

Jesus answered “I AM the

Way
and the
Truth

and the
Life

No-one
comes to
the Father
except
through Me”

John 14:6

AT TFG MINISTRIES WE
SEEK TO KNOW THE
TRUTH
FOLLOW
THE WAY AND
GROW
IN HIS LIFE

TRUTH
Belief &
Knowledge

FOLLOW
Commitment &
Purpose

GROW
Relationship &
Intimacy

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www.tfgministries.org.uk/truthfollowgrow



Jesus said
“you will know
the truth, and
the truth will
set you
free” (John 8:32).

INTRODUCTION

Fundamental to what TFG is and has always been is discovering the Truth, encountering it and coming into the light that it provides.

It starts with a choice to believe, and from this flows the knowledge that comes from greater revelation.

Jesus is the Truth, He tells us so in John 14:6. The Word of God is the Truth, and so the Bible reveals the Truth about Jesus and all He has made.

Scripture, then, needs to be the starting point of our understanding of the world and the plumb line by which we evaluate all other philosophies and teachings. We need to be people of integrity, not squeezing scripture through holes it will not go through, but neither should we be forcing observed facts of nature into contorted shapes. Truth demands that Scripture and the Created Universe are in accord - and this is possible when we view both correctly,

As we grow in our belief and knowledge so our viewpoints will naturally shift and alter. We may believe something now and refute it later, but it is imperative that we can articulate why we believe what we do on the basis of scripture. That way we can discuss it with others and learn from each other, growing together as we seek to come into all truth. “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully” (1 Corinthians 13:12). At TFG we challenge viewpoints to see if they are grounded in scripture or come from other sources.

The Bible has to be the source, and not just one verse or one passage but the context of the breadth of scripture from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, which we believe to be internally consistent, without error and useful for ‘teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness’ in order that we might be ‘equipped for every good work’ (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Implied by all of the above is the truth of the verse quoted on the first page of this document, that Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life and that no-one comes to the Father - gets eternal life - except through Jesus.

INTRODUCTION



It's not enough to believe the Truth, or to declare that you have the Truth. Doing that makes you arrogant and religious.

Jesus is the Way, and that means we have to follow Him. We have to know Him, by both studying His life as we see it in Scripture and also by learning to hear His voice speaking into our lives today. In short, we have to live the Truth and not just know it.

Following Jesus starts with a commitment: "I will follow", before we even necessarily know what that will mean for us. But in essence, we do know the generalities of what it means: it means to walk in His path and not follow the fashions and philosophies of this world and our present age. However, we do that without taking it 'too far'. We need to live in this present age, so we need to evaluate the technologies and trends that are around us and learn to be able to sift what is good and useful from what is harmful or unhelpful. We are not about ignoring the 21st Century, but redeeming it.

That starts with us, and the purpose of our lives is to follow Jesus. As we get to know the Jesus of Matthew or Mark or Luke or John we need to consider how He would have responded to the world we live in. He would not have met many lepers in the UK, but how would He have dealt with the needs we do see today?

The people of Judea in the 1st Century were looking for a Messiah-Lord leader, and were ready to 'repent and be baptised'. The people of today do not seem to want a leader, but prefer to do what they want when they want. They do not recognise sin, they are not aware they need a saviour. What message would Jesus have that meets the needs these people think they have? How do we commit to bringing that message?

As we follow Him and grow more intimate with Him (see next page), so we begin to feel His heart and hear His voice to the people of today. We take His message to them, so that they will hear Him in a way that is meaningful and relevant, just as did the people He met in 1st Century Judea.

GROW

**Relationship &
Intimacy**

INTRODUCTION

We have the Truth, and are committed to walking in His Way. How do we keep on going?

We need to recognise that the Truth we have at the moment is only the beginning, there is more. We cannot know Jesus completely on this earth, and perhaps even eternity is not long enough to do so. However, He tells us that He is the Life, and that He has come in order that we might have life too, and have it in all its fulness (John 10:10). That is an invitation, an invitation to come close to him and to grow in intimacy with Him. The more we spend time with Him, the more we become like Him.

We are invited to be intimate with the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. He made the universe (John 1:3), and He has eyes like blazing fire (Revelation 1:14). Yet He wants us to be in close relationship with Him! And that relationship has many dimensions:

- TFG** He is the Father, we are His Son, the one who gets the inheritance - and women are included in this, because His inheritance is for us all.
- TFG** He is the Bridegroom, we are His Bride. The Groom pays a dowry for the Bride, He woos her and wins her and then shares everything He has with her - men are included in this, because He has bought us all for a price
- TFG** He is the Friend, we are His friends. (John 15:15). He passes on to us everything He knows. We are included in His inner circle
- TFG** He is the Good Shepherd and Saviour, who came looking for us even when we didn't know we were lost, and He entrusts this same mission to us to rescue the rest of the world (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Those are just some of the ways Jesus, God, wants us to explore our relationship with Him. We are called to intimacy with Him, this intimacy deepens as we follow the truth He reveals to us and stand more surely on the Rock that He is.

Bringing others into that intimacy is our role on earth today. People may not know they need a Saviour or a Lord, but they are looking for intimacy. We need to model it and we need to introduce people to Him,

At TFG we aim to be the wise men (and women) who build their house upon the Rock of Jesus (Matthew 7:24-27).

GROUP studies

TRUTH

**Belief &
Knowledge**

FOLLOW

**Commitment &
Purpose**

GROW

**Relationship &
Intimacy**

It is intended that members of the group would spend 20 to 30 minutes reflecting on each of the questions alone before coming together for a group discussion.

Please keep in mind through this both the key verse of John 14:6 and also the other verses printed at the top of the relevant Group Study sheet.

