreigner that worship what I have been led to believe is pure evil.

Alright, these questions are all in jest, but the passage brings back to mind that the Old Testament, at least, was not written for me. It was written for the people of Israel. I am hopeful there is a change

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in the New Testament, but this is something that is mentioned consistently in the Old Testament.

As nice as it would be to be considered God's people, I am not one.

Bible Read: Isaiah 7

## *100 Days of Wisdom*

*A*fter 100 days of reading the Bible I have had highs and lows. There have been times with great epiphanies, but the majority of the time has been slight entertainment.

I don't feel like I know God any better, but I feel like I understand where Christianity came from a bit better. I hope more people decide to read the Bible because it has a lot of insight into how things were way back when.

The biggest thing I've taken from this so far is that I am happy for the times I live in, the people I have in my life, and the goodness that still exists in this world. It doesn't seem like that is what I am supposed to be getting out of this project, but that is it.

Maybe I will pay more attention to my intuition now. It seems like that is more along the lines of the prophets. Maybe I hear from God all the time and I just ignore it.

Maybe I will write down my prayers. The books of wisdom are largely collections of prayers. Maybe that will keep me inspired.

Maybe I will look deeper into history. The historical books constantly explain the great moments of history through the works of God. I think I might go back and see what else must have been influenced by God.

Or maybe I will just keep going on the way I go on. That seems more likely.

Bible Read: Jeremiah 9

## *Be Like Mike, Not Like God*

God punished some of the Israelites because they burned incense for another god. It was another example of God's wrathful jealousy.

As terrible as it sounds, God appears to be a horrible role model for people. He is violent, jealous, leads people to do horrible things... He is not the being that I would like my children to aspire to be like.

As a leader he is swift and decisive, but he lacks the human compassion that makes for a leader that is liked by his people.

If God was a manager in a corporate setting he would constantly be firing his underlings. Just as he constantly decimated the Jewish people he would be handing out pink slips every time the group lost focus.

If God was a husband he would be heavy handed with his family and today would possibly be considered abusive. Just the fact that he tells his people sacrifice to him for their sins could be a form of emotional abuse today.

I understand that he is a god and should not be held to the standards of a human, but it seems that if you pay attention to the actions of God in the Old Testament he is the embodiment of things that today are commonly attributed to weak minded people.

I've grown up feeling that violence and jealousy were more traits of the devil than God. It seems I need to rethink what it means to be a good person.

Bible Read: Jeremiah 11

## *Thou Shall Not Fantasize*

*T*hou shall not steal. Fine, I can do that. No matter how tempted I get I can always stop myself from stealing because my mind can remind me.

Thou shall not covet. I can't do this. The problem with coveting is that it is not an action, but a thought. As soon as I think about coveting I've already done it. I've already sinned. My mind cannot remind me to not do it because it is what is doing the sin.

I think it is a fine idea that it is better to be happy for people than to want what they have, but I can't just stop thinking certain thoughts.

No matter how much I try, if my neighbor wins the lottery I will want to have won it. I don't think there is any type of regimen that I can go through that will train me to stop thinking.

Essentially what the Bible is telling me is to not fantasize. Maybe that is good advice. Being present is more productive than daydreaming. But, I am not sure I want to live a life without it.

And what about real dreams? Those many times are coveting also. Too much to think about. I wish I had more control, like monks do. Wait! That is coveting again. Sigh.

Bible Read: Jeremiah 14

## *Shameless Plug? No, Shameful Plug.*

*I* published my second novel over the weekend on Kindle. It will be another week or so before I get it in paperback.

The thing I find interesting is that even though both of my novels were written well before I attempted to read the Bible, they both have religious tones to them. And beyond that, they both show a fairly realistic representation of things I have read in the Old Testament.

My first book was called *Testament*. It is the story of a vampire who believes his new chance at life is a gift from God. And because of this he is going to spend his vampiric life doing the work of God as an angel.

At the time that I wrote it I was imagining this vengeful God which I didn't believe was in the Bible. I was unaware of how violent and jealous God was and used this image as a good background for a horror/thriller. Now, I look at it and see realistic representations of not just God, but man and his relationship with divine. I see similar themes in my own that I see in the Old Testament where man is missing the ability to avoid sin and honor God in the way he is meant to be.

I hope when I get to the New Testament my representation of Jesus in my book is also a fair depiction.

In my new book, *The Psi-Chotic Adventures of Drew Darby*, I have religious representations of Satan. In the book, a young adult novel, I tell the story of Drew Darby who happens to find himself joining the Psychic Operations arm of the United States Army. I wrote it as a fun adventure through the paranormal showing the eternal battle between good and evil.

Since I was writing for teenagers I tried to make the Devil more of a satire of evil than a person. But, after reading the Book of Job I realized that my version of Satan was very similar to the

depiction of him in Job. He is not represented as an overpowering godlike creature that controls all aspects of the Earth, but as a being who is attempting to steal God's people away from him through the constant manipulation of the people.

I am not writing this solely as an advertisement, although that is a part of it.

Advertisement → Go to Amazon and search for “Testament Richard W. Kelly” or “Solundrums” or “The Psi-Chotic Adventures” ← Advertisement

The interesting thing to me is that I tried to envision these religious experiences in my head and in doing so I feel I may have opened myself up to meeting God. It is not something that crossed my mind as I was overly skeptical about religion. But, now I feel that I may have done some amazing things for my own spiritual journey by writing these books that I had not intended on doing.

Bible Read: Jeremiah 20



## *-Howdy, God-*

*I* decided to pray yesterday. It lasted half an hour or so, not sure if that is short or long. But, I realized that I don't know what God wants to talk about. I tried to vary it up some. I asked for things for me and for others. I thanked him for things. And I talked about what I've been reading.

I figured if I am talking to God I should talk like he is anyone else. The problem is I don't know what he is interested in. Some people like to talk sports, some like philosophy, some like gossip. If I am trying to speak to God I need to know where his interests lie.

It was interesting. At first I felt kind of stupid. I felt like I was talking to myself, but after a while it felt fine. But again, there was no response. I am not used to talking to someone who doesn't speak back. Maybe it is a bit more like being a radio host.

The more I read, the more I think I need to pray. It seems like the right thing to do, plus wouldn't you be more likely to receive guidance when you ask for it? I also figure that the great people in the Bible speak to God all the time. It almost seemed like Joseph, Moses, David... They all seemed to be favored by God, but I think it is just that they talk to him.

So, maybe I want to be a favorite. No, that isn't it. I just want to get to know God.

When I was done I wanted to say, "See you later." But it felt wrong. So instead I said, "Amen." It felt like I was signing off. The word was kind of an over and out type of phrase. Strange Experience.

End transmission...

Bible Read: Jeremiah 25

## Hey God

*I* was reading the lyrics to *Terrible Lie* by Nine Inch Nails. Growing up I always thought it was just an anti-God song, but reading it now I realize that it was just what I wanted it to be.

As a kid I wanted to rebel. I wanted things I liked to be questionable and dark, but in reality it means much more than just immature revolt.

It is a story of a man who is asking why God is making his life so bad. He questions if it is him or if God is not what he says it is. It is similar to Job in a lot of ways.

The part of the song that moves me now is that it ends with the man desperately pleading to God to help him. He wants to have faith and to be happy.

“My head is filled with disease  
My skin is begging you please  
I’m on my hands and knees  
I want so much to believe”

This is what I missed when I was younger. When I would get all teenage angst-y I would blame God, I would question God, and I would hate God. The thing I never considered was giving in to God. If I could have seen this when I was younger, maybe the song would have had a profound effect on me.

I guess with age comes wisdom, or at least a little less pride.

Bible Read: Jeremiah 29

## *To Any In Need*

Last night we went to the neighbors' house for dinner. It was nice and had amazingly good sandwiches, good conversation, and of course the kids had a blast.

These are the neighbors that introduced us to their church, Pantego Bible Church. They know about my attempt to read the Bible and follow along some of the time.

They asked me last night if it had caused any lifestyle changes. It has not really other than praying and trying to expose my kids to it more. But, it is a good point. I would think that the more I read the more it would affect my behavior.

I don't know if it is that I am still ok with my lifestyle or if I am resistant, but it seems as though I should allow it to influence me more. Although I have consciously wanted to wait to make any big changes until I finished the Bible because I feel like I don't know the whole story yet.

Maybe in the future I will give more to charity and proselytize, but I haven't done much of those recently. But, it isn't like these are things that I haven't always wanted to do. I love talking about my beliefs and giving to those less fortunate, I just don't have the opportunity often.

I think there is a lot to say about giving. I was listening to the *Dennis Prager Show* on the radio yesterday and they mentioned Christian causes that give to non-believers. Different charities that are based in the faith that give to anyone who needs it. Yes, they spread the word of God while they give, but they are not discriminating against those who are not of the belief.

This is a powerful thought to me. It seems that so many charities give to a very specific group of people. Many times they give to a specific economic class, age group, race, religion, to people of a specific location... I had never really considered it, but I have seen

time and time again “Christian” charities that are not picking and choosing their recipients.

I am not saying they are the only ones or that there aren’t other charities that are just as non-discriminatory, but it says a lot to me about the religion. It seems like it would be easy to say they are going to give to those who follow Christ. It seems simplistic to only give to those in a congregation, but from what I’ve read the Ten Commandments refer to people’s interactions with all people, not all believers.

Bible Read: Jeremiah 33

## *Status Report Day 104*

*A*gain I am done with a book that felt like it was nothing, but God reigning down his fury against his people for not listening to him.

This book was a downer. Although there are some high points with the new covenant overall, it felt as if it were mostly negative.

All these stories from the prophets make me want to prophesize, but it tells us not to do that unless you hear the words of God. So, I will not be listing any predictions, as fun as it might be. But, how does one hear the word of God?

At lunch today I was praying to God and I asked him to speak to me. I wanted to see what it was like to hear God's words and be able to talk about what he had said to me. But, it did not happen.

There has been a strange change in my praying now. I had wanted to pray like I used to in church. Where it is very formal and respectful, but recently I have felt that it was more appropriate to speak to God like I would speak to a friend or a parent. There is still love and respect in it, but it isn't as if I am requesting to speak with the president. Instead it is conversational and more like I am speaking with a mentor. It is kind of nice.

### Questions

Do prophets always see dark futures?

Why aren't there more happy books in the Bible?

What does God sound like?

Bible Read: Jeremiah

Richard W. Kelly

# *Lamentations*

## *There's a Certain Point Where I Tackle You*

*I* have been asked a few times now, what are some of the things that changed you from being a skeptic to reading the Bible and starting to believe in God. I have talked about some of the things, friends who give, all the people around the world who believe in something greater, my blind faith experiment...

One of the things that made a huge impact on me was a video from an atheist. Penn Jillette is one of the magicians in the group Penn and Teller. They do a show in Las Vegas and are hilarious. Penn is a very vocal atheist.

There was a video he posted, I don't have the original link.

Just go to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for "Penn Jillette gets a gift of a bible"

The things he mentions in this video are amazing. He not only appreciates the gift, but he puts into perspective all those pushy people who proselytize door to door. When I first saw this video I felt like he was not only thanking this man for his actions, but spreading Christianity by telling the story. It made me wonder if God exists maybe he speaks through those who believe and don't believe at the same time.

