

Seeing Through God's Eyes

Discerning Biblical Wisdom

for Faithful Living

Chapters 1–5 with Reflection Questions

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1. Right Over Good

Once, there was a beggar who was hungry and searching for food. A preacher passed by, looked at him, and began to preach about the coming of Jesus, the importance of repentance, confession of sin, and belief in Christ, thumping his Bible against the beggar's head before departing. Another man passed by, saw the beggar's plight, went into a nearby store, bought some bread, returned, and gave it to him. The hungry beggar gobbled it up.

Who acted rightly here, and who did the good thing?

Clearly, the man who fed the beggar did the right thing. The beggar was physically hungry and needed bread, not spiritual nourishment.

James 2:8 (GNT) states, “You will be doing the *right* thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’”

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation of India and the largest democracy in the world, once remarked, “Even God cannot stand before a hungry man unless in bread’s form.”

You might be thinking, “Well, clearly Gandhi is wrong! Nothing is impossible for God. He can make a hungry man not feel hungry or feel full (physically) while he’s being preached to by the preacher. He could silence the mouths of those hungry lions when Daniel was thrown into a pit full of them!”

But the thing is, if God intervened, how would the preacher realise whether he did the right thing or the good thing? How would he feel if one day at home he came across James chapter 2? What good is it if the preacher has faith but no actions? (James 2:15-17)

According to Philippians 4:8 (GNT), we can infer that right things are good (or excellent) and praiseworthy things.

Now we understand that right things fall under the category of good things. So, if you’re doing the right thing, you’re doing the good thing. But if you’re doing a good thing, it doesn’t necessarily mean you’re doing the right thing! Interesting, isn’t it?

Sometimes, God requires us to do just the *right* thing to please Him. No dilly-dallying whatsoever. Doing the good thing could be outright disobedience and utterly wrong. One such case occurred in 1 Samuel chapter 15. During the war against the Amalekites, Samuel ordered King Saul and his men to go and “completely destroy everything...don’t leave a thing” (1 Samuel 15:3, GNT). However, they “spared” the life of King Agag of the Amalekites and “did not kill the best sheep and cattle, the best calves and lambs or anything else that

was *good*" (1 Samuel 15:9, GNT). They did so intending to offer the best sheep and cattle as a sacrifice. Samuel furiously admonished Saul, saying, "Which does the Lord prefer: obedience or offerings and sacrifices? It is better to obey Him than to sacrifice the best sheep to Him" (1 Samuel 15:22, GNT).

It seems the devil cunningly convinced Saul and his men that the sheep and cattle were good and worthy of being a pleasing sacrifice to God, which led them to disregard Samuel's direct orders, resulting in his downfall. Had Saul (a Benjamite and son of Kish) obeyed and done the right thing by not sparing King Agag and his family's life even for a little while, Haman in the book of Esther would not have existed about 500 years after the events of 1 Samuel chapter 15. I mention this because Haman was a descendant of Agag, as stated in Esther 3:1, while Mordecai was a Benjamite, just like King Saul and a descendant of Kish! The Amalekites were arch-nemeses of the Israelites ever since they were coming out of Egypt. They used to attack the Israelites from the rear and kill those who straggled behind. Moses gave special orders to the Israelites regarding the Amalekites: "When the Lord your God has given you the land and made you safe from all your enemies who live around you, be sure to kill all the Amalekites, so that no one will remember them any longer" (Deuteronomy 25: 17-19, 1 Samuel 15: 2, GNT). Just as the Amalekites hated the Israelites, their descendant, Haman, too hated and planned to destroy the Jews and wipe them out, but we see Esther intervening, resulting in Haman suffering the fate he had planned for the Jews - he and his sons were hanged from the gallows (Esther 9: 24 - 26, GNT). This is how brutal disobedience is, my friends. It reverberates across time. It's lethal. Just as one mistake in the Garden of Eden led to humanity's fall into sin and welcomed death, this small act of disobedience from Saul led to the Jews being precariously close to being wiped out during the time of Esther!

Sometimes, God requires only one thing, which is the right thing, and everything else is just unnecessary noise, like when Jesus visited the house of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42, GNT). Martha was "worried and troubled over so many things," but just one thing was needed from her – to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His teaching, which Mary did – choosing the *right* thing.

Jesus had little time on this planet. He could have been frantically preaching and healing people tirelessly without wasting any time. Yet, we see Jesus slipping away at times to pray alone at dawn or whenever He found some quiet time before going out to meet the crowds, preach the Kingdom of God, and heal them. He clearly had a massive responsibility on His shoulders, yet He found time to talk to His Father. Spurgeon states it clearly: "The way to get the revival is to begin at the Master's feet; you must go there with Mary, and afterwards you may work with Martha."

In 2014, I was an intern at a multispecialty hospital in Bangalore, India. As you know, multiple departments/specialties like Paediatrics, General Medicine, and Surgery have their respective heads of departments (HODs).

I was in the General Medicine department, working closely with and under the HOD of that department – a dignified, well-respected man who made his presence known wherever he went. One day, a patient in critical condition was brought into the emergency department. He had severe pneumonia, and his vitals were failing. He required oxygen supplementation as his lungs and trachea (windpipe) were filled with excess phlegm and mucus. His chest rose and fell rapidly and prominently. The HOD was consulted by the junior doctors for his expertise and guidance. He observed, assessed the patient's condition, reviewed his past medical history and medication, analysed, and calculated every possible way to alleviate the patient's symptoms and potentially prevent death by suffocation, but he realised that any attempt to intervene could cause even more pain to the patient.

For instance, if they considered performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on him, it would most definitely crush his ribcage and collapse his already failing lungs – exacerbating the situation.

After considering every option, in his wisdom and with all the knowledge and expertise at his disposal, and the pressing responsibility he had, he finally decided to sign a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) form.