Try to bring Bible verses into your answers wherever possible; always aim to ground your thinking in scripture.

It would be helpful to have a notebook or paper to write down your thoughts on, and also to write down questions or comments you would like discussed in the group session.

Some of the questions are deliberately designed to make us uncomfortable, to challenge us to think through what we believe and why we believe it as well as how we relate to and respond to Jesus. So please pray together before you spend time alone thinking through the questions, and again when you come together to discuss.

The aim is that we all move forwards in our faith, but it is probable that it will be in different ways. God calls us as individuals, and we respond to Him as such. Yet also He calls us as His Church, and it is the coming together of us as individuals as we seek Him that builds that Church into the image of Christ. This is for His glory and to shine His light into the world.

GROUP studies

FOLLOW
Commitment &
Purpose

**“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”
(Matt 7:24, AV)**

Jesus called people to follow Him, not just to believe in Him. Paul writes “let us live up to what we have already attained” (Philippians 3:16)



TFG Which things that you know to be ‘what a Christian should do’ do you find hardest?

TFG Does this lead to feelings of guilt (because you do not live up to them) or instead do you reject the teaching as ‘no longer relevant today’?

TFG In what ways do you think that following Jesus is like being built on a rock?

TFG Jesus says that He is the Way. A modern mantra for Christians has become WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?). How do you bring Jesus’s Way into your daily dealings with people?

Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’ (Matthew 16:24). Earlier, in Matthew 10, he said ³⁷ ‘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.

³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.’

A modern parallel might be to consider the commitment and purpose of an Olympic athlete.

TFG What does ‘taking up their cross’ mean? What did it mean for Jesus Himself, and what would have been the image in the mind of the people He was speaking to when He said this?

TFG Does consideration of the commitment of an Olympic athlete throw light on what it means for a Christian today to be a follower of Jesus?

TFG How can we help each other be stronger followers of the Way?

GROW

Relationship & Intimacy



GROUP studies

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

(1 John 3:1)

**How beautiful you are my darling, Oh how beautiful!
(Song of Songs 4:1)**

Jesus! my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart,
and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought.

Till then I would thy love proclaim
with every fleeting breath;
and may the music of thy Name
refresh my soul in death!
(John Newton)

TFG The Bible presents us with many different ways in which Jesus relates to us. John Newton lists some of them in his hymn on the left, the verses above add lover and Father. I would add Teacher, are there others you can think of? Which do you find easiest to relate to?

TFG Are there some that you had not thought about before? Do they bring fresh dimensions to the relationship you can have with Jesus?

TFG How do you pursue your relationship with Jesus? Has it ever been passionate?

TFG Choose one type of relationship that you have not considered having with Jesus before and spend 5 or so minutes speaking to Him in this way (eg as your Priest or as your Brother)

For the Christian life to be a living relationship, we need to be able to look back and see the way we have grown in our faith.

TFG Can you think of a key point of growth in the past year? Perhaps some new understanding that has helped you, or a new level of commitment.

Jesus said 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26). What He meant was that our passion for and commitment to Him must be far greater than that in our other relationships.

TFG Does that statement anger you, or does it cause you to seek Him more?

TFG Jesus said "I am the Life" and "I have come that you might have life, life in all its fulness" (John 10:10). To what extent would you say that Jesus is your life?

GOING deeper

TRUTH Belief & Knowledge

What do we mean by Truth? We are going to examine three aspects of “the Bible is true” to help us to explore this.

Creation

Salvation

Leviticus

We will be looking at these aspects to try to learn about seeing the Bible as one book, which has progression and development in its themes as well as consistency. The object is to get hold of the weight of what God is saying, so that we can stand more securely on that Truth - being the wise men and women who build their houses upon the Rock!

FOLLOW Commitment & Purpose

A follower is a disciple.

How do we follow Jesus?

How do we follow other ideas, people or aspects of modern day life?

How do we discover what it is that Jesus wants us to do anyway?

Jesus wants us to commit to walking in His Way even before we specifically know what that means for us personally.

GROW Relationship & Intimacy

Just believing isn't enough. Nor is just following a code or rules, that makes us religious. We need to grow in relationship with Jesus, the Creator and Lord of Heaven and earth.

That we are invited to do that is amazing! That so many Christians don't bother to do that is tragic.

Unless otherwise indicated all scripture quotations in the following are from the NIV

TRUTH
Belief &
Knowledge

**CREATION &
EVOLUTION**

Does it matter?

GOING
deeper

I think it does, because it is vital that we have integrity in what we believe and speak about. By integrity I mean that we can give good account of our beliefs without gaps, and also that there is a consistency between our reading of scripture and our understanding of the natural world. I often hear people saying things like “the Bible isn’t a science text book, so it can’t be expected to get the origins of the universe right”, which sounds very good until that person also says “the Bible is the Word of God”. Can’t God be expected to get the origins of the universe right? In any case, that argument really only refers to the text of the first few chapters of Genesis, and I am going to ignore those chapters in these pages apart from the following opening diagrams:

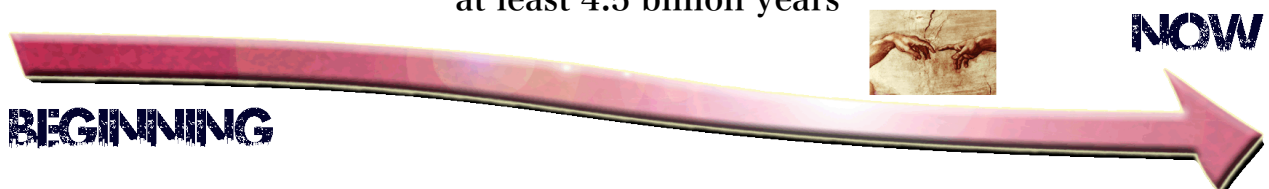
Timeline of World History according to Bible account

