

The Simple Truth Series #1

Giving God A Chance



to be **GOD**

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'And expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.' Acts 18:26.

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1.

Introduction

Who is Jesus Christ? Many see Him as a good Man who lived 2000 years ago. Some see Him as a teacher, a philosopher, or a Prophet. But, all power in Heaven and in earth is given unto Him, and He wants us to see Him as Almighty God, and give Him a chance to be God for us.

2.

The God who has all power

In Matthew 28:18 the Lord said *'All power is given unto Me, in heaven and on earth.'* But even though He has all power, He doesn't just barge in, and take over, and use it. He waits to be invited. Matthew 7:7 tells us to, *'Ask and you shall receive.'* So, we have a part to play in this.

There's a bumper sticker that tells us, *'The things that God does, only God can do.'* That's true, because God is a Supernatural Being. He lives in a Supernatural world, and He acts Supernaturally. Some people only let Jesus be a good example. Some let Him be a good teacher. But He wants us to let Him be Himself, and be all that He is. He wants us to give him the opportunity to be God for us, and be all that He says He is, and do all that He says He is capable of doing.

3.

The God who knows all things

We find an example of this in Luke chapter 5:1-11. *'And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and*

prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him.'

So, what happened here? Jesus was on the shore of the Lake with a crowd that had gathered. He stepped into Peter's boat, and taught them. And Peter heard things he had never heard in the synagogue. Jesus said "Love your enemies, and be good to those who aren't good to you. That fisherman who sold you rotten fish today, don't shun him; go back and buy twice as much off him tomorrow. That boy with the baggy jeans, and the cap on back to front, who's outside coining your car; don't give him a kick in the butt; invite him in, for lunch and coffee." He said, "Stop behaving like selfish men, and start treating others the way God treats you."

Peter knew this Man was different. This man was a great teacher. And when Jesus had finished, he told Peter to let down his net for a catch.

Luke calls this lake 'Gennesaret.' We know it as the Sea of Galilee. Peter grew up around its shores, and spent his adult life there, as a fisherman. So, Galilee was his backyard. He knew all the places to catch fish, and he believed any night he couldn't catch a fish there, no one could. So, when Jesus said 'C'mon let's go out and let down the net for a catch,' Peter protested. '*Master, we've toiled all night, and caught nothing.*'

Because of Peter's expertise as a fisherman, that normally would have been the last word; and they would have packed up, and Peter would have gone home a happy man, with a tale to tell. And he would tell his children and his grandchildren about the day the 'Great Teacher' sat in his boat, and taught the people. And he would show them where Jesus sat, and let them have turns sitting there too. And it would have been a great day for Peter, what we'd call a Red-Letter Day.

But Jesus didn't want Peter to think of him as a great teacher, or a good man, or any other kind of man. When He said, '*Let down your net for a catch,*' He was giving Peter an invitation to let Him be God for him. And when Peter said, '*We've fished all night and caught nothing, but at your Word I'll do it,*' that gave Jesus the chance to act as

God. Anytime we take God at His Word, it gives Him a chance to be faithful to his Word for us.

4.

The God who walked among men

So, they let down the net, and there were so many fish that they filled both boats till they were sinking. Peter knew this was no ordinary day, and this was no ordinary Man; and before the day was over, Peter had quit his job, and left his boat behind, to become a fisher of men. That night he went home with a box of chocolates, and a bunch of roses, to break the news to his wife. Peter's fishing buddies did the same, they left all to follow Jesus.

And when they did, they stepped out of a fisherman's world, and into God's world, and they witnessed things fishermen never dream of. They saw water turned into wine. They saw Jesus take a boy's lunch and feed 15,000 people, and there was more left over, than what He had started with. They saw Him walk on water, as if it was rock. They saw Him speak to a storm and it stopped. Lepers came to him and walked away clean. The deaf could hear, the blind could see. He sent the disciples out two by two, and they returned rejoicing, because Devil's were subject to them. And, they were so caught up in the power of God, that when they weren't received in one town, James and John asked, *"Shall we command that fire come down from heaven and destroy them?"*

They were on top of the world, and at times like that it seems as though it's never going to end. But it did, suddenly, and tragically. Jesus was arrested one night, and He was crucified the next day. And there was no more Supernatural, no more power of God, they were just men among men, once again.

5.

The men who walked without God

So, what do you do when everything collapses around you, and turns to custard? You take a step backward, to something familiar. To the old hometown, the old friends, the

comfort of familiar things. So, Peter said, *'I go fishing,'* and his fishing buddies, and a few other disciples went with him. They dragged the old boats into the water, but it was another one of those nights. They fished all night, and caught nothing.

Over the three years that Peter had been with Jesus, the Lord got to know him well. He knew what colour sandals Peter liked to wear. He knew what flavour ice cream Peter preferred, and He knew just how Peter liked his first coffee of the day. You'd wonder, is that important? Yes, it is, because anything that's important to us, is important to Him.

6.

The God who knows the heart

The Lord knew, that Peter would go back to fishing at this time, and He knew just where to find him in the morning. Back at that same little bay where they first met; where Peter goes to wash his net, and have his breakfast. So, the Lord went there ahead of him, and He lit a fire, and put fish and bread on to cook. Then he waited. He does that a lot.

He knows where we like to go, and what we like to do, and where to find us when He wants us. So, He goes there ahead of us, and patiently waits. Then we go to that place. That house. That room. That church. That fishing spot. That cafe. Whatever it is. And when we arrive, we feel His Presence, and we think, "Hey, the Holy Spirit's here now." No, He's been patiently waiting for two hours. Sometimes, all Heaven is waiting. Sometimes, the whole world is waiting, for one of us to go to that certain place, and meet the Lord, so He can take the next step in His plan, because every part of His plan, is an important part of His Plan.