Now, signing a DNR is a proper and professional way of stating that the patient should be left as he is (in this case, with maximum safe levels of oxygen supplementation) – untouched but monitored, and that any interventions from healthcare professionals (HCPs) could unavoidably bring him closer to death, potentially a violent one.

The HOD took the inquisitive and worried wife of the patient aside and explained the situation to her clearly and succinctly. She sobbed as she was consoled by her family members who had brought her husband to the hospital.

The HOD asked me to fill in the form just as he dictated. As an intern, I felt like I was writing a death sentence, as I had never encountered such a system before. It seemed like a way for doctors to wash the blood off their hands, similar to how Pontius Pilate did. As he dictated and I wrote, the DNR content felt like it said mercilessly, “It’s not in our hands anymore.” The HOD signed it, the wife signed it, and the chief superintendent of the hospital signed it too, as per protocol.

That afternoon, the patient died, but it wasn't a violent death. It wasn't good. It didn't seem good from any angle, even to you, I believe, as you read this still with pressing questions lingering at the back of your mind, but it was definitely right as I reflect on that DNR form I filled after all these years.

The Right Can Seem Wrong

Later that day, we were informed that the HOD was grilled and questioned by the superintendent of the hospital for more details regarding the signed DNR and the circumstances involved, in the presence of all the other department heads. As the hospital was fairly new at that time, they didn't want unnecessary attention from the police and the media. However, everything was fine with no red flags, and everything was all right.

You see, the right things can be questionable.

The right things can be strange and hard to comprehend.

The right things might stretch our minds.

Doing the right thing could even mislead us to think like how people believed John the Baptist "had a demon in him" (Luke 7:33, 34 GNT) and that Jesus was a "glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcasts." Yet, both of them were doing the right things – leading thousands of people to repentance, preparing the way for the Messiah, teaching, working, loving, and dying for them like no one ever had, respectively.

People may even criticise us for doing the right thing, but we must keep doing them, for John states in 1 John 2:29 (GNT) – "...everyone who does what's right is God's child," so let us love as Jesus loved. The fact of life is no one can please everyone. May we seek wisdom from above to discern what's right in His eyes as we live our lives here on earth.

Reflection Questions:

- Identify a "good" that has recently led you astray – what one nudge from Samuel might realign it?
- In your own Martha style, what is a "one thing" pause that could settle the whirlwind today?
- Reflecting on that DNR weight, where is a "right" in your days that still feels heavy? How might mercy reframe the burden?

2. From Disappointment to Devotion

In 2017, Bradley Wright, one of the authors at patheos.com published an article that caught my eye—a series on a study of religious deconversion. He discusses four general explanations for deconversion based on analyses of 50 online testimonies posted by former Christians, one of which is a failed relationship with God.

He notes that about half of the writers expressed sentiments that, in some way, God had failed them by not doing what they thought He should. "Unanswered prayers" broke their relationship with God.

One of the testimonies in this category was from a young man raised in a Baptist church, who epitomised this feeling of failure when he wrote about God not answering his prayers regarding family difficulties.

He wrote: "The first time I questioned faith was when my grandmother shrivelled up in front of me for six months due to cancer. I was 13, and my mother and father were getting a divorce. My father told me I should have been aborted. I prayed to God, but nothing fails like prayers."

Another, a former Roman Catholic, talked about God's inaction during his teenage years: "I prayed and prayed, and things never got better... in fact, they got worse. So, I was like fine... if God can turn His back on me... I can do the same." **Error! Reference source not found.**
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There were many other testimonies the article mentioned that made me feel sad. How much more sorrowful God must have felt when they were written!

These testimonies shouldn't be a surprise. We are in the end of days, where the Bible mentions (predicts) in various places that "many will give up their faith..." (Matthew 24:10, GNT), "...some people will abandon the faith in later times..." (1 Timothy 4:1, GNT).

With that said, many of my prayers have gone unanswered, whether reaching for the stars or delving into the deepest abysses known to man. Often, I found myself nudged or redirected to pursue different paths, much like a shepherd guiding their sheep. I seldom liked it, but I learnt to align my plans with God's, recognising Him as my Creator and understanding that I am nothing without Him. You see, I have complained, shed tears countless times, soaked my pillow at night, and awokened with swollen eyelids. However, I also realised that complaining achieves nothing and often exacerbates the situation.

Whenever the word "complain" comes to mind, the ancient Israelites also come along with it and place themselves in my mental playground. It's amusing, but that's how the Spirit of God is supposed to help you. After all, that's His name—"the Helper," according to John 14:26 (GNT). You see, He's the one who helps you in drawing parallels, discerning, and learning from the Word of God. He's also the Advocate—one who recommends. That easy access to the Word of God or the exact and instant recommendation of an example, Bible character, or section from the Word of God during what you're experiencing comes through meditating on His Word and constantly ruminating on it. Now, how can He, the Advocate, recommend something from His Word if you don't or can't find time to help yourself by "reading" the Word?

The Peril of Rebellion

Speaking of the Israelites, who were led out of Egypt by Moses after centuries of tyranny, even though they had seen the awesome and wondrous things that God did with His "strong hand" (Deuteronomy 6:21, NLT), they were stubborn; they rebelled, complained, and were disloyal (Hebrews 3:8-11). We see that God made a solemn promise that He would never let them enter the land where He would have given them rest (Deuteronomy 1:34, 35). Because they complained, God refused to listen to their prayers. It would have taken just 11 days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea, yet because of their actions, they had to wander aimlessly for 40 years in the wilderness!