Human Beings created on 6th day



Timeline of World History according to Evolution

Human Beings appear less than one million years ago, in a time span of at least 4.5 billion years



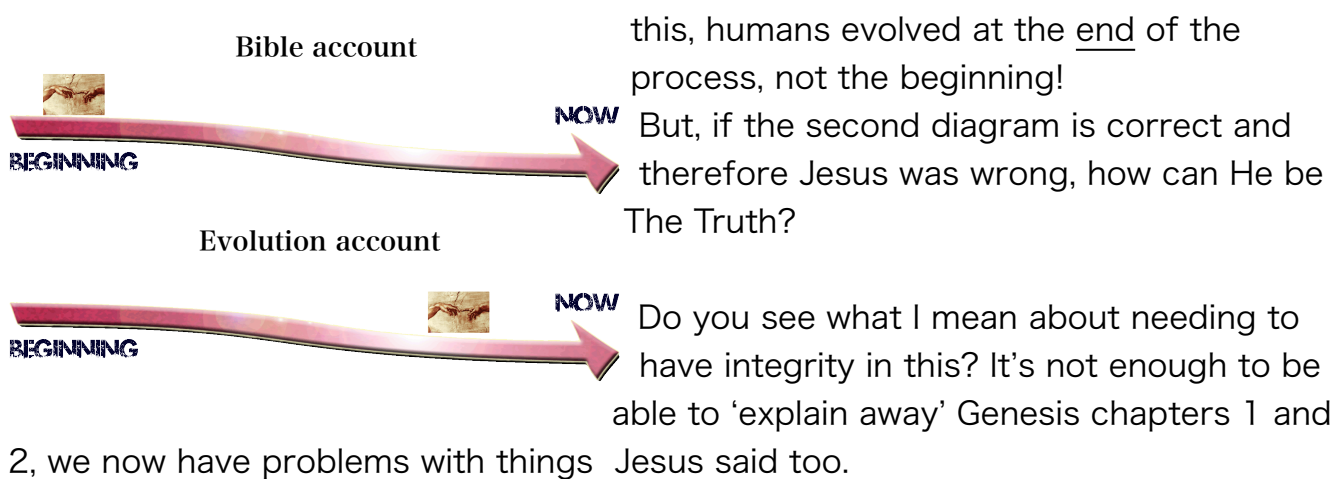
(Some evolutionists are now arguing for much longer than 4.5 billion years, but that period is the most accepted. All agree, however - as far as I can see from their online articles - that modern humans appeared on the scene about 250,000 years ago, with ‘proto-humans’, eg Homo Erectus and Neanderthals, up to a maximum of 1 million years ago.)



GOING
deeper

We need to take account of the broad view of scripture, and not just one passage or another when we consider Biblical Truth. Time and time again we see the Bible refers to creation by God and assumes it to be the case. You can't get away from Creation, and the subsequent Fall of Man, it is a major theme of scripture.

For instance, Jesus, Who is the Truth (John 14:6) said the following in Matthew 19:4 'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female,"'. He is teaching about divorce, and whether or not it is ok to get divorced. Jesus refers to something which He takes for granted, that God created people. But more than that, He tells us when God created them: at the beginning of creation. Look again at the diagrams of the last page and ask yourself how, if the second diagram is correct, it can be reconciled with Jesus's statement. According to



But there's more. Throughout scripture we read about the cause of Death being the Fall of Adam and Eve. Romans 5 says: 'Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned –... For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ... For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!' (selection of verses 12-17).



That's a key teaching of the Bible, that death came about because of sin, that death was not God's plan for the world but instead is the curse that resulted from the Fall.

GOING
deeper

1 Corinthians 15:2,22 says 'For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.'

However, if God created the world through evolution then He used death as a prime instrument in the process. Human beings don't appear in the diagram until nearly the end of the time line. There had been millions of years of creatures being born and dying before the first human was born, and Adam was not the bringer of death into the world. If death is God's idea, used by Him to bring about people, why does the Bible compare Jesus's death-to-bring-us-life with Adam?

With integrity, then, I find it impossible to both believe the Bible and believe the evolutionary timeline. However, integrity also demands that the facts and observations of nature are treated properly too. I can't just say 'because I believe the Bible I reject what evolutionists say', I also have to look at the facts that are observed in the rocks, fossils, stars and galaxies and treat them with integrity too.

Thankfully, more informed people than I have done just that. Many scientists start from a Biblical perspective and see the rocks speak a similar message. There are some links on tfgministries.org.uk/truthfollowgrow if you want to explore this further.

We need to handle Truth with integrity. If you can answer the questions implied in the above with a different conclusion, which has integrity to both scripture and nature - great. If not, please spend time thinking through the implications of Jesus's words that He is the Truth, and His Word is also therefore True.

Evolution, as an idea, started in the minds of people like Adam Weishaupt and Karl Marx who knew that a direct attack on Christian faith would get nowhere. Instead, they wanted ways to make people begin to doubt. "Did God really say...?" Today, many Christians teach evolution and incorporate it into their belief system. But it does not originate in Scripture, and therefore cannot be the Truth.

Be careful to make sure where your ideas come from!



To summarise, then I would say that, if scripture has DNA woven through it, then one of the strands is surely that God created mankind perfect, but that the first man, Adam, fell when he turned to physical things rather than God and this brought death into the world.

God then redeems mankind by sending His Son Jesus to suffer death, and in so doing to defeat it; rising again to life and returning the Tree of Life to mankind. Everywhere you look in scripture you see something of this strand. It's the back-story that gives structure to the whole of the Bible, that makes sense of the darker passages and gives colour to the lighter ones.