I think this is a very heartwarming video and everyone should watch it.

"How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell me that?"

Thank you, Mr. Jillette.

Bible Read: Lamentations 5

## *Status Report Day 105*

*T*he first poem of Lamentations is very beautiful, but again we reading about bad things and people being sad about it.

It feels like there has been so much depression in the Old Testament that the uplifting events of the New Testament will be like a true beacon of light. Sort of similar to when you have terrible tasting food for a long period of time and then you have some chocolate cake.

The analogy reminds of the television show *Survivor*. They are away from society and food and family and friends and technology... for so long that it must be a shock to the system when they get back into everything.

I wonder how many people on that show have a religious epiphany. It seems like it would be possible, but probably unlikely since they have to focus on winning a game the entire time. Maybe it would be better to just remove yourself from the world you know for a while and see how your experiences affect you. For how long I wonder. 40 days sounds about right.

### Stats

Books Read: 25

Chapters Read: 802

Verses Read: 20,465

Words Read: 527,973

Bible Read: Lamentations



# *Ezekiel*

## *What the What?*

*T*here have been a couple times when I was reading the Bible that I considered the idea that the author was insane. Usually, that goes away with the thought that strange things do happen. But, Ezekiel seems insane.

Just to cover what he had to say. He said four beings came down and each had four faces. They had the face of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle. Each of them had a wheel that shone like crystal. Each wheel had eyes around it and when the wheel moved the beings moved.

Then God appeared in the heavens as a man shining with fire. He gave Ezekiel a scroll and told him to eat it. So, he ate it. Then he told him he would suffer one day for year the Israelites had been sinning by laying on his side and eating what essentially is road kill to be cooked over human excrement. Ezekiel complained about that part so God allowed him to cook it over cow manure.

WHAT?!?!?!?!?

This passage is by far the most illogical thus far in the Bible. There have been dreams explained in the Bible that sounded more realistic than this.

I am attempting to embrace the Bible. So, I will attempt to buy this story, but I don't see how anyone can see this as anything, but the babblings of a lunatic.

I am thinking that he wanted to be a prophet and in order to be one he had to have some story that linked him to God. That, right now, is the only way I can make sense of this.

Bible Read: Ezekiel 6

## *Half Man, Half Angel, Mangel*

*I*n the Book of Job they used the phrase “Son of Man” a few times.

The title returns in the Book of Ezekiel. It is used constantly as a way for God to address Ezekiel.

It poses a question. Why had God not been using that title for other people that he worked with? Moses, Joseph, Jacob, Abraham... They were not referred to as son of man.

Does this mean that Job and Ezekiel are not of the same genealogy as the others? Early on in the Bible it mentions men, angels, Nephilim, Anakim, and of course gods. Is it possible that Job and Ezekiel were the first to be pure man, but still led by God? Could the others been only half human?

There must have been these beings out and about in the world. As I said, these other species are mentioned in the Bible mostly before the flood, but with the Anakim giants they were still around after. Just like when Cain was sent to the land of Nod he was not alone. God said he would run into people and that is why he was given the mark. These people should not have been human since humans had originated in the Garden of Eden and should not have spread too great to be out in Nod nor do we have stories of others being exiled to there.

It makes me think that many of the early prophets of the Bible were part angel or part nephilim or part giant. If they had to do the things they did they would need to have been men of great courage, compassion, and foresight. Even if they were unaware of their personal DNA, if they were not 100% human they could have traits and abilities that others do not.

Plus they spoke to God differently than Job and Ezekiel did. Job and Ezekiel spoke to God as if they were scared of him. They were complete servants that followed orders as if they were lucky just to be receiving the word. But the others, Moses especially, spoke to God in a less formal way. They spoke to him, prayed to him, and even

questioned him. Could this have been because they were part gods themselves?

Then there comes the question of suffering for mankind. In general God allowed people to suffer for the sins of the whole. He would punish entire tribes of people for generations, inflict punishment upon nations of people through their kings or pharaohs. But the major characters from the Old Testament seemed to be outside of a lot of the punishment. Moses, Abraham, Joseph... These men did not suffer for the sins of others as much as were told by God how the others would suffer or they would suffer for their own personal betrayals.

But in contrast to great men of Genesis the two sons of man endured punishment on behalf of their fellow man. According to Ezekiel he took great suffering for his people. Job suffered greatly at the hands of Satan.

Just as I found it surprising that it seems the Bible supports the idea that other godlike beings existed, God is only the God of the Israelites, and God does not seem to be able to read minds, I find it very intriguing that the people referred to as son of man appear to be treated differently than others.

I will need to pay close attention in the New Testament to how they refer to Jesus.

Bible Read: Ezekiel 11

## *-Punishment for One and One for Punishment-*

Thinking about how many of the people of the Bible suffered punishment because of their kinsmen I began to think how unfair it was. Even though God said that the son shall not be punished for the sins of the father, there were still times in the Bible where entire groups of people were killed because the society was corrupt.

Thinking back to the beginning, there is a poetic justice to people being punished as a whole. In the beginning there were only two. Adam and Eve.

These two were given the perfection of the Garden of Eden, but after they both disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge they were punished by banishment. But, it was not just them who were punished. Through the banishment God had punished all of humankind who would never enjoy the perfection of the garden.

Just as men consistently receive punishment from the actions of the whole, in the beginning the whole received punishment from the actions of the first two.

Bible Read: Ezekiel 18

# *Repent, That's What I'm Talking About*

*I*n Ezekiel 18 it says that a righteous man who turns to wickedness will surely die. Then it says that a wicked man who turns to righteousness will surely live.

This sounds like the idea of repentance. Maybe I am reading it wrong, but it sounds like if you truly repent then you will be forgiven. But, if this is the case what was the point of Jesus dying on the cross?

I might be writing this too soon since I have not got to the New Testament, but I thought that Jesus was incarnated as man so that when he died he accepted the punishment of all mankind so they could be forgiven.

The idea always confused me, I didn't understand why something had to die for our sins, but it seems to follow the Old Testament tradition of sacrifice. As I was reading about these sacrifices I kept thinking that it should mean that you could go to heaven as long as you made these animals pay for your sins. But, now that Ezekiel has said that we can be forgiven, or not remembered as it is put in Ezekiel, this feels like the purpose of Christ is redundant.

I hope this doesn't hinder the message of Christ for me. I would like to see the awesome force of the Son and the compassion he displayed.

I always thought it was because of Jesus that we could repent and be saved, but the words are clear in the Book of Ezekiel before the story of Christ, "Repent and live!"

Bible Read: Ezekiel 20

## *Everybody Loves Jesus*

*I* have yet to understand why worship lacks entertainment. I understand the idea of loving God and being thankful and all that jazz, but why does it have to be so boring.

I have not yet seen any church service that includes any entertainment other than music and a few jokes during the sermon. Why must worship work like this? Can't we include something more entertaining than just music and a speech?

Other areas have realized that this often times is not enough to draw a crowd. Today, we have lots of visual entertainment. We celebrate movies and television which utilize speeches, music, comedy, drama, action, sports... I would think if the churches could pull something together more like this it would speak to more people.

Christian rock was a big movement for the Christian community twenty or thirty years ago. Can't there be another break through with Christian sitcoms? I would be more excited to go to church if there was an ongoing comedic play week after week that helped express the message of God while actually entertaining me.

I understand those who think it might take away from the worship, but those are the same types of people who thought using Christian rock instead of hymns would destroy the message. I don't think it does, I think it just speaks to a new generation of people.

Maybe there should be some games and attractions. Maybe there could be some choices for the parishioners to decide what message to hear that day. Maybe, just maybe churches could operate more as events, parties, and attractions while keeping their mission of spreading the word and love of Christ.

It is just an idea, but I think we are way beyond boring at church and it just does not have to be that way.

Bible Read: Ezekiel 27

## *I Just Can't Shut Up!*

*I* often times hear people say things like, “I appreciate all the small gifts from God.” Or they will say that they know God exists because of the little things like the chirping of birds or the smell of nature...

I always kind of liked the idea, but reading into the Bible that sort of thing is never mentioned. Other than the creation story at the beginning God doesn't really talk about his other creations.

It would make sense to me if God would come out and sooth one of his people by having them pay attention to the beauty of nature or the calming attitude of a cat. But, he always tries to calm his people by promising them death to their enemies or something that is equally devastating.

I guess it all comes back to the idea that the Old Testament God is full of vengeance, wrath, and jealousy. It seems that I am harping on this quite a bit, but it is one of the main themes of the Old Testament.

I also ran across a disturbing passage in Ezekiel. God is condemning Israel for turning away from him. And, he describes a prostitute as someone who sold herself to the Egyptians because they had genitals like donkeys and ejaculation like a horse. I don't remember the exact quote and I don't have the Bible in front of me right now.

I don't like the repetition, but my questions keep going back to the same ones.

Why is God so mean?

Why is the Bible so inappropriate for children?

Bible Read: Ezekiel 30



## *No Time*

**O**ur world today makes it hard to include God. When I take into account my responsibilities with work, kids, marriage, other relationships... I find it hard at times to make time for God.

This seems like a backwards statement. God should be so important that he comes first every time, but as we continue to progress through our lives we find that we have things that we are responsible for that we can't ignore or we have very visible effects.

It can be easy to argue that if we don't take time for God there are effects of that as well, but they aren't as visible as not being able to pay your bills. Instead it is the quality of life that suffers.

I have this on my mind today because I have a lot going on right now. Work is getting overwhelming and I have been trying to improve all my relationships, but in doing this I am feeling bogged down trying to fit in my Bible reading at the same time. But, I know me. I know that if I take a few days off the entire thing will lose its importance in my life.

I don't know how to make everything easier to handle. Maybe I should pray.

Bible Read: Ezekiel 35

## *What Does God Say About Me*

*I* love the idea of the Bible code. If you haven't heard of it, it is the idea that you can take the bible, remove all the spaces and make it into a matrix or a big box of letters. Then you use it like a word search. So, you can look through all these pages of biblical matrices and find words, and then other words you find on the same pages are supposed to give you messages about the subject you looked for.

Now, this is probably fairly farfetched, but it is a very cool idea. Of course the idea is that there are hidden prophecies within the Bible. And to me, it makes sense that if the Bible is written by the hand of God there could be hidden prophecies put in this way.

I always wanted to try it. I wanted to look myself up and see what it says. It is probably something like "Read whole Bible". Of course I haven't because most of the people who believe in it think you have to do it in the original Hebrew. I don't see why. If God wrote it, he could have embedded these messages in all languages.

Another problem is that you have to decide what size matrix you want to build. Is it 100 characters by 100 characters? I would stick with the three big numbers in the Bible, 7, 12, and 40. Seems like the appropriate size matrices to me.

Of course there have been people who did the same thing with Moby Dick and found a bunch of messages in there too. I don't know if they are as accurate, but it kind of takes some of the fun away.

Bible Read: Ezekiel 48

## *Status Report Day 113*

*E*zekiel went from strange to boring. Not a good combination. I wanted nothing more than for it to end.