You may be a young person who has lost your mother to cancer, or you may be a father who has lost your only son in an accident, or you may be in a failed marriage, or you could be a student who failed a major academic test. You might be expressing sorrow and grief while trying to find answers. Lamenting is good. We see Jeremiah doing that in the book of Lamentations. Rick Warren, in one of his devotionals, says, "When you complain *about* God, that's an act of rebellion. But when you complain *to* God, that's an act of worship. You can complain *to* God all you want. God can handle it! He can handle your rage, resentment, regrets, and accusations—because He already knows it all."

Enduring in Faith: Models of Steadfast Trust

Yes, that's right. Lamenting to God is good. It's an act of worship. In the Bible, we see Job lamenting. He was once the most righteous person on this planet, and God loved him and blessed him immensely. He had practically everything. He was probably like modern-day Elon Musk—richer than the richest. And in

a jiffy, he lost everything! All his ten children (seven sons and three daughters) died, he lost all his possessions, and he himself suffered from a dreadful skin disease.

At one point, in Job 2:9 (GNT), his wife approaches him and says, “Why don’t you curse God and die?”

And then, Job responds, “When God sends us something good, we welcome it. How can we complain when He sends us trouble?”

We don’t see Job complaining or clenching his fists against God or turning his back on Him. We see him persistently asking questions and affirming God’s attributes. He knew God was still loving, all-powerful, a healer, always listening, and faithful. Most importantly, he kept trusting God.

You might be thinking, “This is tough. I can’t do this.” But we have the Word of God, which is a guide and a lamp to our feet (Psalms 119:105, NLT). We have individuals who have been through worse things than most of us, yet they kept trusting Him. And because they exhibited unwavering faith through thick and thin, the writer of Hebrews says in 13:7: “Remember your former leaders, who spoke God’s message to you. Think back on how they lived and died, and imitate their faith.”

Let us consider the story of another man, Abraham. The Bible says that Abraham was God’s friend because he was completely faithful. The Lord called him once and promised him: “I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing...” (Genesis 12:2, GNT).

The following verses state that Abraham was 75 years old. He was married to Sarai and had no children yet. Imagine living your life without having children for 75 years! What’s even more extraordinary is that Abraham became a father when he was 100, says Genesis 21:5 (GNT)! 100 years! He had to wait 25 more years for God’s promise to be fulfilled! Again, the Bible never says that Abraham, during this period, grew weary, lost all hope, filled himself with disbelief, complained to God, or blamed God.

Now this is very important: “Abram put his trust in the Lord, and because of this, the Lord was pleased with him and accepted him” (Genesis 15:6, GNT).

Towards Unwavering Hope

What do we learn from the accounts of the Israelites, Job, and Abraham?

What can we infer from their stories?

We learn how tragic it can be when we test God's patience like the Israelites did. We see that God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation (James 1:12), as Job experienced in his life. We also see that it is important to trust God and His timing and have hope in Him alone, as Abraham did, even though it took many years for His promise to be fulfilled. We must strive not to get misled or go astray by Satan's schemes. Peter urges us to stand firm against him and to be strong in our faith, not to have a weak mentality (1 Peter 5:9). He goes on to say that our family of believers undergoes the same kind of suffering. It is important to have an accountability partner when we're feeling down or when we feel we are unable to see the horizon. Communication is key. Meeting together is key (Hebrews 10:25). Having a community or church that looks out for one another's interests (Philippians 2:4) could really help us all stay united since we are all part of one body in Christ. Citing the consequences that the Israelites faced when they complained and rebelled against God, the writer of Hebrews warns us to "...be careful that no one has a heart so evil and unbelieving that he will turn away from the living God." He adds, "...you must help one another every day..." (Hebrews 3:12, 13).

My dear friends, let us not grow weary in this cruel world while we face dire circumstances. Let us not lose hope because Jesus did not lose hope while He was among us. For if we are not in Him, we will be like those in this world—fruitless and discarded like a useless branch, gathered into a pile to be burned.

Reflection Questions:

- Think back to a prayer that felt like it vanished into the void. What small shift in perspective, viewing it as a shepherd's nudge, might alleviate the ache today?
- Recall a time when your lament turned to worship (or had the potential to do so). How might voicing a raw "why" to God this week create space for His whisper?
- Imagine Job or Abraham in your position. What single trait of their trust feels like an outstretched hand? How could adopting it for just one hour change your outlook?
- Who in your circle is also navigating these wilderness experiences? What simple "me too" conversation could help strengthen your connections a bit tighter?
- If hope's flicker is dimming right now, which verse from their stories could you hold close—like a lamp for your next step, no more?

3. Even If He Doesn't

“.... If the God whom we serve is able to save us from the blazing furnace and from your power, then he will. But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty may be sure that we will not worship your god, and we will not bow down to the gold statue that you have set up.” Daniel 3:17, 18 (GNT)

These words were spoken by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (“the trio”) in response to King Nebuchadnezzar, who was filled with rage at them for not obeying his direct order: “Bow down and worship the golden statue. If you do not, you will immediately be thrown into a blazing fire.”

If you read the above reference from the Bible repeatedly, you will sense their supreme, unwavering faith in God.

It is quite challenging to say, “even if” when we are embroiled in difficult situations or when we are about to make a significant decision. Although we may not be in life-and-death situations like the trio or like the many missionaries who travelled around the globe to spread the Good News and lost their precious lives for His sake, we often fail to demonstrate unwavering faith through our actions. This is largely due to our flawed human nature. We tend to view situations through our own eyes rather than through God’s eyes!

The Peril of Bold Words Without Deeds

We find a person in the Scriptures who spoke in a manner similar to that of “the trio” but could not back it up with actions.

When Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crows twice, he emphatically states in Mark 14:31 (NLT): “No! Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!” We know what transpired next. We are aware of the regret that Peter felt after denying Him three times that same night.