Evolution just does not fit in with this. Evolution has mankind appearing as the result of death. Only the fittest survives, only beneficiary changes make it to the next generation.

TFG With evolution, death brings about mankind.

TFG In the Bible, mankind brings about death,

God is life, the Deceiver is death. Whenever something is suggested that is diametrically opposite to what the Bible says, you can be almost certain it originates with the Deceiver.

The Bible teaches that the God of Life made man and woman, mankind. It's all about the Tree of Life, from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22. You cannot reconcile that with mankind coming about as a result of death. The Bible says that Life produced creation, evolution says that Death produced it.

TFG If evolution is true then the Bible is a fairy tale from beginning to end. It just cannot be even mostly true.

TFG If the Bible is true then evolution is a deception that blinds people to the truth of the Bible.



SALVATION

GOING
deeper

This is obviously a major theme of Scripture, no surprise then that it is also one that has been attacked by the Deceiver who does not want the Truth known and people saved. Briefly we will look at three current streams of teaching on salvation which fall short of the fulness of what God's Words says: the Catholic Stream, the Calvinist stream and the Pantheist stream.

Each of these have some of the truth, and find most of their doctrine in Scripture. But they all fail to embrace the full breadth of God's Word, and by emphasising one thing over another miss out on the full truth.

In brief, the **Catholic stream** teaches that salvation requires works, or action, on our part in order to be saved. This thinking is not confined to the Roman Catholic or even Higher Anglican churches, but can be found across the Christian spectrum. It includes ideas such as "you have to be good to go to heaven" and "I wasn't good enough last month, that's why this trouble has come".

At heart, it is a Christianising of the Old Testament Law. It overlooks what Christ did on Calvary and how He fulfilled the Law in His own life and then instituted a new covenant which is by Grace, not works. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9).

We do not have to work to earn salvation, and yet the idea that we do is strongly held throughout our society. As such, the Christian message is received as one that feeds on guilt, and generates misery. The clarity of the Gospel is lost. Jesus said "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, AV); ask most people in the street what the Christian message is and - if they have any idea at all - they will probably say "Be good and go to church".

That's not to say that repentance isn't important. But repentance is a turning from wrong towards God, not a requirement to do certain things. It is about coming into a



relationship with Jesus because of what He has done for us, not what we need to do for Him.

We are no longer under the Law (we'll think a bit more about that in the Leviticus section later). It's not "do this, don't do that and if you do it well enough you can approach God" but "enter into His presence, get to know Him, and then live to please Him". In the Old Testament, they obeyed in order to be in covenant with God. In the New Testament, we are in covenant with God and so we choose to please Him. The "Catholic" message completely confuses the Christian Gospel, and so obscures the Truth. It's not just salvation that gets obscured, but that is our subject here so we won't deviate to other areas.

The [Calvinistic stream](#) builds on the teachings of Jean Calvin, a 16th century French theologian. His teaching reminded people of God's sovereignty; that God is foremost in the work of salvation.

Vital as that is, Calvinists now believe and teach that God has divided humanity into two groups, the elect and unelect, from birth. Those in the latter group will never be saved 'even if they wanted to be', because they are not in God's plan of salvation. The error here stems from over-emphasising certain verses and ignoring the context and consistent theme of scripture that it is 'not God's will for any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance' (2 Peter 3:9); and also from getting into mental contortions over understanding what it means for God to 'know the end from the beginning' (Isaiah 46:10).

Taking the last point first, Scripture is written to us in our realm. God uses prophecy to declare the 'end from the beginning' and certainly has a plan for this world and humanity. He may well know exactly which choices a person may make in their lifetime even before they are born, but that does not mean that God pre-defines those choices. Knowing what someone will do is not the same as making them do it, or barring them from something else. Knowing that Adam would eat the fruit of the



tree of knowledge of good and evil did not stop God from giving him clear warnings not to. God did not make Adam eat it, it was Adam that chose to eat it. Every person will look back on their lives and see the choices they have made and know that they, and only they, were responsible for those choices. No-one will be able to say "God, you made me unelect, it is Your fault".

God's Sovereign role is in the initiation of salvation, and offering it to mankind. It is offered to all, for John the Baptist announced Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29 - we'll return to this verse later). He did not say 'who takes away the sin of those God has previously chosen'. All sin was dealt with, no-one is left out. God is not willing for any to perish (2 Peter 3:9).

One of the key passages that Calvinists use to justify their position is Romans 8:28-30 ' ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.'

Read cold like that, if you are told that the Bible says God knew some people before birth, chose them and set their destiny to be like Jesus, this passage would seem to support the teaching. But we must never read a passage 'cold'. We must always set it in its context. That context has two settings. The first is the teaching of all scripture. We must not come up with an interpretation that then requires us to bend or shape the force of the Bible's teaching elsewhere to fit it; instead we need to see this as a puzzle piece which fits neatly into the rest of scripture. The second is the context of the book it is found in, in this case Romans.

Many Calvinists will say that, in the light of these verses in Romans, John the Baptist in John 1:29 meant only 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the elect of the world'. They teach that none of the Blood of Jesus could be wasted, and therefore that everyone He died for must be saved, and hence He died only for those who would be saved.



However, we are not simply playing off John 1:29 against Romans 8:28-30. Other passages of scripture clearly say that God's heart is for all to be saved, we've looked at some of them already. The context of scripture does not allow a situation where God pre-selects people for salvation.

The context of Romans gives us the key to a proper understanding of these verses in Romans 8. It starts by considering God's righteous judgement against the sin of the fallen world, how the Law was given to one nation to demonstrate Covenant relationship with God, how God is faithful even though no-one is righteous in themselves.