I feel like these entries have not been very relevant to the Bible recently, but there just isn't anything that is speaking to me. I feel like I am stuck in a lecture hall listening to some class I just can't focus on.

I guess this is normal with the Bible. I have heard many people say it is boring, but others who say it is the most inspiring book in existence. I think they are both right.

There seems to be a lot in here that would not interest anyone, but biblical historians. But, it is included so I am reading it.

I would like to reflect on the beauty of God that I have noticed recently, but it hasn't really happened. I am enjoying life more, but the epiphanies have subsided and the appreciation for the beauty of nature has become more of a whisper than a constant booming.

### Stats

Chapters Read: 850

Words Read: 567,374

% Complete: 71.98%

Bible Read: Ezekiel

Richard W. Kelly

*Daniel*

## *Coincidental Sadness*

*I*n the Book of Daniel we are presented with interpretations of dreams again. But, this time Daniel not only interprets the dream he is presented with someone else's dream through God.

The king has decreed, since no one can tell him what his dream was and interpret it, he will kill all seers, wise men, magicians... Daniel wanting to avoid this fate seeks God to learn what the dream was so he can interpret it.

I find it interesting that in the Bible when things like this happen people attribute it to God, but today people will say it is synchronicity or coincidence. Or, for the skeptical they will say the people involved are crazies who believe in psychics.

What has happened in this world that we feel the need to explain everything away from the divine? It seems to be plausible that such an unlikely event could be the works of God.

I would like to think that the few times in my life when I felt like I knew something would happen before it did or when I had a connection with someone that was not explainable was the product of divine intervention. It makes me feel a little bit special. It makes me feel like I am not being ignored or just wandering around this world in random happenstance.

Sometimes it feels like today is full of people who want things to be negative.

Bible Read: Daniel 2

## *It's OK, I Had My Fingers Crossed*

Continuing to surprise me, the Bible has yet again broken those preconceived notions I had.

I always thought of worship as something that is done entirely mentally. Just like my former view of praying, I believed that when you worshipped God you were giving him thanks and praise in your head. But, when Nebuchadnezzar told men to fall to their knees and worship the idol he had created they refused and faced death instead.

My initial thought was, 'fall to your knees and pretend like you are worshipping his idol, but in reality just bow and wait'. I think this goes along with my realization that God is not psychic, he cannot read our minds. Instead the visible act of bowing becomes the worship because they are showing, in visible form, they are submitting their will to it.

This very much changes my view on a lot of things. Such as the Christians who do not go to church. How can they be showing God their love for him if they do not make time to do such? I guess if you pray on your knees at home that could work.

Sometimes it is old phrases that can sum everything up for you. Actions speak louder than words. Yep, that about says it all.

Daniel 3

## *Happy Ending, Wait That Wasn't Happy*

*T*he king decrees that no man shall pray to any god other than him.

Daniel, although very well liked by the king, prays three times daily to God. His enemies notice this and report it to the king and convince him that since it has been decreed he must carry out the appropriate punishment. The punishment is to be thrown into the lion's den.

The king reluctantly has Daniel punished, but by the grace of God and the assistance of an angel he survives the night. The king, overjoyed, has Daniel brought back out.

This is all great, but then there is the crazy twist that the Bible has a tendency to take. For falsely accusing Daniel the men who turned him in are thrown into the lion's den with their wives and children. They are crushed and eaten.

All I could think when I got to this point was facepalm. Such a great story was tainted by the inappropriately violent deaths of men.

First off the men did not falsely accuse Daniel. Yes, they had malicious intent. Yes, they were acting out of hate and jealousy, but it was not their fault that the king had issued the decree. This is an example of tattle tales.

But, beyond that why would they kill their families also? They did nothing wrong. It is more of the guilt by association the Old Testament is a big fan of.

At least this time it wasn't God taking his vengeance out on people. This time it was a king who wanted others to worship him. So, it could be argued that it shows that man without the guidance of God will make horrible mistakes regardless of his intent.

I will stick with that. It feels better than a sad karma message.

Bible Read: Daniel 6

## *Little Horn is Born*

*E*veryone, prepare to run away screaming in fear.

I have been a long time fan of Marilyn Manson. I have found over the years that he is a great story teller and manages to flush out amazing characters that are best described as anti-heroes.

As I have been going along, I have found multiple verses quoted in his songs and many ideas that are depicted.

In the Album *Anti-Christ Superstar* he tells the story of a man who attempts to be the savior of humanity, but in the end becomes its executioner of sorts. It does have some anti-religious language, but it is the story of an anti-Christ so it should.

There is a song on the album called *Little Horn* which in an interview he said was about a dream he had where the world is destroyed by a horn. I always passed this off as some kind of gimmick to appear deep that was below my interest of his act.

Then today, while reading the Book of Daniel, I come to read about a dream Daniel had. It is a dream of the end times. But, in the dream a little horn rises and destroys.

Now I have a new appreciation for the song. Just as the album tells of a man becoming an anti-Christ and destroying the minds and souls of humanity, the song relates the album back to the Old Testament prophecies showing how the character is truly what he claims.

I plan on taking a closer look at the album as I get into the New Testament because I am guessing there are a lot of contrasting characteristics between Jesus and the main character in the album.

I love when I learn new things that help me understand art.

Bible Read: Daniel 12



## *Status Report Day 114*

*T*he Book of Daniel may not be the best book of the Bible, but it feels like it after the painfully boring books of Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. It tells a few fun Bible stories and feels like it truly has some important messages to impart.

Until this point, I have looked at the prophecies as something that is only for the man who they are addressing, but reading through Daniel I am realizing they are prophecies for anyone who falls under the traps of the receiver. Nebuchadnezzar was told that since he had left God he would essentially become a beast instead of a man until seven times had passed.

This seems like it could be a metaphor for mankind. If a people refuse God he will cease to be a person and become a beast. If a nation is founded on the idea of God and turns from him they will no longer be civilized and will eat as animals do.

I find it funny that I will read the Bible and at the end of the day say I still am undecided about God. I can't fully commit to the idea that God exists. But, I read passages like this one in Daniel and it makes complete sense to me. It seems as though there are great messages that I am picking up on that drive me to have full faith. Then when I am done, it is back to a reluctance to believe.

Maybe I'm not trying hard enough.

### Random Thoughts

Names I now appreciate because of the namesakes: Joseph, Ruth, Daniel, Israel

Names I don't think fit in the Bible: Dan, Gad, Buz

Things I didn't expect the Bible to tell me: How to make many temples, boxes, the tabernacle, an ark

Bible Read: Daniel

*Hosea*  
*Joel*  
*Amos*  
*Obadiah*  
*Jonah*  
*Micah*  
*Nahum*  
*Habakkuk*  
*Zephaniah*  
*Haggai*  
*Zechariah*  
*Malachi*

## *Cheating Spouses, Can't Live with Them, Can't Divorce Them*

*T*here has been a lot of mention of infidelity in the Bible, but in the book of Hosea we get God's guidance in what to do with a cheating spouse. He says to love your wife just as God loves the people of Israel.

This says a lot about marriage. It isn't right to abandon the connection and vows you have made because someone strays, but it is a time to come together. I find it interesting to think that God suggests that cheating is not grounds for a divorce, but grounds for communication.

Now, there is the other possibility that if you love your spouse as God loves the Israelites you could kill them. God has a tendency in the Old Testament to massacre people for sinning and if you take his command literally, you could say that you need to punish them for their sins.

Obviously this is not how I am taking the scripture. It seems that God is saying that an unfaithful spouse is not your ticket out of a relationship, but instead a charge for lots of homework. Just as we are told to love our neighbor and not covet their wives, here we are told to love our wives and not covet their lover on the side.

It makes me think that if we as a whole were more religious and followed the rules in the Bible we may have a lower divorce rate. But, is there somewhere in the bible that gives you the grounds for divorce?

Bible Read: Hosea 14

## *Didn't That Happen to Pinocchio too?*

Up to this point I have been making sure that I write at least one entry per book. I had not considered how short the books were at the end of the Old Testament. Today I read Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah.

I didn't feel moved by much of what I read, it is still the same old death and destruction unless you follow the rules, until I got to Jonah. Jonah felt like a real story set in the middle of a bunch of rhetoric.

There are many times while I have been reading the Bible that it felt that the characters in it are not real. They don't have human emotions or responses and feel like fables more than anything else.

Jonah is different. The story is still fantastical and could only have been done through miracles of God, but the character of Jonah feels very real just as Moses, Daniel, Ruth, Nebuchadnezzar, and Joseph did. The thing is they did not act like complete servants. They had emotions based on the situations and questioned either God or the people around them.

Jonah has been charged with going to Nineveh and spreading the word of God. He is told to tell them to repent and God will not destroy them. Jonah does not want to do this, he does not like those from Nineveh and they are not God's people. So, Jonah sails in the opposite direction.

While on the sea Jonah hits a huge storm and it is ripping the ship apart. He realizes that God is angry and tells the crew to throw him overboard to save themselves. He is then swallowed by a large fish where he lives for three days. He eventually is vomited up on the shores of Nineveh. Jonah is upset with God for making him do what he tried to refuse, but God's response is to ask if Jonah has the right to

be upset for disobeying him.

The book does not make Jonah feel like a great man, but it makes him feel real. He did not want to do what God wanted and he tried to walk away, but God would not let him. He was forced to be a better person. I think this is a great metaphor for parenting.

Kids often times will try not to do things because of their image or their fears, but parents need to push their kids to do things that are near the edge of their boundaries. We need to make sure that they grow up to be well rounded people who believe in their own abilities.

And just as God protected Jonah because he was one of his people, we as parent will do the same for our kids regardless of how much we try to push them.

Bible Read: Jonah 4

## *-God Lives at the End of the Road-*

*I*n the Book of Micah it mentions that the Lord came down from his dwelling place. After all these writings where I am wondering why men in the Old Testament could hear the voice of God, but men today don't, I am seeing that God in the Old Testament was a terrestrial being.

If God walked among men back then it would make sense that they could hear his voice. But, that questions if there is still a God that listens to use today.

After my own experiments with praying, I believe there is some sort of god that can hear us and make things happen for us. But, I don't know if it is the same God that was here during the biblical days. Maybe we have a different god now.

I'm almost to the New Testament, I just need to keep holding on until I get there.

Bible Read: Micah 5

## *Micro Words of a Macro God*

*W*ith the final book of the Old Testament being so short I have decided to do a collection of micro essays to cover the interesting things.

### *Beware Your Neighbor*

*I*n the Book of Micah, God tells Micah to beware of other people. This is reminiscent of God telling Abraham to leave Sodom and Gomorrah. He seems to be singling out one good person. But I also find it interesting because this is the first time I recall that God spoke to someone to beware of others breaking the Ten Commandments. Wouldn't he just tell Micah to go tell people death and vengeance is coming?

Either way it is more scripture that reminds me of today, children to do not respect their parents and neighbors feud. Beware of those close to you because they are your enemies. This is not uplifting.

### *Habakkuk is Worthy, Job is Not*

*T*he majority of the Book of Job is about Job pleading to God to help him. Job being a righteous man and did his best to not sin he felt he could speak to God. God did not reply to Job, but instead let Satan punish him constantly.