We possess a human nature that fervently endeavors to live boldly for God, regardless of the circumstances, yet we almost always fall short. We make statements like, “Yes, I can do that,” or “There’s no way I’m leaving your side,” but executing such commitments perfectly is often difficult. Pride and human resolve frequently emerge when we are impulsive and act on our own. What could be the reason for this? What was the defining factor that distinguished the trio from Peter?

In the first chapter of the second letter to Timothy, Paul encourages him by affirming that he possesses the same “genuine faith” that first filled his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. He reminds Timothy

to “fan into the flames” the spiritual gift God has bestowed upon him. Paul states, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline,” and urges him never to be ashamed to tell others about the Lord. I reference Paul’s conversation with Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5-8 (NIV) to illustrate that being filled with the Holy Spirit enables us to exhibit our Godly nature to the world and to act righteously during challenging times and situations. You may be pondering, “Were the trio filled with the Spirit when they confronted the wrath of King Nebuchadnezzar? I thought the Holy Spirit did not exist in the Old Testament.”

The Holy Spirit has existed since the beginning. As noted in Genesis 1:2, He is part of the Trinity. There were instances in which several biblical figures were filled with the Spirit and accomplished remarkable feats, such as Gideon in Judges 6:34 and Samson in Judges 14:6, 19, and 15:14. Although the Book of Daniel does not explicitly state that the trio were “filled with the Spirit” or that “the Spirit took control of them” prior to being cast into the furnace, we know that God was with Daniel and the trio, and “gave them knowledge and skill...” (Daniel 1:17, GNT).

A Personal Stand in the Shadow of Idolatry

As a Hospital Pharmacy Intern, I was expected to work alongside doctors during ward rounds, providing bedside patient counselling among other tasks to develop my practical skills. A few other interns and I were assigned to the hospital’s Pediatrics department for three months. The hospital was newly built, with parts of the site still under construction. Two months into our posting in that department, we received news that a separate physiotherapy rehabilitation centre for children and adolescents would be opening soon. We were all excited, as this would provide additional treatment for children with musculoskeletal disorders and allow us to build rapport with the physiotherapists as we worked alongside them. As this was considered a sign of progress for the entire hospital, the department head suggested that a dedication ceremony be held.

The Hindu dedication ceremonies in India involve setting up an idol of a god or goddess, performing rituals, offering garlands of flowers, burning incense, presenting special food to the idol, and distributing that food among the department doctors and other paramedical professionals. The entrance to the rehabilitation center was also decorated in accordance with Hindu cultural customs. Everything appeared celebratory. All attendees were expected to leave their footwear outside as a sign of respect and devotion towards the idol inside, and everyone was invited to accept the food offered to the idol and depart in an orderly manner as a blessing.

As a God-fearing Christian, leaving my footwear outside and entering the premises would be perceived as an act of idolatry. If I entered without leaving my footwear, the doctors might view it as a deliberate act of disrespect, potentially resulting in significant backlash. Furthermore, accepting food that had been submitted to the idol would be considered a sin and a serious error of Biblical proportions. Conversely, refusing the food could lead the doctors to think I was disregarding the rules and traditions of Hindu culture. I found myself in a distressing situation, caught in a complex dilemma that put my internship in the Pediatrics department in a precarious position.

I recall taking a moment to speak to God in the adjacent room about the dilemma I was facing. I could feel my hands becoming clammy as I remembered that I had hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating due to stress) at that time, particularly in my palms and soles. I reassured myself that it was not wrong to refuse to comply with their requests solely based on their religious traditions and rules. All I needed to do was inform the department head of the reason I could not participate in the rehabilitation center dedication ceremony – to explain that I am a Christian with my own beliefs and to politely decline involvement in any of the proceedings.

All I needed to do was stand firm in my identity as seen by God, and the rest would follow. I was aware that my posting at the department could be jeopardized as a result, and I felt anxious. I approached the department head and explained why I could not take part, and to my surprise, she was completely understanding. She encouraged me not to waste time sitting idly and directed me to the hospital pharmacy to assist the head pharmacist in dispensing medication to outpatients.

What I learnt that day was the importance of standing firm, no matter how challenging it may be, reminding myself of my identity in Christ, and not to stress too much, as I share the burden with Jesus. He leads us by holding our hands, and even if things do not go according to plan, everything will ultimately be fine.

Reflecting on that experience today, I recognize that I felt more like a child of God, determined to proclaim my allegiance to Him, regardless of the outcome. As Paul mentioned to Timothy, being filled with the Spirit empowers you to be courageous and to stand up for God.

Refined by Fire: The Purpose of Trials

When trials confront us, we must not succumb to overwhelm, for it is through these challenges that we are transformed into valuable instruments of God. We need to recognise that God tests us to determine whether we possess “genuine” faith that enables us to endure. Peter’s first letter states in 1:7, 8 (GNT) that the purpose of trials “is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure.” Thus, trials serve to assess the authenticity of our faith in God.

Furthermore, Ecclesiastes provides insight into God’s role in our triumphs and tribulations in 7:14 (GNT): “When things are going well for you, be glad, and when trouble comes, just remember God sends both happiness and trouble; you never know what is going to happen next.”

One of the most profound tests by God is recorded in Genesis chapter 22.

It begins with: “Sometime later, God tested Abraham....” God instructed him to take his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved dearly, and go to the land of Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice.

Imagine being married around the age of 40, receiving a promise from God that you would have many descendants at age 75 (while your wife is no longer able to conceive at that age), and finally having a child at 100. On top of that, God asks you to sacrifice that only child whom you love so deeply!

Abraham did not flinch. He demonstrated unwavering faith. He ascended the mountain, bound his son, and raised the knife to sacrifice him.

You see, Abraham believed in the promise God made to him when he was approximately 75. He must have thought to himself, “*Even if* God takes Isaac from me, He will provide...” It is noteworthy that in verse 14, after this profound “test” of faith, Abraham named the place, “The Lord Provides.”