It then tells us where righteousness comes from, it comes through faith (3:22) and goes on to look at the life of a man whom God declared righteous through his faith: Abraham. Therefore (Paul writes in 5:1) 'since we have been justified through our faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Justification comes through the Blood of Christ. The next few chapters give practical examples of what this means for the Christian life. Roman 8 begins saying there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and then speaks of the trials and pressures of this life. It is an exhortation to go on going on in faith, ending with the great crescendo that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God'.

In the middle of this we get the verses in question, more of which later. After Romans 8 Paul goes on to talk about the fact that God sovereignly chose one family in the past (the tribe of Israel) to carry His Name, but now He has sovereignly chosen the Church - Christians. Through this all - including Israel - can be saved.

So, back to our verses. "Those whom God foreknew" - - people God knew before. Instead of assuming this is about God knowing the saved from before they were born, could it not mean people like Abraham that we have just been reading about? In that case it reads "How do we know that all things work out for good for those who love Jesus? Through faith, and by looking at the lives of those God knew before and seeing what happened to them."



Then we see how, following their positive response to Him God gave them a destiny in Christ which worked out in their lives with blessing and honour, and eternal glory. All of the verbs are past tense in this passage by the way.

As to the use of the term 'the elect of God' in passages such as 1 Peter 1:1,2 it is always used in a plural sense. In other words, it is the Church that is predestined for glory, it is the Church that is the Elect. God has decreed that the Church is the Bride of Christ. I have not read any passage of scripture which refers to an individual as elect, apart from their being part of the Church.

I am on a railway station platform. On one side a train arrives bound for Glasgow. On the other side one comes in going to Cardiff. One train is predestined for Scotland, the other to go to Wales. I am invited onto the trains by the doors opening. I have a choice. Once I am on the train I have joined those predestined for its destination, I am part of the elect. But it is my choice.

God has predestined the Church, the people saved by the Blood of Christ for Heaven and eternal life with Him. He invites all to receive that offer. It is available for all. But we have a choice. Once we make the choice, and accept the grace of God by the Blood of the Lamb and the working of the Holy Spirit, we are part of the Elect.

And that means we need to be God's ambassadors, sharing His call with all the world, helping all men and women to join the Elect.

You might not agree with my conclusions and interpretations on the subject of Calvinism, but I urge you to make sure that your own view of scripture has integrity, which means that it is internally consistent across the breadth of scripture. As we come to greater understanding, so we need to be ready to change our views. That is growth. I may well read this in ten years time and want to rewrite it - but hopefully the rewrite will be to see God's Word as complete Truth ever more clearly.



Finally, and briefly, what I have called the [Pantheist stream](#), the view that no-one goes to hell, that all are saved. Or that all religions lead to God.

Reading the last few chapters of Revelation should make it clear that some - many perhaps - are not saved. Jesus's clear statement that He is the Way, and that no-one comes to the Father except through Jesus (John 14:6) leaves no room for religions leading people to God.

But in John 1:29, if the Lamb of God really does take away the sin of the whole world, why are some lost?

The answer is to do with the Book of Life, and the 'other books' of Revelation 20:12. Each person carries a book around with them, in it is recorded everything they have ever done. Jesus, the Author of Life has the Book of Life. At the Cross He offers to exchange that Book with the one we are carrying. That is how He can take away the sin of the whole world but each individual needs to accept it for themselves. Judgement day is not about sin, but about how people have responded to Jesus. God will ask to see the book they are carrying. If it is the Book of Life, He will open it and see the story of Jesus, and smile. If, however, it is another book then God will see the sins of the person. Their fate will be sealed.

Many will stand there, seeing that their sins were forgiven at the Cross and yet being condemned because they did not receive that forgiveness for themselves. Surely there is nothing worse than to know the price was already paid, but you did not take advantage of the free gift, and you are now beyond hope.

Only Jesus can give the Book of Life, there is no other Way.



LEVITICUS GOING deeper

We do not live under the Old Covenant, but the New. God has not changed, but He has ripped the curtain in the Temple and opened up access for us to Him that was unknown for the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus declared Himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life, the only way to the Father in John 14:6. Jesus reveals the Father, and we are the Body of Christ chosen to reveal Jesus.

To pick just three attributes of Jesus, three characteristics of Him, that our interpretation of the Bible needs to be consistent with I will choose love, justice and righteousness. If we interpret any passage of scripture in a way that is not based on love, then it is not consistent with Jesus and must be a false interpretation. If there is no justice in what we preach based on our reading of a passage, then we have got it wrong. If it is not righteous (upright, in line with God's revealed character) then it is missing the point. Jesus is Holy, Scripture is Holy, we are called to be Holy. Holiness includes love, justice and righteousness.

When we read the Old Testament, especially the Books of the Law such as Leviticus, we need to bear all that in mind. Leviticus is essentially a book of separation, or holiness. God has led Israel out of Egypt and is preparing them for nationhood in a land of their own. It is a book which teaches them how to be apart from the world to worship the One True God. It includes, among other things:

- TFG** The way to approach and worship God
- TFG** Lifestyle and dress for the people of God
- TFG** Regulations about clean and unclean
- TFG** Rules for sexual activity

We need to be clear, as we read the book, not only its broad context (being holy before God) but also the sub-context of the part we are reading. We are not Jews. We are under the New Covenant. Therefore, as a book of the Law, it does not all apply to us in the same way that it did to the people of Israel. It is, however, still all relevant if read correctly.



1/ WORSHIP

The first seven chapters, roughly, cover the various offerings for sin, guilt and so forth. Also the grain offering, the fellowship offering and the like. These do not form part of Christian worship, Jesus became the One True Sacrifice and offering and our worship is now 'in Spirit and in Truth' (John 4:23). So, when we read about how the Israelites were to worship we do not read it as a list of dos and don'ts for us. Instead, we ask ourselves what the heart behind the requirements were. What did they teach the people, how did they respond? From that we reflect on what they teach us about what Jesus did for us.