Habakkuk is a book that details a conversation between God and Habakkuk. It is very similar with Habakkuk questioning why bad things happen. But, the difference is God responds. Why does he respond to Habakkuk and not Job? Even later in the Bible I am still

thinking about how mean the Book of Job is.

### *God Has One Big Ego*

*I*t is interesting that God's constant torment of sinners is commonly followed by the result that he wants. It says throughout the Old Testament that the Lord will kill so and so and destroy this or that village and they will say Israel is great because they follow the Lord their God. Or it will say they will fear God because he is the true God.

It seem a bit egotistical that he would do these things just to show his might and have people fear or follow him.

### *I'll Just Repent Later*

*I*n Malachi God talks about how he resents the people of Israel because they are expecting to be forgiven if they sacrifice after sinning. He is saying they are empty sacrifices with livestock they do not want anyway.

Interesting passages because I've always thought, as long as you repent on your deathbed you can do whatever you want. But, this seems to tell us that God sees through that.

Bible Read: Malachi 4



## *Status Report Day 120*

Now that I am finished with the Old Testament I have to say it was not what I was expecting. I think the collection is essentially the story of a God who is fighting to lead all the people of Earth.

In the beginning there are multiple references to other gods. There are other species on the planet and God focuses his dealing with just the tribes of Israel. He uses them to slowly advance across the land and become more powerful.

He sends attacks and disasters to other countries who worship other gods. But, while he is doing this he quarrels with his own people to live the way he wants.

As time goes on the references to other gods go away and he begins to refer to himself as the only god. He sends out prophets to talk to other countries to get them to follow him and to fear him.

The Old Testament ends somewhere around 400 B.C. We have a 400 year break until we get to the New Testament.

It seems fairly apparent that the stories in the Old Testament cover a time when God at times walks the Earth as a terrestrial being. He sees people face to face, speaks to them, and has places that are where he stays.

He is not the omnipotent ever forgiving character I had built up in my head, but instead is a rash and powerful being. He has many human attributes that I thought would not be present as they seem like faults to me.

I enjoyed parts of it and suffered through others, but it was interesting at least. I think there are a lot of ideas in the Old Testament that Christians today ignore or just don't know about. I also think that it is a fairly literal story and has been misconstrued over the years to be a largely metaphoric idea. It seems a shame that today many people feel they cannot understand the Bible and turn to a reading companion to understand the "hidden" meanings in each verse. I don't believe the

Richard W. Kelly

Bible was written for scholars and the average man was meant to be taught it. I think it was meant for everyone.

It will be interesting to see how Jesus interprets the Old Testament and how he compares to God.

#### Statistics

Books Read: 38

Chapters Read: 925

Verses Read: 23,090

Words Read: 607,488

Bible Read: Old Testament

## *The New Testament*

Richard W. Kelly

## *Matthew*

## *-Joseph the Good-*

*A*t the very beginning we get the story of Joseph. He is set to marry Mary, but finds out she is pregnant. He, out of respect for her social life, plans to divorce her quietly and not make it a public scene. But, he is approached by an angel who tells him the baby is the son of God and that Mary is still a virgin. Joseph decides to marry her, but not sleep with her until the child is born.

This is a testament to Joseph's character. He not only believed the angel and his wife, but agrees to live with the possible ridicule and scorn that could come if people found out that his wife had another man's child.

Considering the times in which this takes place it is a big deal to agree to what he agreed to. He seems to be a person who is worthy of his namesake.

Bible Read: Matthew 4

## *Don't Do, But Don't Think Either*

*T*he New Testament sure starts out fast! Six chapters into Matthew and it is full of wisdom. As much as I expected to already know the types of things Jesus would say, I am shocked again at what the Bible is telling me.

He says that man cannot serve two masters so we should not try to serve both God and money. That of course hits home as money is typically a worry I have. Then he goes on to tell us that we should not worry about money or clothes or food. That we should first worry about loving God and getting to the kingdom of heaven and those things will be given to us.

That is one of those passages that make me question my ability to be a good person. No matter how much I try to focus on God, I don't know if I have the ability to not worry about money. I have spent my life growing up in a world where things are everything. We latch onto science which constantly develops new thoughts based on things existing. We raise people up through fame by coveting their things. And we use people as role models based on their things, their bodies, and their money.

This is all severely blasphemous it seems. This is essentially rejecting the world I know for the world I wish it was. But is it possible to change your thoughts?

Jesus seems to think changing your thoughts is possible. He says that looking at another woman is adultery. He says bragging about charity isn't charitable. He says worshipping in public isn't devout.

I am flabbergasted. This is going to be a wild ride.

Bible Read: Matthew 6

## *Super Christ*

*J*ust a few chapters into the New Testament and we are hearing about the miracles of Jesus. He stopped a storm, he healed the sick, he resurrected someone from the dead, and he cured someone who was possessed.

It seems like Jesus is a super hero. He condemns the evil and lifts up the good. He protects the needy and feeds the hungry.

The problem with seeing a connection between Jesus and a super hero is that it makes it feel less real. If the stories seem fictional then they have no influence.

But, it isn't just the crazy miracles that make it feel less real. In the Old Testament there is little talk of Satan, almost no mention of heaven or hell, and nothing about demons. At the beginning of Matthew we are introduced to all these things.

Where the Old Testament seemed to take very little faith to believe the words of God, other than the idea that he exists at all, it takes mountains of faith to believe the words of Christ.

I find it interesting that there is such a lack of these subjects in the Old Testament, but 400 years later with the New Testament, Jesus speaks of these topics as if they were part of the Jewish doctrine. Maybe they were, but I don't know where they would have come from.

With all these new ideas being pushed onto the reader so quickly it makes the Old Testament feel like it is based in a real world that miracles and the unexplained are rare while the New Testament is based in a world where the supernatural is everywhere. I am assuming these ideas will sink in as I go along, but it feels like a lot to chew on right up front.

Bible Read: Matthew 9



## *Did I Read that Right?*

*J*esus said, “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

This is something I did not expect. I now don’t know if I can follow the lessons of the Bible as I don’t think I can love anything more than my kids.

For the first time I feel angry at the Bible. This verse feels like it is against my nature as a parent. God and Jesus need this much attention that they require us to put them over our children?

I feel hurt and offended that something like the love of your child can hinder your relationship with God. But, then I reached Matthew 13 which gave me a little hope. Maybe I was misunderstanding what he meant.

The parable of the sower says a man scattered some seeds. Some seeds fell on the path and were eaten by birds. Some seeds landed on a rocky area where they sprang up quick because the ground was shallow and when the sun came out they were scorched because of the lack of roots. Some landed in thorns and the thorns grew and choked the plant. And, some landed on good soil and grew into a crop thirty, sixty, or a hundred times what was sown.

Jesus explained the parable as people who hear the message of the kingdom of heaven. Some don’t understand and Satan comes in and snatches them up. Some hear it and embrace it, but when trouble comes because of their belief they abandon it. Some people hear the word, but the deceitfulness of life and wealth choke the word out of them. But, some hear it, embrace it and understand it.

So which one am I? Before I would say I was in thorns as life seems to always drive me away from God. But after what I’ve read, Genesis to Matthew 13, I think I am the seed who is being eaten by birds, especially after the verse about loving Christ more than your

children.

Maybe I can continue to grow and learn. Maybe I am wrong about the verse I mentioned. Maybe I am not seeing the forest for the trees.

Bible Read: Matthew 13

## *In Currency We Trust*

*M*y guess is that if Jesus heard the phrase, “the almighty dollar”, he would be greatly offended. I am still having trouble grasping his hatred towards money.

In a scene in Matthew Jesus gets a little violent which was a shock. It is Matthew 21 where Jesus goes to the Temple Courts of Jerusalem where is going to have prayer and heal people. When he gets there, people are celebrating him and very excited he has come. But, there are people in the temple who are doing commerce.

It says that he “overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.” This is not something I’ve heard before. Then he says, “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.”

It makes me wonder why money seems to be so evil to Jesus. Is it because it is necessary for survival that God did not makes, man made it instead? I am guessing it is a sort of false idol.

Many times in the Old Testament, God condemns people for worshipping gods of wood and gold. Maybe, this is what he meant. People raise up money as if it is everything in this world and for real reasons. Without money it is hard to survive and life becomes torturous.

This is, to me, the hardest lesson of the Bible, to reject the importance of money and use it for good rather than for selfish reasons.

It also makes me wonder how Jesus would have felt with American money having the words, “In God We Trust” on it. Might just be blasphemy.

Bible Read: Matthew 25

## *Status Report Day 124*

*M*atthew was an interesting book. It introduced me to a Jesus I did not know. He is depicted more much more human than I would have guessed.

The biggest surprise was Jesus impatience with people who do not understand his teachings. He constantly seems annoyed by them asking him to explain his parables or thinking they are being good people even when he thinks they are not.

I have a feeling I will get bored with the story of Jesus as Matthew was the first of four books that tell the same story. It is fun hearing about the miracles, but eventually it will just be repetition.

The crucifixion is very difficult to read. It does a good job of capturing the hatred that existed in the time. The guards who yell at him things like ‘where is your God now?’ makes biblical times feel less like an ancient culture and more like a modern times with people who have no conscience.

I would like to say that I am starting to change my ideas and my habit due to the words in the Bible, but the New Testament thus far has only made me question if I can do the things that Jesus preached.

Best Line of the Bible so far: “Do what you came for, friend.” - Jesus speaking to Judas about betraying him.

Bible Read: Matthew

*Mark*

## *He Has Risen! And Those Other Two Did too*

*T*he resurrection of Christ always seemed to be the biggest miracle of Jesus Christ. What I did not realize is that he resurrected two other people before hand. He resurrected a 12 year old girl who he said was just sleeping and John the Baptist who had been beheaded.

I hate to say it, but these events seem to take away from the amazement of Christ's resurrection. I always thought it was kind of fitting to think that the son of God was the only man to ever return from the dead. But, it is not so.

Truthfully, the return of John the Baptist seems more impressive to me. He was beheaded which would make his resurrection incredibly difficult. As if it isn't already hard to rise from the dead, but without a head?

I am torn on the New Testament thus far. Everything seems so farfetched, but at the same time there are multiple writings by different people who recall the same events. It seems as though the New Testament seems more likely to be real than the Old because otherwise it would have been a great conspiracy by all these different witnesses who wrote about it.

It is part of the idea that conspiracies can exist, but most likely only in the small scale. You always have to consider the secret that is too big to keep. I would think faking the coming of the messiah would be a secret that someone would have blown and we would have many books from the time that talked about the world's greatest hoax.

Bible Read: Mark 5

## *I am Jesus. No, I am Jesus.*

Reading through the stories of Jesus something came across my mind. What if Jesus was not only Jesus Christ, but he was also the embodiment of the 12 apostles?

A lot of people think this is a stretch as it takes an alternative view of life, time, existence... But, seeing as how we are talking about a story of miracles, resurrections, and the child of a human and God, I don't think I am taking too big a leap.

Knowing that the apostles also went out and taught the words of Christ and they endured great punishments it would make sense to me that they could have also been the son of God. They did show faults by betraying Jesus, disowning him, not having 100% faith, but all those things had to happen in order for the lessons to make sense.