Do we possess that kind of faith in our lives?

Enduring Legacy: Horatio Spafford's Lament

Allow me to introduce another notable figure in faith, whose compelling and poignant true story is recounted by Kenneth W. Osbeck in his book *101 Hymn Stories*. Horatio G. Spafford suffered the tragic loss of his four daughters in a shipwreck. Rather than succumbing to bitterness or resentment towards God, he chose to move forward and composed a beautiful hymn that is widely known and sung in churches around the world today.

Horatio G. Spafford was born on 20th October 1828 in New York. As a young man, he established a successful legal practice in Chicago. Alongside his financial achievements, he maintained a strong commitment to Christian activities and enjoyed a close and active relationship with D. L. Moody and other evangelical leaders of his time.

Some months prior to the Chicago Fire of 1871, Spafford invested heavily in real estate along the shore of Lake Michigan, and his holdings were devastated by the disaster. Subsequently, he lost his four-year-old son to scarlet fever. In an effort to provide rest for his wife and four daughters, as well as to assist Moody and Sankey in one of their campaigns in Great Britain, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in November 1873. However, due to unexpected last-minute business developments, he was required to remain in Chicago, and he sent his wife and four daughters ahead as scheduled on the *S.S. Ville du Havre*. He intended to follow in a few days. On November 22, the ship was struck by the *Locearn*, an English vessel, and sank within twelve minutes. Several days later, the survivors were finally landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, “Saved alone.” Shortly thereafter, Spafford departed by ship to join his grieving wife. It is believed that, while at sea near the area where his four daughters had drowned, Spafford penned these words, which profoundly encapsulate his personal grief: “When sorrows like sea billows roll...” Notably, however, Spafford’s hymn does not dwell on the theme of life’s sorrows and trials; rather, it focuses in the third stanza on the redemptive work of Christ and, in the fourth stanza, anticipates His glorious Second Coming. From a human perspective, it is remarkable that one could endure such profound personal tragedies and sorrows as Horatio Spafford did and still assert with such convincing clarity, “It is well with my soul.”²

This man’s story differs somewhat from Abraham’s. He lost his four daughters, yet he maintained his belief in the “redemptive work of Christ,” as the author notes. Today, he remains an inspiration for us to declare, “Even if...” in the face of trials and tragedies, as he did.

The Christian journey is often marked by unexpected twists and turns, with triumphs and tragedies interspersed with trials and temptations. It is never easy to lead a life of unwavering faith like Abraham, Horatio Spafford, and many others whose stories we may not know. Jesus also demonstrated during His time on earth the importance of resisting the sinful nature that accompanies suffering.

Imitating the Faithful: A Call to Christlikeness

About 30 years after denying Jesus, having conversed with Jesus about tending to His sheep, enduring imprisonment, and facing persecution on multiple occasions, Peter writes a letter to the persecuted

Christians in Rome: “For God called you to do good, *even if* it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21, NLT).

Do you recognise the transformation in Peter from his former self to the new? The change that Peter underwent after being filled with the Spirit cannot be fully grasped through human wisdom—it is akin to Saul becoming Paul. The spirit-filled life prioritises eternal hope in God over the transient suffering of this world.

It is essential for us as Christians to take a step back and observe how these great men of God lived and thrived boldly as His children, regardless of the cost. We, too, must strive to respond with “even if” when challenges arise; failing to do so makes us akin to the world, and what value is there in emulating the world?

Therefore, as the writer of Hebrews states in 13:7 (GNT): “...Think back on how they (former leaders/ancestors) lived and died, and imitate their faith,” let us learn to follow in their footsteps, keeping our eyes on Jesus and the reward that awaits those who dedicate their lives solely to glorifying His name.

Reflection Questions:

- Recall a trial where surrender felt impossible—what one attribute of God (e.g., His provision as with Abraham) might you affirm today to echo the trio's resolve?
- Consider a current decision evoking Peter's early bravado—how could a brief pause for prayer, as Jesus modelled, invite the Spirit's power for authentic action?
- Drawing from 1 Peter 2:21, note a recent hardship mirroring Christ's—how might viewing it as refining "genuine faith" (1 Peter 1:7) shift your perspective towards endurance?
- Like Spafford's hymn amid loss, list three "even if" truths from Scripture (e.g., Jehovah-Jireh in Genesis 22:14)—how could voicing one in prayer foster rest in God's redemptive work?

4. Patience and Procrastination

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines the terms “Patience” and “Procrastination” as follows:

Patience (noun): The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious.

Procrastination (noun): The action of delaying or postponing something.

I hope by now, we are all cognisant of the extraordinary levels of patience demonstrated by figures such as Abraham, Job, and others in the Bible as they endured numerous tests and trials. While we strive to emulate the lives of our ancestors, we often find the standard they set to be daunting as we navigate our own lives. We frequently find ourselves good at enduring long queues at the café or sitting in traffic on a Friday evening without a hint of displeasure, as we understand what awaits us and have adapted to these circumstances.

But what happens when we find ourselves waiting for something we have desired for an extended period, and it feels as though time has come to a standstill? We may begin to feel overwhelmed, our shoulders drooping, uncertain of how to occupy our minds during this period.

God may have promised you something through His Word, and while you are confident in this promise, doubts may creep in about whether it will ever come to fruition. Hope and trust in God can begin to feel as fragile as candle flames flickering in a breeze.

It is important to recognise that the trust and hope we place in God fuel our patience to receive what has been promised. We worship a faithful God who is a fulfiller of promises. We can always seek refuge in His Word regarding His divine faithfulness; as the writer of Hebrews notes in 6:17, “To those who were promised, God wanted to make it clear that he would never change his purpose.” It is entirely possible to lose hope and trust in God due to the distractions of this world, similar to Peter's experience while walking on water towards Jesus in Matthew 14:29-30. The devil excels at playing mind games, leading us to succumb to temptation and our sinful nature. Consequently, when trials and tribulations come knocking at our door as we await the fulfilment of God's promises in our lives, we may become annoyed or anxious, which often displeases God.