2/ LIFESTYLE and DRESS

Most of us are jolly pleased that circumcision isn't a New Covenant requirement. Circumcision for the people of Israel dates back to Abraham in Genesis. Leviticus 12:3 says it needs to be done on the 8th day after a boy is born. There were other lifestyle regulations too. 19:27 says "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard."

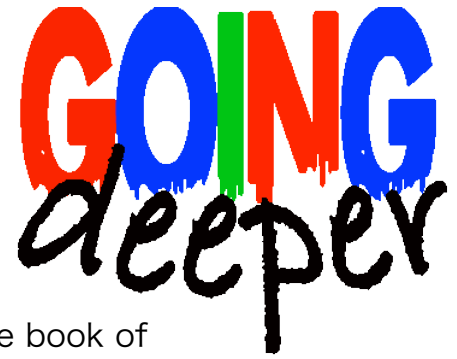
Modern Orthodox Jews will still dress in this way, with heads covered, side hair uncut and so forth. These were signs of what became known as Jewishness. In the book of Acts there were prayerful meetings where the Holy Spirit led them to discern that such regulations should not be laid on the Gentiles. Instead, we are dressed in the Blood of Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Again, when we read such parts of Leviticus we need to reflect on what it is at the heart of the message. God's people had to look different as well as behave differently. God set things up so that they would just not fit in with the nations around them, they would stand out as separate. That way they would be protected as much as possible from falling into the wrong worship and stuff.

Once they started to let the separation slip, they fell all the way.

3/ CLEAN and UNCLEAR

Modern hygiene rules were only really understood within the last century and a half. Things like infectious diseases and the need for quarantine, or how to keep food



safe for eating, are relatively modern discoveries. Yet in the book of Leviticus we see many of God's regulations agreeing with hygiene rules.

In a hot climate, the unclean foods designated in Leviticus are the ones we now know need special care in preservation and preparation.

The same goes for the regulations about mildew and so forth.

In Acts 10, however, God tells Peter that spiritual uncleanliness does not come from eating certain foods. It's a matter of the heart and the action towards God and others, not what we eat.

Again, part of what God was doing was also to make a separation from the people around them. He keeps saying through Leviticus "I am the LORD". By implication: "You are mine, be holy, be separate".

4/ SEXUAL ACTIVITY

The language changes somewhat towards the end of Leviticus, with the regulations about sexual activity. There is a long list, and in the most part it is a list which would meet with common consent today. Do not have sex with your parent, your sibling, an animal and so forth. Doing so would defile a person (stop them from being holy).

Notably, chapter 18 starts with a reminder that the heathen nation they had come from (Egypt) and the ones surrounding them where they were going (Canaan) did practise such things. They were to be separate, to be holy.

These regulations are not specifically lifted anywhere in the New Testament, and in fact they are re-inforced. Sexual immorality is mentioned several times as being unacceptable for the Christian disciple.

These chapters are in a different context to the others considered in Leviticus, the language is stronger, and also it is less restorative. A person with a 'dreaded skin disease', though excluded from the camp, was given a path back as the disease abated. These verses offer no opportunity for restoration.



To frame 20:13 in its immediate context we see:

v9 curse parents = put to death

v10 commit adultery = put to death

v11 sex with fathers wife = put to death

v12 sex with daughter-in-law = put to death

v13 sex with another man = put to death

v14 marry both woman and her mum = burnt to death

v15 sex with animal = put to death

Now, we're not here about to go off at a tangent about capital punishment. The point is the language is strong, the consequences severe.

Most people (even non-Christians) would agree even in this part of the 21st Century that the actions mentioned in each verse are not good things to do (verse 13, of course, being an obvious exception. Should it be?)

So, within Leviticus which is a book which taught the Israelites how to be holy before God we see that some of it was specifically about OT worship, some of it was about how to look different to the world around them, some of it was to protect them from disease and plague and some if it was in stronger language about controlling sexual behaviour.

All of it is about being different to the non-Godly around them.

As Christians today, we are still called to be different to the world around them. This quick skim through Leviticus makes me ask myself the questions

TFG Do I try to fit in so as not to stand out, or is my lifestyle distinct from that of the world?

TFG Am I casual in my approach to God because I do not have to keep all these rules?



When we read the Old Testament, the thing to remember is that it is the Old Covenant and we are under the New Covenant. It's Grace, not Law. The Truth in the Old Covenant shows us the heart of holiness, the standard of perfection from which Adam and his race fell. Even more we then realise how much Jesus has done for us on the Cross in that we are made right with God without all these Law-based obligations upon us.

Leviticus is a book of holiness. Separation from the world and to God. It should inspire us to be more filled with His Spirit, so that His Life in us will make us more like the people He calls us to be.

The modern trends have been either to ignore Leviticus or to accept that since some of it doesn't apply to us then none of it does. Both are wrong. The Truth is that all of it 'is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16, AV). As we come to know God's heart in the New Testament more and more, so when we read the more difficult parts of the Old we gain a clearer understanding of what God is teaching us.

The Bible is a book of progressive revelation. God reveals His full heart only in Jesus. We get part of the message earlier on, and aspects of it that get fully revealed when we read them back with eyes that have seen Jesus. So we must always read Leviticus and the other books of the Old Testament in the light of what Jesus has accomplished on the Cross. For He is the Truth, and through Him we will see the Truth even in regulations that no longer apply.

GOING deeper



Jesus said "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

How do we follow?