If he had been teaching lessons to perfect people then it would not have been impressionable. I already took the leap into the alternative views by considering God as an alien, why not Jesus as multiple people?

It would make more sense to me as to why Judas turned him in. It would be more understanding as to how John the Baptist could have both been resurrected as well as being the reincarnation of the prophet Elijah.

Just a thought...

Bible Read: Mark 8

## *I Hope Mountains Can Swim*

*A*fter hearing the accounts of the miracles of Jesus for the second time I am starting to believe that Jesus did not think he was doing miracles. Instead it seems as though he believed that he was doing things that any person could do.

When someone came to him and asked him to touch them to heal their ailments Jesus did not reply with an affirmation that he was healing them. Instead he told them their faith has healed them. When he went to resurrect the young girl, he did not say he would bring her back from the dead, but that she was just asleep.

I don't think that Jesus was doing anything, but turning things over to God. He just knew something others did not. Mark 11:23 "If anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them."

We should not be looking at the stories of Jesus as miracles of the son, but as the possibility of what God can accomplish. Mark 11:24 "whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

This account is Jesus telling us how to pray successfully. Now 2,000 years later we still are not as a whole utilizing his words. Maybe *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne just listened to Christ.

The message is simple. Believe in God. Speak short and simple to him. Ask for what you need. Possess no doubt in your mind of God or his gifts. Believe it has already been given and it will be.

Bible Read: Mark 16



## *Status Report Day 127*

**R**epetition seems to be a common theme through both the Old and New Testaments. But, the story of Christ is much more compelling than much of the Old Testament.

If nothing else, Jesus, so far has taught me how to pray better. I think I was doing it all wrong. He has said to keep it short and sweet. I guess that makes sense if he is listening to all people of the world. But it feels like it takes away the chance for a relationship with God.

Prayer recently has been a time for me to just talk to God, but Jesus is saying that is not the way to do it. So, I will try his way. It will take less time at least, but I don't know how I am supposed to get to know God if I am not having some sort of conversation, one sided or not.

Other than that it is mostly about the story of his life. There was a mention of those who believe in him holding snakes and not getting bit. I can see where those snake churches come from now. I am still not going to one of those churches. What if I think I have full faith in Christ, but there is doubt I was unaware of. Then I should be bitten. Nope, not for me.

Reasons Jesus is scary

1. He says if you don't believe in him you go to hell.
2. He killed a fig tree because it had no fruit.
3. He told Judas it was better if he was not born even though he knew what he would do.
4. He went crazy in the temple, overturned tables and benches and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise in there.

Bible Read: Mark

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*Luke*

## *Love Thy Spruce?*

*J*esus has a lot to say about love. He really likes the idea of love your neighbor, but he points out that you should not just love your friends, but your enemies as well.

This turns it into more of a love your fellow man. It is a nice sentiment, but why stop there? Should we love all living beings? Love your dog and cat and fish and bird. Probably should love the plants also.

Of course, Jesus had a fig tree killed because it had no fruit on it when he was hungry, so maybe we are not supposed to love the plants.

I think my problem is that I have more questions that the Bible is willing to answer. Should I love and respect all plants? Is entertainment bad? Is it ok that I have a cell phone on me 24/7?

There is a passage in the New Testament where people ask Jesus a question and he pulls a Socrates on them and answers it with another question. The people felt it was a trick and refused to answer and Jesus in turn did the same. It says after that no one dared ask Jesus anything else.

I don't get that. I would love to have the opportunity to grill Jesus with question after question, but unless I am doing this prayer thing wrong, I don't have that opportunity.

Bible Read: Luke 7

## *I Get it Now*

*E*piphany moment... I keep wondering why Jesus is telling us things like we need to love him more than our children and parents. Why he keeps telling us that we need to forgo everything good in life to spread his word.

I get it all of a sudden. He is saying that there is this life and the next. If you want to have everything in the next then you have to focus on that instead of this life. Yes, you need to eat and have shelter and those types of things, but it is because your body needs that. You have to meet the needs of the body to live, but your goals and missions should be based on the everlasting life.

I don't know if I can do it, but I get what he is saying all of a sudden. I have to think that is some severe dedication because I have trouble sticking with a diet to get results in a few months. To have the perseverance to spend your entire life to achieve something afterwards is very honorable.

But, maybe it comes back to faith. If you believe with all your soul that this is how it works, then you probably can commit your life to others without a problem, but if you are like me and are just leaning one way or the other you feel you are sacrificing a lot more.

Bible Read: Luke 8

## *It was a Small Turtle Because the Moon Is Small...*

*I* don't like nit picking a single line and questioning things about it, but I pick single lines to take lessons from, so why not the opposite.

It seems as though Jesus thought that the end of society was coming sooner than it has. In Luke 9:27 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

It sounds to me like he thought some of the apostles would still be alive after Armageddon. I can't come up with any other way they will see the kingdom of God before they die.

I could see an argument that they could see it through the death and resurrection of Jesus, but that is not the kingdom itself. In that sense they could see the compassion of God or the pathway to heaven or something of the sort, but not see the kingdom.

This is by no means a deal breaker on whether I believe what the Bible has to say as a whole. It just points out to me that these books were written by men who are expressing the teachings of Christ. Men are fallible and can misquote which is what I will assume here.

It is very apparent in the parable of the sower. It has been told three times in three different books by three different authors. Each one is phrased slightly different and can easily have different lessons taken from each. Although the main idea has stayed the same, anyone who is trying to look deeper into the words to find hidden metaphors could easily be led astray.

I think this is why I keep looking at the Bible as literally as I can, because when you start moving it into metaphors and deeper meanings you run into issues with translation and interpretation.

Bible Read: Luke 10

## *Hurt*

*I* keep writing these entries feeling like the Bible is making a difference and maybe it is, but much of the Bible isn't sticking with me. I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the stories or the lessons. But, occasionally there is that one thing that holds onto me.

Typically it has been something uplifting. The story of Ruth and her love for her in-law was very inspiring. Joseph rising from a slave to the helper of the pharaoh was an awesome thing. But, this time it is one of the most painful and frightening moments, in my opinion, in the Bible.

I haven't been able to get out of my head the picture of Christ being crucified and screaming out, "God, why have you forsaken me?"

I feel like I should pause for effect because every time I think of it, it brings pause in my life, both metaphorically and in the physical reality.

This moment is not just hard to read because it is taking a man who is nearly perfect, loved by God, loved by men, full of compassion, and incredibly forgiving and torturing him to death. But, it is also the sacrifice he is making for all of us.

No matter how much I think I am questioning everything and using logic to make decisions... Every time I think of this moment in history I hurt.

Bible Read: Luke 11

## *Hidden in Plain Sight*

*I* tried praying again today. But, this time I followed the guidance of Jesus. He said to not say too much, be humble, ask for what you want, and believe you already have it. So, that is what I did.

I also started with the Lord's Prayer. Funny, growing up I never knew why it was called that, but now it makes sense. It is the Lord's Prayer because it was the prayer Jesus suggested. Some things are just so simple.

I am a big fan of foreshadowing, which makes sense knowing that I am a writer. So, I really love it when I notice things in day to day life which feel like they are trying to tell me something. They are usually big things such as, your light turns green, but the song you are listening to says stop. You stop and a semi comes barreling through the intersection. Those types of things are great, it is as if God is foreshadowing the world for you.

But, sometimes they are the smaller things. Today it was a smaller thing. I was sitting in my car waiting to go into work. I did my prayer and when I looked up I saw a small cross in the pillar I parked next to in the parking garage. I had never noticed it before and it seemed like the perfect scenario to see it for the first time. It was a nice little confirmation that God heard me.

Seems like today is going to be a good day.

Bible Read: Luke 22

## *-Status Report Day 132-*

*I*t surprises me at times to hear certain things in the Bible that I had never heard about before. The main example that comes to mind is Jesus coming into the temple and throwing out the money changers and salesmen. It is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but I had never heard that story.

It seems sometime we as people latch onto a single sentence because it speaks to us, but we ignore things that have been reiterated because we don't like them. It seems the same way with the constant condemnation of money in the New Testament. Jesus says over and over that money will keep you from heaven, but modern day Christians don't seem to embrace the poverty that Jesus espouses.

I am no different though. At this point in my life I cannot bring myself to give away all my money. Which I guess shows that I am not ready for the kingdom of heaven. But, maybe one day I will be.

Things Jesus wants me to do that I am having issues with:

1. Give away all my money
2. Love him more than my children, parents, or wife
3. Have full faith in my prayers

Bible Read: Luke



*John*

## *He was a God! No, He was Man!*

*T*he Bible suddenly took a turn for the weird. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are all pretty down to Earth. They have a message that Jesus is the son of God who performs miracles because of his faith and connection with God which is possible for all of us. It shows that he spread the word of everlasting life which is obtainable if we could just follow him and believe in him.

Then we get to John. In the Gospel of John we hear that Jesus is not just the son of God, but also God himself. He performs miracles because he is God incarnate and we are nothing but the sons of Satan. We cannot perform these miracles because we are evil from birth while he is the physical embodiment of good.

I have always heard that the Bible contradicts itself and this is the first time I've really noticed. Now, Jesus says that he is God while the other books have him say things like, why do you call me good? Only God the father is good?

I am having a real problem understanding how these contradictory books have been included in the Bible. It seems to me that there has been a drastic difference in interpretation of what Jesus actually said.

In the first three gospels Jesus seems like a real person. He has emotions and story that mirrors real life with some mystical background. In John, he is a deity who is only appearing to be human.

I can see where the denominations come from, there is too much division in the Bible itself, you almost have to pick and choose which one you believe.

Bible Read: John 9

## *Please Rise for the Honorable Judge God*

*L*et he who is without sin cast the first stone. I think this was the first line from the Bible I ever heard that made an impact on me.

It is in the Gospel of John. Jesus is teaching when an adulteress comes into his tent. The men say she should be stoned as written in the Old Testament. Jesus refuses to stone her and says “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.”

I love this little story as it shows that no one should judge. Of course, it does suggest that if you are a perfect person you can judge all you want. But, as we read many times in the Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus says no one is without sin, no is good, except for God himself.

God is our judge. It makes sense when you think that the only person who can judge us is he who has not made the same mistakes. But, what does that mean for our courts? What does that mean for governments and schools?

It seems like it may be blasphemous for us to be judging and condemning people for breaking laws. Maybe it is.

I think it is a part of why the Ten Commandments were created to keep the peace on Earth. Without it people would do what they want and have no consequences. It makes more sense for the Ten Commandments to have been made for the benefit of people rather than for the benefit of God.

Jesus did not encourage violence as he was spreading a message of love and peace. But, what if it was a murderer who came to his tent? If he was repentant would Jesus have said the same thing?

Bible Read: John 20

## *Status Report Day 135*

*I* finished the Gospels. I liked them although they were repetitive. I can see how one chooses a church now. The Catholics seem to favor the Gospel of John more than Luke or Mark. The Unity church seems to avoid the Gospel of John.

Actually having read what was in each book I could see how I could use that to attend the church that best reflects my opinion of the Bible. But, I need to finish reading it first.