Our own sufferings can lead us to our sinful nature and ultimately to our downfall, handing the victory over to the devil. While it may not always be apparent, this is a carefully orchestrated chain reaction of thoughts, emotions, and actions.

When we begin to feel frustrated, we may grow weary and start complaining, which can lead to giving up and straying from our path or becoming disobedient. Disobedience is a violation of the law, which constitutes sin, and sin ultimately leads to death (Romans 6:23).

We must remember that God watches over us every second of the day, fully aware of our levels of patience. He teaches us the art of patience under trials through endurance, as Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 1:8 (GNT), “keeping you (us) firm till the end.” Romans 8:29 (NLT) tells us that God desires for us to become like Him through Jesus, to be part of His family as His children. But what kind of child of God does not embody godly characteristics (fruit of the Spirit)?

God does not solely wish for us to develop patience in our Christian journey; He desires for us to bear all the fruits mentioned in Galatians 5:22. This often involves placing us in situations or around people that encourage our growth. If we lack self-control, we may be placed in circumstances where we must learn to manage our emotions or desires. Equally, He teaches us to find joy even when our surroundings appear bleak.

It is crucial to understand that becoming like Him is not achievable through our strength alone; it is God who works within us continually, providing us with the desire and power to do what pleases Him (Philippians 2:13).

It is common to have questions such as, “How do we wait on God while simultaneously distracting our minds from the devil's attacks?” or “How do we cultivate hope and trust in God to enhance our patience?”

Below are a few strategies that I find helpful when I feel stagnant in my Christian walk of faith:

1. Count my blessings:

It is true that God has instilled in us a desire to know the future (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We are often eager to discover what lies ahead. While hope and anticipation are positive, it is equally vital to pause occasionally and reflect on the past, recognising the mighty works God has accomplished in our lives. This perspective should characterise our Christian journey. We must acknowledge that He has always been with us, guiding us at every step, and will continue to do so. Remember His loving kindness and compassion that surround

us daily, providing for our needs. We should surrender our burdens to Him (Psalms 55:22), for He is the source of our rest (Matthew 11:28). In doing so, we cultivate a sound mind and experience the divine peace that transcends understanding. Praying daily—not only for the fulfilment of our desires but also with genuine gratitude—can be immensely beneficial. Moreover, while praying, it is crucial to believe that He has already granted us what we have requested.

2. Dwell in His Word:

Hebrews 4:12 (GNT) states, “The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword...It judges the desires and thoughts of man’s heart.”

Jesus instructs us not merely to listen to His words but to obey them; otherwise, we risk perishing like the foolish man who builds his house on sand (Matthew 7:26, GNT).

We should not simply read or listen to His Word and then proceed to go on living our lives. As James advises in 1:22-23 (GNT), we must not deceive ourselves in this manner but rather put His teachings into practice. We should meditate on His Word, allowing it to reveal its profound truths about how to navigate this world as mere strangers on our way to our promised destination. We need to arm ourselves with this mighty sword provided by the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) to combat the devil. In doing so, we enable God to guide us in all our endeavours and grant us victory.

3. Never procrastinate:

This is perhaps the most overlooked aspect by many contemporary Christians who wait on God yet take no action themselves! Each of us has been gifted by God in unique ways, with different talents that can be used to assist those around us and glorify Him.

As we wait for God's timing to fulfil His promises in our lives, we must diligently utilise our talents to bring Him joy. The Bible states in James 4:17 (GNT), “...the person who does not do the good he knows he should do is guilty of sin.”

Casper ten Boom, a hardworking Swedish watchmaker, did not hesitate to provide shelter and protection to Jews being hunted down by German soldiers during WWII, resulting in his arrest and imprisonment in concentration camps. He believed it was God's calling to assist them, regardless of the consequences. God must have been pleased with him, as Casper believed in the saying, “Service to man is service to God.”³

We need to shift our focus from ourselves to the betterment of others. Patience does not entail waiting on God all day without engaging in other activities. We must overcome our complacency, stand firm, and begin to reap, for Jesus states that “the harvest is large” (Matthew 9:37, GNT). The devil is cunning and can easily confuse us between patience and procrastination. We must not fall for this deception. Instead, we should pray for God's guidance to fulfil His will, recognising that we do not belong to ourselves but to Him alone, as He redeemed us with His own life on the cross. The devil's attacks can be so relentless that they drain our energy and enthusiasm for God. We must seek His grace during our moments of weakness, for His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9, GNT).

I acknowledge that figures like Abraham, Job, and many other biblical heroes have set exceptionally high standards for Christian living. We must always strive to endure our present sufferings without succumbing to frustration. Let us be filled with eagerness and hope to serve Him wholeheartedly, so that one day we may share in His glory for eternity.

Reflection Questions:

- What is one past "mighty work" from God that still brings a smile to your face? How might acknowledging it today steady your wait?
- In a situation where delay is challenging, what is a small "do it now" step—perhaps a kind word or a passage of Scripture—that could lighten the atmosphere?
- Who in your circle requires assistance today? Note one way your gifts could alleviate their burdens.
- If hope feels fragile, what promise from His Word could you whisper back to Him this week as fuel for your spirit?