- TFG** We follow a FOOTBALL TEAM by supporting it even when it s going through a bad patch
- TFG** We follow a FASHION by emulating those who dress that way and behave that way
- TFG** We follow a SUSPECT (if we are police!) by tracking their every movement

We need to follow Jesus in all these ways... by making sure we keep an eye on Him, finding out how he would behave and doing likewise, and sticking with Him even when it gets us laughed at or persecuted.

Philippians 2 tells us to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, and as we look at how He is described in that chapter we see Him as humble, obedient and as a servant. He had the power to change the circumstances He was facing, but did not use it. Instead He committed Himself to the path God had given Him, despite the cost. He could have chosen not to. He could have called on the angels that were there to protect Him, but He did not.

We are called to that attitude, to follow the Way that the Holy Spirit leads us in. In Matthew 10:38 we read 'Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me'. For Jesus taking up the Cross meant being prepared to die, and knowing that He no longer had life ahead of Him. He was carrying it to death.

So for us to take up our cross means that our lives are over, in terms of choice of our destiny. It is about giving our destiny to Him, to choose the destiny He has pre-determined for us (our pre-destiny). But, there is a choice every day. Everyday we

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need to choose to continue to walk in the path He has set before us. Just as Jesus chose each step that this was what He was going to do. He could have thrown down the Cross, called down the Fire of Heaven and taken up His Throne. But that would not have saved you or me. God had pre-destined Him for the Cross. His choice meant He walked the path God had laid out for Him.

God's plan was costly but better. We need to believe that God's way, though it might be costly to us, is better in the end. As we choose to follow, we focus on God's plan not our own. We choose each day, and often more frequently, whether or not we will follow the course God has predestined for us.

We need to come to the point when we no longer bother about our image. Modern culture is all about image. But that is not God's way. He did not send Jesus to a palace. He did not make Him rich or fashionable. "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). So we need to focus on the things of Christ and not the things of this world.

We won't be great at this. Sheep following a shepherd along a road (or being directed by the shepherd and sheepdogs) are heading in a definite direction, but will wander left and right all over the place as they go. God guides us, He promises to. But our following is very sheeplike, we are all over the place even though we are moving under His direction.

Jesus is the Way, and also the Destination. He leads us and yet is behind us telling us which way to go, walking with us step by step and He is, as well, the light that shines on the path. As we give our lives to Him we commit to following Him whatever He says, even before we know what that is. It's easier to wait for Him "tell me what to do and I will do it". But God says "tell me you will do whatever I say, and then I will tell you what I want".

Being a disciple of a Rabbi meant that you would follow that teacher anywhere. You did not know what that would mean or where you would end up. The Twelve disciples

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of Jesus were led to the Cross from which they initially ran away but, once the Holy Spirit filled them, the remaining Eleven identified with the Cross and again gave their lives to follow Jesus, even to martyrdom.

The Gospel is free to receive but costs everything to Follow. We need to be committed to walking in the Truth of it as we Follow the One who gave Himself for us.

Finding out what Jesus wants us to do, where He wants us to go, is a lifetime commitment. But the Good News includes the promise "I will lead you, I will guide you" (see for instance Isaiah 58:11, John 16:13). It's a promise from God that, if we are committed to walking in His path, He will let us know which way to go.

In the next section, GROW in His Life, we will see that it is as we spend time with Him that we learn to hear Him more readily. Then we get the prompts and directions sooner and find ourselves walking a more direct line. But the wanderings are part of the process of growing, and God smiles to see His child learning to walk in His ways. Too often we focus on the failures, but God focusses on the attitude of wanting to follow.

If a toddler gave up everytime she fell down, she would never learn to walk. As we believe Jesus as the Truth and commit to following in His Way, so we fall over less and make greater progress in the things of faith. Each lesson learnt establishes our feet more securely on the Rock of Christ; in turn this marks us out more distinctly as His disciples - people no longer swayed by passing worldly fashions but steady in our walk on the path He has prepared for us "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-15, AV)

GROW

Relationship &
Intimacy

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper

worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1,2)

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If we just believe the Truth, and tell others it, we become cold, hard and judgmental. If we Follow the way of Jesus without spending time with Him we are just religious people. We are not called to be cold, hard, judgmental or religious. We need instead to Grow into the Life that is Jesus. To get to know Him, through the Holy Spirit, and to be transformed to be like Him. Only as we develop that relationship with Him, growing ever closer in intimacy, can we become the people He wants us to be so that He can bring others to Himself too.

There are three key points from the Romans passage above. We need to

TFG offer our bodies in sacrifice

TFG turn from the ways of the world

TFG renew our minds to be transformed into His way of thinking

We grow in our Christian life by developing our relationship with Jesus. We should be able to look back over the past 6 months or year and be able to note the ways in which we have grown. The mark of this will be the extent to which we have done one or more of the three points above.

What do each mean in reality? The answer to that is essentially that they are signs of the extent to which we have allowed the Holy Spirit to fill us and lead us. So too then are they signs of the extent to which we have become like Jesus. Our relationship with Him pulls us closer to Him, we can't get close unless we align ourselves more fully with Him.

Now, some might say here that we are made completely like Jesus when our sins are taken away, and that that happens at the point we give Him our lives. Yes, that is true. But it is also true that we remain engaged in sinful activity even though it is forgiven. An acorn when it is formed is potentially an oak tree, but it does not look or behave like one. As it grows, it slowly changes form and becomes first a sapling and then a tree and, finally, a mighty oak. In the same way, we are 'born again' as "Christian acorns" but we need to grow into "Christian Oaks".