Driving to work today I saw a sunrise. It wasn't a beautiful sunrise, it was just average really. But, it made me think about how much awesomeness there is in the mundane. We could live in a world that has nothing that is beautiful. Sunrises could be just as simplistic as a light bulb, but that isn't the world that was created for us.

There are many things we take for granted and it is a shame. I, for one, need to take more time to appreciate how the world works.

Bible Read: John

## *Acts*

## *Story of the Audience*

*I*t feels kind of nice to read stories that are different than the same one I read four times going through the gospels. Now, we get the stories of the apostles after the death of Jesus.

It feels like the New Testament is setup wrong though. Typically we get all the background info first and end the book with a climax. We already had the climax of the crucifixion, four times!

Instead of having the collection of books designed to tell the story of Jesus and his great sacrifice we get the story of the apostles and how Jesus affected them. Which could be just as good a story, but it doesn't seem like it was planned out correctly.

I think it might be how the church works. Since the church worships God and Jesus, it would make sense that the overarching story should be about God and Jesus. But, the bible is truly about people and how they adjusted their lives to accommodate for their deities.

It should make a bigger impact on the reader as they are the main character in a sense. But in that sense I would think the religion as a whole would worship the men who followed Jesus.

Bible Read: Acts 2

## *You are Healed Because I Said so*

*T*here is a story in Acts about a crippled beggar who asks Peter for money. Peter tells him he has no money, but what he has he will give to the beggar. He then heals the beggar in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is an awesome idea. Jesus had said that if you believe something will happen, it will happen. This is a great example. The apostles believed that Jesus performed miracles because he was the son of God and if they invoke his name they can do miracles as well.

It makes me think that invoking Jesus is nothing more than a way to believe your prayer will work. If Peter had said the man is healed because God allowed it, then it most likely would have happened as well as long as Peter believed it.

This seems to continue to dispel the ideas that were written in the Gospel of John. If John was correct then only Jesus should have been able to do the miracle because he is the son of God and Peter, being man, is the son of Satan. If Peter did a miracle would have been the work of Satan. Now, I am sure there is some difference after Jesus died for their sins, but it makes more sense to me if you do things based on Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Bible Read: Acts 9

## *Anything Left?*

Over the course of the months that I have been writing about the Bible, the thing I've been afraid of is running out of things to talk about.

I feel like I have hit that point. Instead of having too much to say about the words found in the book, I now have almost nothing new to say. The stories that I am hearing now seem to have little more than just reiterations of the same messages that I have been reading about for the last few months.

At this point I am wondering if there will be anything else that I learn. I feel like the Old Testament gave me a very good understanding of ancient views of religion. The New Testament tells an amazing story of Jesus and his gifts he bestowed upon the people of Earth. But, now there is nothing exciting, nothing groundbreaking.

I might be trying to pull too much out of the Bible or I might be burned out from reading it for almost five months. I feel like I should take a break, but I want to finish my project.

Maybe tomorrow I will find some renewed interest.

Bible Read: Acts 19



## *Talking to Jesus, Similar to Talking to Lincoln?*

Seems like every time I talk a Christian they ask if I know that Jesus died for my sins. Then they ask if I have a personal relationship with Christ. Then it spirals off into churches and things.

Knowing that this is the common thread for a quick Christian inquisition these ideas would be highlighted in the New Testament. The first is. Jesus died for the sins of mankind. I got that, cool.

The second thus far is missing. Sure, the apostles had a personal relationship with Jesus, but they followed him around day to day. But, once he died, came back, and then went to heaven... there has been no mention of continued conversations with him.

Now, I guess if you subscribe to John's theory that Jesus is also God, then praying would accomplish this. But, Matthew, Mark, and Luke didn't seem to go down that path. They say he is the son of God, not so much God himself. So, if that is so praying wouldn't necessarily reach him.

But, that is kind of just a theoretical. The piece that has been missing from Acts is the apostles telling people to have a personal relationship with Christ. Instead they tell them that if they believe in him they will be saved. They do not tell them to speak to Jesus or meet him or learn from him. They instead spread his teachings themselves and tell people to believe in the story.

Again I feel like the Bible is telling me something very different from what most churches have tried to convince me of.

Bible Read: Act 20

## *Judges, Senators, Representatives, Presidents... Moral?*

*R*ead the story of Paul there is one thing that coincides with the story of Jesus that just is glaring me in the eye. The rulers of their times did not want to persecute them.

Jesus was crucified because the people asked for it. Pontius Pilot did not want to crucify him according to some of the gospels, not all. In the end had it not been for the people Jesus may have been released and not crucified.

Paul was imprisoned for two years for teaching against the laws of Judaism. King Agrippa said he had done nothing to be imprisoned for.

The Bible seems to be telling me that rulers may have more sense or morals than the populace. This isn't something that many Americans would agree with over the last thirteen years. It seems that most people seem to distrust government nowadays and would not like to trust their judgment for things like life.

Maybe this is another lesson of the Bible. Just like the Ten Commandments make life better for humans in their day to day life together, maybe trusting your leader is something that could make day to day life better in society.

Bible Read: Acts 26

## *-Status Report Day 141-*

*A*nother day, another book. The book of Acts was interesting, but seems less important than the gospels. Following the lives of the apostles after the death of Jesus feels like playing telephone. You know, that old game where you have a bunch of kids that whisper a sentence to each other one after the other and the message changes as you go through more and more kids. That is what the Bible is feeling like.

It seems there are some great messages in the Bible that tend to get lost in translation or lost in generation or lost in adaptation. After Jesus exits from the Bible it feels like we are just going through hearsay.

I'm starting to think that the stories about a person and the words they said are important. The dreams and signs given to the prophets by God are important, but the teachings of those who are no longer in the presence of God are lacking in divinity.

I go back and forth, but I am thinking at this point that there is a lot of benefit of reading the Bible. Probably more than going to church and hearing how someone else reads it. But, that is something that most likely people as a whole won't do.

Today I look out at the rain and am happy about where I am and where I am going. I am happy with what I have learned from the Bible and feels more secure than ever in my faith. It is just a happy day.

Things I have not found in the Bible

- People having a connection with Jesus post crucifixion
- Rules about sexual immorality other than homosexuality
- Importance of church

Bible Read: Acts

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# *Romans*

## *Born Slaves*

*I*n Romans the writer makes a bunch of metaphors. He says that man is born a slave to sin. But he can become a slave to obedience, which will make him a slave to righteousness and in the end a slave to God.

A definition of slave from Dictionary.com says “a person entirely under the domination of some influence or person”

So what is the Bible trying to say? We are slaves of sin so we have no self control? We have no choice in the matter? We are dominated by the desire to sin? But then we can break free of this servitude and trade it for another.

Then what? We are the same way, but for the glory of God instead of the self absorption of sin?

This is very confusing to me. I always considered life to be a series of choices not a series of submissions. Is it possible to not be a slave to God, but to still spread his word and be a righteous person? The Bible seems to be telling me to trade in one set of chains for another.

It seems to always come back to this type of thing. I had a problem when Jesus said to love him more than your children and now I am having a problem with the idea that we are supposed to be a slave to obedience. Maybe I need to embrace the idea that I am just a mere man and cannot hold a candle to God.

Bible Read: Romans 6

## *Thoughts Speak Louder than Actions*

“*E*verything that does not come from faith comes from sin.”

Romans Chapter 14. Wow. This implies that sin is inherently unpredictable. If it wasn't it wouldn't be sin, but prayer. I say this because Jesus was fairly clear that if you believe it, it will happen.

But how is this statement possible if you have faith in a sin happening? Such as, what if I covet my neighbor's car and I believe that it was meant for the car to be handed over to me. Hmmm. I guess I wouldn't be coveting it, but waiting to receive it.

Bad example. What if I have faith that God has approved me to have adultery? It is a sin as written in the Old Testament, but my faith says it is ok. Therefore it is not coming from sin.

It seems confusing, but that quote actually follows a passage that is talking about how it is ok to eat any foods. It says there are no clean or unclean foods as all food was created by God.

But, God did say in the Old Testament that you could not eat certain things as they were unclean. This is where the Bible gets twisted and hypocritical. At least this is where people say it is hypocritical, but I don't think it is.

This is because we are not hearing the words of God at this point. These are the words of an apostle in a letter to a church. Jesus and God contradict each other very little. It's when man is trying to teach what he learned to other men when the things get convoluted.

I think the message is that if you believe in Christ, listen to his teachings and be good at heart you will be saved. It does not matter if you fall victim to one of the many sins in the Old Testament as long as you believe that you are doing good.

I think that is the message or at least it is the one I am taking from it.

Bible Read: Romans 14

## *-Status Report Day 143-*

*T*hese books are getting shorter and are passing by quicker.

The Bible project has overlapped the diet project which I thought might deter my focus, but it has actually created some interesting intertwining thoughts. As I continue to read about the magnificence that is God I also have been trying to fill my body with healthier foods.

It has helped clear my mind and made me feel a bit better. The biggest revelation is that I have come to think the foods that were created by God are what the body needs to keep healthy. The foods altered and created by man are not good for us. It becomes a wonder that man ever considered he could outdo what God created in nature by altering the genetics of it.

Genetically modified foods are a big controversy right now with scientists saying they shouldn't affect differently than normal foods, but my diet has shown otherwise. Removing the modified veggies has given more energy, but not as much as removing processed foods. Anything with preservatives and chemicals seems to be a big hindrance on the body.

I want to keep an eye on this and think about what else has been created by man. What else could I be including in my life that is hindering me? Money comes to mind...

### Bible Stats

Books Read: 45

Chapters Read: 1,062

Verses Read: 28,364

Words Read: 725,510

Bible Read: Romans

Richard W. Kelly

## *Corinthians I & II*



## *Yoga for Health*

When I purchased DDPYOGA I thought it was God telling me to get it because I needed it to get in shape. Thus far I have been less than consistent with it. But, now I realize he wanted me to get the program because that is what would lead me to discovering my son's issue with gluten.

I wrote about finding the program before. I prayed. I ran across the program. I decided it was the answer to my prayer. In the long run it seems to have been a godsend, just as I thought.

I am now taking prayer much more seriously. I can't tell you how much of a difference this is going to make in my life, my wife's life, my daughter's life, and of course my son's.

I am trying to pray for others more and to pay close attention when an answer comes. I was thinking back to prayers of old. Prayers for money and happiness and health... And I am pretty sure some of them were answered, but I didn't grab hold of the response.

There have been times when opportunities arose, but I was too scared to try them. I think this is a big lesson for me. It goes back to Genesis when Moses did not want to lead the Jews, but God told him he had to.

I believe God wants us to take risks. He wants us to become better and grow. I hope more people can realize this and understand that they need to take risks when they present themselves.

Bible Read: Corinthians I 7

# *I Told You that Mountain Would Jump Into the Sea*

*T*he idea that if you believe what you say 100% it will come true has been on my mind a lot. I want to believe, but there are those small hints of non-belief in the back of my mind.

I had been on a diet for a whopping 10 days and I messed up multiple times. I don't think I believed I would be able to do it. Nor did I believe that it would work for me. I didn't see the results in my head like I should have.