5. Seeing as God Sees (Part 1)

Praying bold prayers is essential. Asking God to help us perceive everything through His eyes should be a part of our daily conversation with Him. Why this specific request? He created us and desires for us to become like Him, and we must yearn to emulate Him. Our worldly human perspective is flawed, opinionated, and judgmental. We do not view things, people, and situations as God sees them. Practising this according to His Word and meditating upon it assists and guides us in viewing matters from His perspective. In this chapter, I outline some insights I have learned or discerned in detail that may help answer some pressing questions you might have. Remember, the Word is God Himself, and meditating upon His Word with the Spirit's guidance will reveal much about Him. Do this consistently

(i) Where did God come from?

"There are some things that our Lord our God has kept secret..." Deuteronomy 29:29 (GNT)

*"For God in His wisdom **made it impossible for people to know Him** by means of their own wisdom...For what seems to be **God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom...**" 1 Corinthians 1:21, 25 (GNT)*

Sometimes, when your mind is like a clean slate without any scribbles, questions like these arise unexpectedly. It is akin to the creative mind at work while you are showering early in the morning.

Do not be disheartened after reading the aforementioned Bible references. Keep reading. You will likely gain some wisdom even if you do not ultimately understand the origins of God. You might even prepare yourself to explain this kind of mind-boggling question to someone else. Who knows? After all, it is important to look through God's eyes rather than merely our own!

Now, let's say you created or invented a robot. You give the robot arms like those of humans and wheels that swivel for feet, with a wide base to enable it to move around the house freely without tripping or falling easily.

Then, you assign it a purpose — it must sweep the floor, mop, wash the dishes, dry them, systematically arrange them in the cupboard, do laundry, fold the clothes, and organise them in the shelves or closet.

Now, does this robot need to know your date of birth, where you studied, or who your parents are? No, right? It's unnecessary. What would it do with that information? Would it tighten its nuts and bolts, oil itself, and perhaps start a rebellion?

Let's consider another example. Let's think about humans in this context, rather than a robot.

Imagine you have a child. You literally created them — all the flesh and bones — it's your child, and they are now 2 or 3 years old. Does the child need to know your date of birth? What would the child do with that knowledge? Does it hold any significance for their childish, innocent mind? All they want to do is eat dirt and dance to the tune of "*Baby Shark*". Even if you provide that child with your personal information, are they capable of making any sense of it?

Simply put, if God one day decided to tell us where He came from, our minds wouldn't be ready (in fact, they'll never be ready!), and our minds are incapable of understanding the depth of the information He would provide about Himself. It is akin to a carnivorous animal (such as a tiger) eating grass for the first time only to vomit it out later, as it is incapable of digesting it. The knowledge He provides about Himself could be 100 or even 1000 times more complex than a Christopher Nolan film. Who knows?

A couple of questions may arise in your mind now.

For instance, "What about the scientific experiments being conducted to determine whether God exists?" "Do you think scientists will one day be able to finally resolve this mind-boggling question of God's origins?"

My answer is: No.

Why?

Science is a term coined by humans. If you ask Google, "Define Science," it states, "Science is the study of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment."

Now, God created humans, and humans coined the term Science. Doesn't that imply that God *indirectly* created science as well? Consider this: He created EVERYTHING, didn't He?

In conclusion, can a robot, a child, or even science explain their creator's origins?

Only if the *creator* provides the answer and the *created* are capable of understanding, discerning, and properly digesting the information provided. Then, yes, definitely, yes.

Has God provided information in the Bible regarding His origins?

Unfortunately, no.

In fact, He has made it impossible for us to know Him, as indicated by the Biblical references mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

(ii) Where is God in all the chaos?

Mass shootings, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, famine, and deadly diseases are occurring all around the world as I write this. Approximately 100 people die every minute. Since all these events were foretold and predicted to occur and intensify in the end times, we cannot blame God; He is not permitting these occurrences to happen, nor is He turning His face away while conditions on Earth deteriorate.

The Bible states in Romans 6:23 (NIV), “The wages of sin is death.”

The aforementioned calamities exist because sin exists in this world. Consequently, because sin exists, death exists. So, who introduced sin into this world?

Recall the time when God instructed in the Garden of Eden, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”? (Genesis 2:17, NIV)

Unfortunately, we did not listen. We disobeyed a direct command from God. Thus, with sin came death into this world - death manifesting as mass shootings, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, famine, and deadly diseases.

God has always been present, observing everything unfold. He granted us free will, but we chose to sin. In simple terms, we inhabit a land of the dead (the world) and our objective is to reach the Land of the Living (heaven), where there is no sickness, pain, suffering, sorrow, grief, disease, or death, and to reunite with our loving Creator.

Only through His abundant grace and mercy is there still balance in this world — the sun rises and sets every day; you woke up today to read this, with your heart continuing to beat and your lungs expanding and contracting in your chest involuntarily.

Be glad and thankful to God that His mercies are new every morning.

(iii) God, Time, and Humans

We have already established that God is sovereign over everything. He created everything — including time and humans.

The moment He created light and separated it from darkness, He initiated time (Genesis 1:4-5). Since He created it, He exists outside of it; He is neither influenced by it nor controlled by it. Thus, He remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8 GNT) — meaning God does not age and has no expiry date (Hebrews 1:12b). He is immortal and everlasting!

Since He exists outside of time, it may be something tangible to Him. I firmly believe He perceives it as a person would a freshly picked apple. He can carefully examine the spots on its skin, cut it open — He can do virtually anything with it.

As for us humans, we were created in His image. Like God, we initially had no concern for time — none whatsoever. The past, present, and future were all before us, open and unhidden, until one day we disobeyed, and sin and death entered, transforming us into mortals.

We now live *in* time and are surrounded and influenced by it. We view it like a tourist exploring a city, admiring all the ancient, spectacular architecture. We age. One day we are born, and the next, we die. We possess a past, a present, and a future that we cannot fully perceive, and we cannot halt time.

You may be thinking, “I wish I had that kind of God-like control over time...” We could have that control too. Trust me. Only if we are His true children of God.