Living Sacrifices. Jesus lived His life as a living sacrifice. He was heading for the Cross and did nothing to alter course, even when He had the opportunities. He did His Father's will, not His own. Being a living sacrifice means being ready to do what the Holy Spirit directs us to do, to Follow the Way of Jesus. Much of this we discover by reading, knowing, and doing what it says in Scripture. But as we spend time with God in prayer and reflection we begin to know the way the Holy Spirit prompts us as an individual. We do what we believe He is telling us; sometimes we get this wrong and by so doing we learn how to more clearly discern what is His voice and what isn't. The better we know scripture, the greater our discernment in this area.

It means putting time alone with Jesus as our main priority, something that shapes our day. Special times not only within the day but also special days we set aside just to be with Him.

It means not going to places He would not want to go to, for where we go He goes too. It means being ready to go to people and places He wants to go to, even if we do not ourselves.

The Church is the Body of Christ. We are His hands, feet, mouth. We need to be familiar with Him so that we can do and say what He wants to do and say.

Our living sacrifice needs to be 'Holy and pleasing to God'. Holy means 'set apart for'. The Body of Christ is also the Bride of Christ, a Bride is set apart for her husband. Reserved for him. Christians, as the Bride of Christ, are reserved for Christ.

Turn from the Ways of the World. This is another way of saying 'repent'. It's not a once for all action. It is a regular checking of which way we are walking and to make sure we are walking alongside and with Jesus. At it's simplest it is about developing an attitude of love, focussed first on Jesus and then on those He loves (everyone!). Instead of putting 'me' first, we put Him first. We can be confident He is always putting us first, for we are His Bride-to-be.

The Life of Jesus flows from the Holy Spirit, the life of the World flows from the physical body. So we stop living for the body, and start to live for the Spirit. Instead of 'I feel something physically, my mind notices it so I react to it" and ignoring our



spirit, it should be “I sense the Holy Spirit’s prompts, my mind notices this so I will make my body obey it”. It’s the different way up to the world. Getting close to Jesus turns us on our heads; as the old saying goes we are ‘head over heels’ in love with Him. Or the old song:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

The way that we turn from the ways of the world, then, is not primarily by stopping things but instead by turning to Jesus. The more we listen to Him (read the Bible, reflect prayerfully, etc) the more our hearts are changed and the less we want the things of the world. The only way to truly Follow is to become more like Jesus. Otherwise, it is just dogmatic religion.

God made the world, and everything in it when He looked at it He said was Good. But then came the Fall, and the way that Adam (and all of his descendants bar One) have looked at the world since has not been purely good. It’s not Gold, Sex, or Technological Advances that are bad but the way that we covet, lust, or become addicted to things. We need to find out how Jesus looks at each of these things, and come into line with that.

The things of this world shout at us, because they are unavoidable. The Bible whispers, because we have to deliberately choose to read it or we do not hear what it says.

Renew our minds. Soaking up the Presence of Jesus in these ways changes our thinking. It is one of the surest signs that we are growing to see our viewpoint alter and come more in line with His teaching and His heart. Paul was able to write ‘For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far ...’ (Philippians 1:21-23). The things of heaven, of His Presence come to mean more to us than the things of earth.



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We don't do any of this alone, though. WE are the Body of Christ, together. We need to spur each other on in love, urging each other to become closer to Jesus. I am built up if you are closer to Jesus, you are pulled down if I do not walk close with Him. The Church, united with Christ, is the greatest force on earth. We need each other to be growing closer to Jesus, so that we are better able to Follow Him and demonstrate His Truth to the world.

We help each other by encouraging each other to read and understand the Bible, coming together to worship and hearing God speak to us. It's so easy to pull people down, Jesus only ever lifted people up. Even the woman caught in adultery, or the Samaritan woman alone at the well, He picked them up. The Gospel is about building people up, and we need to do that for each other. Jesus washed his disciple's feet and put Himself lower than them, even on the night before He was crucified.

So come to the Bible, choosing to believe it is True before you start to read it; choosing to follow the teachings you read in it before you read them; and loving Jesus more because of what you learn about Him as you read.

Jesus answered **"I AM the
Way
and the
Truth
and the
Life
No-one
comes to
the Father
except
through Me"**
John 14:6



PROGRAMME

Here are some suggested ways you might use this material for a weekend away.

Talk 1: Aspects of Truth from the material

Study Groups: Divide people into groups of 7 to 10. Each group studies one of the three Group Studies for about one hour. After a break, they then spend another hour planning a lesson, drama or other presentation to tell the others on the weekend what they have got from their study. These presentations could be made before dinner on the Saturday evening

Talk 2: Follow. Suggested for Saturday evening. A challenge to be more devoted to following Christ, including a call to salvation

Talk 3: Grow. Sunday morning, possibly as part of a Communion service. Could include testimonies from people about how they pursue intimacy with Christ.

Divide into groups of 7-10. Each group does same study each time.

Fri eve: Group Study on Truth

Sat morning: Plenary discussion on Truth, or talk based on material after a break, Group Study on Follow and plenary


Sat evening: Main talk, perhaps taking aspects of each area

Sun morning; Group study on Grow, final plenary

The material could also be used for a series of Sunday sermons with midweek homegroups using the Group Studies and additional questions based on the sermons given.

If you are planning to use this material we would suggest a contribution towards the cost of production of approximately £1.50 per person. For example, if you are using it on a weekend with 30 people, that would be £45. If you are using it for weekly church meetings, base the size of the group on related midweek group attendance rather than Sunday attendance.

But we do not want cost to deter you from making use of the material. If you cannot contribute £1.50 per head please make a donation that you feel is appropriate for your group.

Links to  can be found in the Resources Archive section of www.lumin.org.uk

where you will also find links to information related to some of the issues discussed here.

You might not agree with everything in this material, but hopefully it will spur you on to discovering more of God's Truth as you Follow Jesus and Grow in the Spirit.