What is it about the human mind that allows us to question ourselves? The Bible says that if you believe your prayers and act as if they have already been answered then they will be. So why can't I do that?

Maybe what I need is to believe that I can have the right mentality and pray for that before I move on to stuff.

Of course I also question whether my prayers would be answered as I don't always want holy things. Jesus tells us not to worry about this life. Don't worry about house, clothes, and money so if I ask for them will God really give them? If I am questioning it, he probably won't.

Need to change my attitude. God wants to give me all these things!

Bible Read: Corinthians I 8

## *Put a Warning on that Chalice*

*A* major sin that I was unaware of was taking communion with bad intentions. Corinthians I 10 is all about how you can't take communion if you are doing wicked things.

Again this is against what I thought the point of communion was. I always thought that since you were taking in the body and blood of Christ you were in a sense washing away your sins. Kind of a putting the grace of Jesus in you.

But, apparently I am wrong. It appears as though that is a great sin. So, should I repent before communion to keep from tainting the body and blood of Christ?

I wonder how many times I offended God by being bad and still drinking the wine.

Corinthians II 2

## *Lost Art of Communication*

*T*he two books of Corinthians are among the longest left in the Bible at this point, which is odd since I am in the books of the Bible that were actually letters.

Today a letter is short, full of grammatical errors, and electronic. Oh how far we have fallen from the times of the poetic word.

I remember when my grand-parents died I was at their house as the family was attempting to grieve and get everything situated. I came across some letters between my grand-parents. My grand-father was in WWII and my grand-mother, of course, was at home.

I went through a dozen of these letters amazed by the care put into them. They were each dozens of pages long and crafted ideas better than most authors of today. There was a tempo and tone to each that identified it from the others and the words used in those few letters rivaled some of today's youth's entire vocabulary.

The first one I read felt like the beginning of a novel as it didn't start out with, "Miss you." Or "How are things at home?" Instead, it started with a scene that actually brought the recipient into the world the writer was sitting in.

I don't recall word for word, but it was something like, 'The rain is pounding and the lights have been shut off. We are unsure if there is another strike inbound from the east, but I have managed to huddle under a blanket on my lonely cot to keep the light needed to speak to you once again away from the commanders. The fresh air and patter of the water has brought my mind comfort as it reminds me of our last meeting...'

It was magnificent to read something so beautiful from someone who claimed to never be a writer. But, it is the same as we go back. Look at civil war letters or American Revolution letters or father back to the middle ages, ancient Rome... We have somehow

## My Journey Into Christianity

lost our ability to craft ideas on paper.

We may have lost the ability to craft ideas to others in general. But, the Bible preserves some of those types of communications.

It has happened a few times where the Bible seems to be teaching me things that are not of a holy nature. It has shown me ways that our society pales in comparison to the past, but it also has shown me how the past was barbaric in comparison to today.

Either way, this is a lesson about growth. This is a poignant display of how we have fallen as we have become lazy.

Bible Read: Corinthians II 10

## *-Status Report Day 147-*

*T*he two books of Corinthians are an odd read. Rather than hearing about the teachings of Christ and the memories of his life we are presented with Paul's direction to the church.

This could be a good place for reference, but I don't understand why he had to write it. The gospels were available to the church, so I would imagine they could have come to their conclusions without his input.

But, as you go forward reading the letters it starts to feel like Paul is explaining why he is such a great man. He even goes into why he is not doing just that, but those words are surrounded by examples of how he suffered more than other men to spread the story of Christ.

The books don't have much of an impression on me. In fact, they turn me off from believing what the church says. If the gospels could not put the impressions of people that Jesus wanted then what are the churches to follow?

Reading Paul try to tell the church not to do certain things makes it feel like the early churches were less of a testament to the teachings of Christ and more of a mix of those teachings with the opinions of the apostles.

I don't feel like that is what we are supposed to do. I feel like we are supposed to look at the stories and teachings we have and decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. As much as I am interested in the apostles interpretations of Christ's words, I would not put them up as infallible and believe they know all about the subject. Just like Judas who turned on Christ I would not say it is impossible for the other apostles to turn on Christ and befuddle the message of the church.

%s done:

Books Read: 47 of 66 – 71%

## My Journey Into Christianity

Chapters Read: 1,091 of 1,189 – 92%

Verses Read: 29,058 of 31,102 – 93%

Words Read: 741,018 of 788,280 – 94%

Bible Read: Corinthians I & II

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# *Galatians*



## *Wrist Sized Jesus Reminders*

*I* was asked last night how the lessons of Christ's life have changed my own. How his response to my situations has affected my decision making? I realized that it really hasn't.

It seems like a logical thing to think about, but I have been so concerned with understanding the Bible and deciding what I believe that I have not used the information to affect my own life. It is something that I need to start considering.

I always laughed in high school when people would wear those WWJD, What Would Jesus Do, bracelets. It seemed like such a ridiculous question at the time, but today it makes more sense.

We are brought up in this world of superficial lifestyles. We focus on entertainment, gratification, and money. I can now see the point of needing that constant reminder to evaluate your decision making and see if you are being as good a person as you can.

I think a big difference is I did not understand what it meant to turn your life over to Christ back then. I may still not quite get it now, but I have a better idea.

Bible Read: Galatians 6

## *-Status Report Day 148-*

**G**alatians was short and about as interesting as Corinthians was. I am not really into reading Paul's letters to churches.

I have been listening to Diamond Dallas Pages podcast and he had former wrestler turned motivational speaker, Marc Mero. It was a fine conversation that was about helping people and making a difference... But, Mero said, "Only those who have really experienced loss can understand how precious life is" That is not an exact quote, but it is close.

I thought that was an interesting idea. He was pointing out that most of the millionaires he knows are miserable, but those who have less often are much happier.

I think it is that people who have had loss know that they missed out on something by being miserable at some point in their life. And, I guess that is a good message. Once you lose something you understand how to cherish.

It makes me want to focus on being happier more. I think that would benefit a lot of people.

Books left:

Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
Thessalonians  
Timothy  
Titus  
Philemon  
Hebrews  
James  
Peter  
John

## My Journey Into Christianity

Jude

Revelation

Bible Read: Galatians

*Ephesians*  
*Philippians*  
*Colossians*  
*Thessalonians I & II*  
*Timothy I & II*  
*Titus*  
*Philemon*

## *Did that Home Run Just Spread the Message of Christ?*

*I* used to think that when someone said they dedicated their work to Christ that they must be doing something that is religious. Similar to the idea that when I heard of people who were die hard Christians that did anything other than working in a church, I wondered how their lives were so holy.

When I was writing my blog about a theme park today I started to wonder these things again. How is it that I could be writing about a fun ride at an amusement park, but still feel like this is what God wants me to do?

I realized something. Doing the work of God may not be spreading the word. Dedicating work to Christ may not require you to point out sin or even infuse religion into anything. But, doing the work of God is the culmination of what makes you feel like you are making a difference.

Because, without the power of the creator nothing here would be possible. Without the amazing work of the Lord we would not be able to achieve such things.

I came to the conclusion that when you do the work of God you better your life and the lives of others. Seeing how God wants to be worshipped, loved, and appreciated, what better way to accomplish these than letting people take joy in their work?

It is a realization that we should not do work that we hate. We need to find our passion and work towards it as opposed to ignoring it.

It makes sense to me that Babe Ruth was doing God's work by playing baseball. He was showing people what is possible. He proved that we can accomplish great things. He brought joy to people's lives. And he most likely lightened his own world. He spread a type of love.

I don't think the promise of heaven is the purpose of the Bible,

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just the motivation for many. I think the purpose of the Bible is the love, respect, and discipline written about within those books.

Bible Read: Philippians 2

## *Don't Be a Pervert!*

*I* was consciously looking for things like sexually immorality when I was reading through the Bible. And I have not noticed much. It boiled down to don't be gay and don't sleep with animals. Other than that, there isn't much.

But, now in the Prison Epistles, Paul has mentioned sexual immorality multiple times. He talks about it as something to avoid in order to make it to heaven.

This is not a surprise to me, I figured it was in there somewhere, but I find it odd that the time where it is focused on is the time after Jesus has died.

If this is where we get the rules about sex are they truly God's rules? Shouldn't we have parables that Jesus taught that explain this to us?

It almost feels like this is an example of how society soaked into religion. It did not appear to be an issue with God or Jesus, but Paul mentions it many times.

This is the same reason why I feel like I can trust the gospels more than the rest of the New Testament. It seems that teachings of Christ through his apostles are not quite divine...

Bible Read: Thessalonians I 4

## *Wine, the Drink of God*

**R**eading through Timothy I ran across a passage that seems to make no sense today. It is a list of things you should do by the teachings of Christ. It says to not drink only water, but to use a little wine too.

It says to do this because of your frequent illnesses. Maybe back in the day that made sense. They could have thought of wine as a medication of sorts. But, today we see alcohol as a bad thing. I can't imagine a doctor saying that I am drinking too much water and that is why I am getting sick.

This also seems to show that the Bible is not anti-alcohol. There have been passages against being drunk in public and doing stupid things, but it never says not to drink.

It makes sense. Jesus turned water to wine and we take communion with wine which is supposed to be the blood of Christ. So, why would the Bible say no to alcohol?

It is just another one of those thoughts that I assumed was in the Bible, but is not.

Bible Read: Timothy I 6



## *Look to Your Elders*

*T*itus is a refreshing book in the middle of some boring letters.

It talks about being a good person and how we can help each other to do it. It says for the elders of the community to be good and not addicts and angry. They can teach young girls to be good and nice and take care of their home. It says to teach young boys to be good, self controlled, and serious. It says to teach slaves to be good, and follow their masters.

A lot of this seems outdated, but I think it is still valid today. As much as we try to be politically correct and treat everyone equally we can still understand the lesson written here.

If we remove the labels of boys, girls, and slaves we see it a little clearer. We want to raise our children well. We want to be good, nice, honest, serious, self controlled, and obedient.

Maybe today it is wrong to say women should obey their husbands, but it is still a good lesson in marriage for both participants to be conscious of the other and the decisions they make together.

Even the lines about slaves make sense today. If we replace slave and master with employee and boss the message seems clear.

This is the type of passage that people twist to say the Bible is outdated and sexist. But, it is just the vernacular of the day. It is not prejudice, it is just misunderstood in modern language.

Bible Read: Titus 3

## *-Status Report Day 152-*

*I* don't know how I would feel if all the letters I wrote were collected to create a set of books. Writing something that is not meant for all to see could lead those letters to not be suitable for the collection. But, at the same time, not knowing they would be used could keep the message purer.

It makes me wonder if there are any issues with the letters collected for the New Testament because of these things. What if some of the messages that were being given to these different churches weren't actual doctrine, but instead messages specifically for the recipients?

It doesn't matter much, the letters are in the Bible. It wasn't a part of the Bible that spoke much to me and overall it was a bit bland. But, I might be on religion overload at this point. I am having more and more trouble staying motivated at this point and hope there is something mind blowing just around the corner so I can finish strong.