If you are a child of God, it means God is your Father, and you love, trust, and depend on Him completely and wholeheartedly, just as a child does with its parents. Only then will you be able to view time as God does.

This means you won't be concerned about marrying at 40 or 50 and having children at around 70 or 80. You'll trust that God will work everything out in one way or another, and you will possess incredible patience for things to unfold in your life and for God's promises to be fulfilled. Even if they do not occur during your lifetime, you will be at peace with it, just as Abraham did not live long enough to see the promise of multitudes of descendants fulfilled.

He is likely now joyfully observing all his descendants walking the surface of this planet, signifying God's promise coming to fruition (Hebrews 11:11–13).

Therefore, trust in God is essential.

Trust in God as Abraham did.

Let your trust be innocent and *childlike*. If we do not love and trust Him as little children do, and instead possess a love that is *childish*, how can we expect to receive His kingdom? How can we enter it? (Luke 18:16, 17).

(iv) The Image of God

I believe that God's DNA is present in all living things He has created, particularly in humans, as He breathed His life-giving breath into us (Genesis 2:7, GNT). He made us in His image, and we resemble Him (Genesis 1:26-27, GNT). Although we have fallen into sin, which has obscured His divine image within us, His mark on our hearts—though faded—remains. This is evident in the qualities and attributes we possess that demonstrate we were made by our Creator, resembling Him and created for Him. These innate human traits reflect God's character:

· Love for One Another

Our natural desire for deep relationships and community reflects the relational nature of the triune God, where love exists in community rather than solitude (John 17:21-23, NIV). In the Garden of Eden, humanity was designed for harmonious fellowship, first with God and then with each other, without any isolation. Even after the Fall, this desire remains as a divine echo, drawing us toward covenantal connections that hint at eternal communion. Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV) commands us to love God with all our being, which extends to unneighborly love in Leviticus 19:18 (NIV) ("Love your neighbour as yourself"), a principle Jesus affirms as central (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV). 1 John 4:7-8 (NIV) states, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." This innate social impulse thus bears witness to our creation in the image of a loving Creator.

· **Craving What the Future Holds**

Humanity's quest to explore eternity, mortality, and the origins of the universe stems from an innate awareness of timeless existence, unmarred by decay in Eden (Genesis 2:17, where death enters only through disobedience). Before the Fall, humans were immortal, unbound by time's entropy, much like God's eternal nature (Psalm 90:2). This longing—expressed through philosophical inquiries or scientific pursuits—indicates a soul oriented toward the infinite, resisting the finality of death and seeking restoration to that original state. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (GNT) states, "He has set the right time for everything. He has given us a desire to know the future, but never gives the satisfaction of fully understanding what He does." This "desire to know the future" fuels our forward gaze. Hebrews 11:1-3 (GNT) connects faith to understanding "what cannot be seen" and the origins of creation, while Romans 8:19-23 describes creation's groaning for redemption, paralleling our innate hope in resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-54), affirming our pre-Fall immortality as a remnant of divine timelessness.

· **Dependence on the Divine**

The widespread human urge toward transcendence—whether directed towards the true God, distorted forms such as occultism, or even secular ideologies—reveals our original purpose: unceasing worship in God's presence (Revelation 4:8-11). Created for eternal adoration, this drive persists, although sin often misdirects it toward idols (Romans 1:25). The rise of atheism does not extinguish this drive but often conceals a hidden spiritual hunger, as all creation intuitively acknowledges a higher power. Psalm 95:6 (NIV) invites us: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" highlighting worship as an innate aspect of humanity. Acts 17:27-28 (NIV) explains that God placed humanity to "seek him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him," for "in Him we live and move and have our being." Exodus 20:3-5 warns against misdirected worship (e.g., idols akin to modern esotericism), while Romans 1:18-20 (NIV) asserts that God's invisible qualities are "clearly seen" in creation, making the suppression of this dependence inexcusable while revealing its depth.

· **Creative Nature**

Our ability to innovate—seen in technological advancements, artistic endeavours, and problem-solving—reflects the Creator's boundless creativity in shaping the complexities of the universe (Genesis 1:1-31). As sub-creators entrusted with extending God's creative work, we transform chaos into order, akin to His act

of creating the cosmos from a formless void. This trait persists as a spark of divine originality, inviting us to steward creation in a redemptive manner. Genesis 1:28 (NIV) grants dominion and implies a call to "subdue" the earth through innovation, while Exodus 35:30-35 illustrates Bezalel, empowered by the Spirit for craftsmanship, reflecting God's artistic sovereignty. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) proclaims believers as "God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works," and Colossians 1:16 (NIV) affirms that all things were created "through him and for him," positioning human creativity as participation in the divine act.

What, then, is the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in all this?

Well, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ serves as the means by which humanity's damaged image of God is progressively and ultimately restored to its intended fullness. Faith in Christ enables believers to be conformed to God's likeness, not through human effort alone, but by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. Christ embodies the purest manifestation of the Image of God. As the eternal Son of God, He is the "exact representation of His being" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV), the visible likeness of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15, GNT). In Him, humanity's original design is exemplified without distortion. Through incarnation, He assumed our form to redeem it, declaring, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, GNT). Therefore, Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide the archetypal model for our renewal.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, "makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image" (2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT), enabling the exercise of the God-like virtues we have discussed—relational love, eternal longing, worshipful dependence, and creative stewardship. The culmination occurs in glorification at Christ's return; we shall be "like him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2, NIV), fully reflecting God's image in resurrected bodies (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Reflection Questions:

- Which part of this chapter stirs a question in you? How might praying for God's eyes change your view of it?
- Recall a time chaos felt close. What small step could show thanks for his mercy that day?
- Like Abraham, where in your life do you need child-like trust in God's timing? Jot one promise from his word to hold on to.

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