Other things on my mind

1. Diet – I have been trying to lose weight... again
2. Other books – I am behind on reading because of the Bible and can't wait to catch up
3. Disney World – My sister is there right now #jealous

Bible Read: Philemon

## *Hebrews*

## *Magical Dam Box*

*A*s they recount much of the Old Testament in the Book of Hebrews it makes me question the building of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. There were very specific instructions on how to assemble these things, but why?

If I was asking someone to build a statue of me I can't imagine I would ask them to make it very specific. I wouldn't care so much about the statues clothes, pose, age, or even the material it was made of. But, with God, he told them exactly what to make, what to make it look like, what it should be made of, how to use it, what colors it should be...

When I think about it, it seems more like a blue print. What I mean is it seems as though it was not just a tent for God to go to or a box to hold some stuff. What if the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant actually did something? What if they were machines just as much as they were symbols?

Could it be possible that God had them build a device that could help direct the miracles that happened when the Ark was around? As much as this seems blasphemous, it makes more sense to me.

I also was wondering about the weight of the Ark. They carried it around with them everywhere they went, but it was large and made with lots of gold and heavy metals. How could they have possibly carried this thing around?

Not that I have any idea how heavy it would be, but I'm guessing not very light.

Bible Read: Hebrews 12

## *-Status Report Day 153-*

*I*t is interesting reading the Book of Hebrews. In it we are given a sermon about the happenings of the Old Testament in comparison to the New Testament.

This is the type of writing that I would have been bored by before, but after you have read the Old Testament and the Gospels it becomes a very valid and interesting diatribe.

It is largely about the differences in the covenants that were created by God and Jesus. He goes through what has changed since the covenant with Christ has been created.

As cool as it is to read about the things that I have been reading about, it is also strange to read a book that is referring to itself. I always considered the Bible as a single book as opposed to a collection, but the self reference proves it really isn't. It is a collection and should be looked at as such.

### New Testament Books Liked

Matthew

Luke

Titus

Hebrews

Bible Read: Hebrews

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*James*

## *You Could Have Said that at the Beginning*

*J*ames is getting all preachy and what does he have to say? He is telling us that just going to church and reading the Bible and claiming belief is not enough. He says that faith creates good deeds.

I understand this, but it would have really helped to hear this before reading the Bible. It seems like that would have been a great thing to focus on.

I say that tongue in cheek, but it is something that has been on my mind. I have had two people ask me how the Bible has transformed my life. The truth is, it hasn't much. I haven't changed what I do on daily basis other than read and write about the Bible.

I went on this journey to learn. I read the Bible to come to conclusions and answers. I didn't do it to become a better person necessarily.

But, even though I did not focus on it, I have had some life changing moments. I have had prayers answered. I have received guidance and direction. I have learned lessons both the easy and hard way since I started.

I think the Bible actually is transforming my life, but I didn't mean for it to. I just wanted to see what everyone saw in it. But, maybe that is it. Maybe it isn't the book that changes your life, maybe it just opens you up to those changes.

But, I am now thinking that I need to let the Bible transform my life in the ways that James mentions. He speaks of community and prayer for your neighbors. He talks about stopping boasting and giving praise to God for your fortunes. He speaks of relying on the kindness of others, letting the church help and not judging each other.

These are the same messages we have received throughout the Bible, but maybe now it is time to let these things affect me. Maybe

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that is why this book is at the end of the Bible and not the beginning.

I would have preferred at the beginning. I wouldn't feel like I was misfocused all this time.

Bible Read: James 5



## *-Status Report Day 154-*

*J*ames is the half brother of Jesus. As such I would have assumed he was an immediate follower of Christ, but from what I've read he was not.

He did make the change eventually, but he had his own doubts. I don't know why this is a surprise. If my sister claimed to be the second coming of Christ I would probably assume she had lost her mind. But, at the same time I would give her my attention and listen to what she had to say.

So, maybe James received a better message than others.

But, thinking about James being a half brother of Jesus... He is that because they have different fathers. But isn't God the father of all men? If so aren't we all half brothers of Jesus?

I know this sounds like a rib on Christianity, but I think it is a valid point. There is an amazing connection between siblings and with so many people feeling a deep connection with Christ it would make sense to me for them all to be his sibling.

Bible Left:

Peter  
John  
Jude  
Revelation

Bible Read: James

*Peter I & II*  
*John I, II, & III*  
*Jude*

## *Eye for an Eye or Lamb for a Lie*

*I* was talking to my next door neighbor the other day and he explained to me why Jesus was called the Lamb of God. It is because before Jesus people would sacrifice a lamb in their sin offering. After Jesus he was the sin offering for everyone who sinned.

This suddenly went from a strange name to a very beautiful one. But, it still does not explain to me why the only way forgiveness can be given for sin is through death.

As much as it seems like a great gift that God gave his only son for the forgiveness of everyone's sin it seems like a great punishment that sin can only be forgiven through death. I guess I can compare it to my own kids. If they mess up they get punished. It isn't for me, it is for them. If they do something wrong they need to learn not to do it. But, shouldn't the punishment for sin be a little less aggressive?

I guess the idea of killing an animal isn't that bad. But, I would think there should be some kind of sorrow felt for the animal. Otherwise, it is nothing more than a taxation. You kill an animal and your flock is smaller. But, if you kill the animal and feel for its demise and thank both God and the lamb for its sacrifice so you can be forgiven, maybe that works.

I don't know, but I think death was a little extreme for a punishment, especially when it comes to resting on the Sabbath.

Bible Read: Peter I 5

## *2,000 Years and Still Waiting*

*B*oth Peter and John speak about prophecy with the return of Christ.

Seeing how that is probably 50% of what I had heard of the Bible beforehand, it is about time it comes to the forefront.

Again, it seems like the people in the Bible are expecting the return of Christ back then. They speak of it being the end times and that they need to follow him so they will be glad to see him when he returns.

Obviously, 2,000 years later we are still waiting.

I think I was better able to accept the idea of the second coming before I read the Bible. Now, it feels more like a cult leader that never returned. I don't like to say that because I don't like to take shots at the religion, but with the apostles saying he is coming back and that they are in end times and that anti-christs have arrived. And, with Jesus having said that some of the men in that day would not taste death before he came back... It just seems like this part is either wrong or misinterpreted.

When Jesus was talking it seemed like he was talking about when he rose from the dead, but if that is the case we should have heaven on Earth now.

I seem to be having the opposite reaction to the Bible than I expected. Now, the Old Testament is making more sense than the New...

Bible Read: John I 5

## *-Status Report Day 156-*

*I* have butterflies in my stomach because I am almost done!

This has been a long journey, but I feel like I have learned a lot. I have learned all kinds of things I did not know about the Bible and realized that a lot of people who claim to be Christian are misinformed.

I have not had the overwhelming epiphany that made the whole thing suddenly make sense. I am still skeptical about the whole thing, well, maybe not the Old Testament as much as I was, but the story of Jesus being the Son of God.

But I realized that it could be that I am not ready. I know I can't do everything that Jesus said his followers must, so I can say I just am not ready to walk with Christ yet.

Opinion about this project now:

Confused

Disappointed

Exhausted

Bible Read: Jude

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## *Revelation*

## *-The End of the World is Confusing-*

**R**evelation is insane! This has a completely different feel to it than the rest of the Bible. And there is too much in there to write an entire entry on every question I have. So, instead I will just list everything...

Jesus is referring to God as someone other than himself. Is this saying he is not the embodiment of God?

The four living creatures sound like the same creatures that Ezekiel saw. Are they some sort of angel or demon or some other species like the Nephilim?

It keeps referring to the seven spirits of God. What is that? I only know of the God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus.

Out of all the scary things that happen, the seventh seal causes silence? That seems relieving. But it lasted for half an hour. These random numbers are killing me in this book. 4 living creatures, half an hour, 7 seals, trumpets, spirits, 24 elders, third of the trees...

God saves everyone with his seal on their foreheads. What is this? How do you get it? Is this like the binding of the Ten Commandments on your forehead?

Holy crap! Four angels killed 200 million armed people?

I think it is interesting that the beast is demanding people sin. By making them make graven images and then worship it.

I still don't understand the point of 666. What does that mean? It says it is the number of the beast, but what does that mean? If I said my

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number is 27 would anyone care?

It just gets crazy with people being crushed in wine presses and whores getting drunk on saint's blood. It is hard to follow.

Bible Read: Revelation 22



## *Status Report Day 157*

*T*here is both a lifting of responsibility as well as a loss of purpose.

I am finished with the Bible today.

There was not a huge revelation that I was hoping would happen. If anything there are more questions than I would have thought. I have come to believe in God. That is undoubted at this point. I have come to believe that Jesus existed. I believe his followers believed he was the son of God. But, I am not sure if they understood his teachings correctly.

I think there is a lot of good in the Bible. If you wanted to use the book as a guide to living a better life, it would work. But, there is more to it. It is a book of our history as seen by our ancestors. And, from that standpoint alone it is an interesting artifact. But, as an enlightening tool to transform your life, I didn't get that from it.

There have been some small changes in my life with prayer and how I think about others, but I have not devoted my life to Christ. I would say it is because I am not sure I understand it all or that I don't believe certain things, but those would be lies. I am not ready to make such devotion. There are many things in the Bible that I feel may be the right way to look at things, but I am not at a place in my life where I can do it. I hope that one day I can, but today I can't.

### Bible Stats:

Books Read: 66

Chapters Read: 1,189

Verses Read: 31,102

Words Read: 788,280

Days Reading: 157

Bible Read: The Bible

## *-A Year Older and Year Odder-*

*I*t has been a year since I finished the Bible and once again I feel like a backslider. I am not surprised, but maybe disappointed.

I was hoping for a huge epiphany that would transform my life, but it never happened. I had some eye opening experiences, but nothing that would change how I live.

The biggest surprise to me was finding a new understanding of the people who I thought were crazy before. The people who say God is an alien or that Jesus was psychic or that the Bible explains past civilizations of monsters, giants, or extra-terrestrials. I understand those people better now. The Bible seems to support all those claims.

The lesser surprise is the Bible has made me not understand the average Christian worse than before. The judgment of others, the belief in a heaven that is not in our dimension, and the lack of following the teachings of Christ are all things that make me feel like most Christians are completely misunderstanding the Bible.

I think the Old Testament spoke much louder to me. I think there are some very interesting insights and mentions of things that I never expected. It has made me want to try synagogue.

I have tried to keep the good habits and use what I learned to avoid the bad ones. I try to love everyone and be compassionate for humanity. I try to be less money obsessed and pay more attention to family.

My belief in God... It makes more sense to me that it is an alien race. It sounds crazy, but if he isn't from Earth, by definition he is an alien. I am thinking he is a lone being. I think he is from a race of beings, but that is just me.

My belief in the Bible... At this point I feel like the Bible is a good representation of the past. It seems to be written by people who did their best to interpret what was happening in their world.

My belief in time... It hasn't changed. I believe in a multi-

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world non-linear view of time.

My belief in Jesus... I don't think he was the traditional son of God. I think he was a man who understood things that other people don't. I believe he did many of the things that were attributed to him in the Bible, but I also think anyone else could have done them as well. I believe that he was able to form miracles. I believe that John the Baptist was able to form miracles. I believe that anyone today could form miracles. And, I think it is his teachings that could help us get there.