7.

The God of love

So, the Lord waited patiently by the fire. Then he saw two boats coming around the point, and His heart began to thump with joy. These were seven of the twelve, He'd chosen personally, to share His earthly ministry. He couldn't wait to see them, because

He likes to spend time with those whom He loves.

But it was a somber crew who brought the boats in that morning. They were cold. They were tired. They were hungry. When you go fishing, there is always the expectation of a good catch. But they didn't have a fish between them. And the crucifixion was still heavy on their hearts. Peter had the added burden, of having denied he even knew the Lord. So, they dropped anchor, and a Voice called from the shore.

8.

The God who reveals Himself to men

Sometimes, you recognize that Voice immediately. But, at other times you wonder, "Was that my imagination?" But, that morning, the Disciples heard a stranger's Voice calling, "Children, do you have any meat?" They answered, "No!" And He suggested they drop the net on the right side of the boat.

The Lord has something that he does, and it's a personal thing between Himself, and an individual, or a family, or a certain group of people. It's His way of making Himself known to them, when he wants to remind them He's there. He will do it over, and over, and over, again, anytime he wants their attention, and he may not do the same thing for anyone else on Earth.

For myself, and my three youngest daughters, it's something we call 'the gas bottle.' The first time it happened, I had read a story to the girls the night before, about a grandmother who was out of food; and the Lord told her to bang three times on the outside of her meal barrel, and there would be flour in there. So, she did it, and the next day, and the next, and every time she did it, the Lord honoured her faith, and there was flour in the barrel.

The next morning, the gas bottle for our heater ran out, and I said "Oh no!" Because it was a cold winter's day, and I didn't have the money to refill it. And the Lord asked me, "Are those stories entertainment for you, or are they examples?" I thought about it, and replied, "Examples." Then I knew what I had to do. I thumped three times on the top of the heater, with my fist; and started it, and it burnt all day. That night I told the girls what the Lord had done for us. And after that, any time the heater began to splutter, and go out, my daughter Cassia, who was a little girl with big faith; would bang on the top of it, and say, "There's more gas in there now," and the Lord always honoured her faith, and there was. After weeks of refilling it by faith, I had some money, and when it went out, I knew it was my turn to fill it myself.

About 10 years later, I gave my testimony at a Church, and told them about the gas bottle. When I got home that afternoon, the gas ran out in the heater. At first, I thought, "Oh no!" But then I thought, "Come on, you testified how the Lord filled the gas bottle the other times," and I knew what to do. I banged three times on the top, and lit it, and it burned that day and for the next week. It was a different heater and a different gas bottle than the original, but the Lord was still the same Jehovah Jireh to me.

What the Lord did with Peter and James and John and Andrew, was this thing of dropping a net into an empty sea, and hauling it up full of fish. So, they let down the net at Jesus' Word, and gave Him a chance to be God, and again he didn't disappoint them. The net was full, 153 great fish, as the Bible records. And in the midst of all the bustle and excitement, of trying to contain the fish, John stopped. He felt something familiar. That Holy Presence you feel, at those times. And he cried, "*It's the Lord!*"

9.

Giving God a chance to be God

Sometimes, the Lord can give us a chance to let him be God, and it comes in such a simple way, that it's frightening; because there's no fanfare, and no trumpets, it's something like that Voice saying, "Drop the net on the other side," and it's so easy to miss it completely. We need to walk close to Him, so we *never* miss It.

Even though the Lord has all the power of heaven and earth, He can only do as much for us as we allow Him to. If we expect small things from Him, He will do small things. If we expect great things from Him, He will do great things for us. He claims to be Almighty God, with all power, and He wants us to give Him a chance to be who He claims to be.

The Bible contains hundreds of promises, and the Lord put them there, because He knew we would need them. But they won't do us any good, if we don't use them. There is a promise for every need we could ever have. There are general promises, such as Matthew 21:22. '*And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive.*' All things, means anything. It's like having a blank cheque. You write your own amount. But some brothers and sisters can't have faith in a promise as open as that, so we have specific promises too.

Psalms 91: 5-7. '*You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; Nor for the pestilence that walks in Darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right*

hand; but it shall not come near you.'

The Lord knows this world is a place of danger, that's why He said 'You should not be afraid of the arrow, or the bullet, or destruction.' Why not? Because in verse 7 He promises '*It shall not come near you.*' You are protected by the hand of Almighty God. Nothing can touch you unless He allows it. An atomic bomb could land at your feet, and it would not singe a hair of your head, unless He allowed it. We saw that in the lives of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. He said don't be afraid of pestilence. He knew about Aids, and Bird flu, and Swine flu, and there's a lot worse to come. But He told us not to be afraid of them because He promised they could not harm us.

10.

The God who protects men

In Romans 8:28 we are told '*All things work together for good, to those who love God.*' The Lord knows that, that's why he placed it in the Bible, and he wants us to believe it. Nothing good or bad can happen to us unless He allows it. You cannot get a cold unless He allows it. No one can steal a hubcap off your car, without God's permission. We are taught that in the book of Job.

Satan had to get the Lord's permission before he could touch anything that belonged to Job. Satan has no power against us, until the Lord gives it to him. And then, he can only do as much as the Lord permits.

The Lord told Satan he could touch anything Job had, but he could not touch Job himself. The second time He said he could do anything to Job's body, but he couldn't take his life. Peter tells us that '*the devil goes about as a roaring lion.*' That's what he wants us to believe he is, a roaring lion. But all power in heaven and earth wasn't given to him. It was given to Jesus, and Satan only has as much power as the lord allows him.

Charles Finney woke one night when he heard something in the corner of his room. He looked across and saw Satan there, and said "It's only you," and turned over and went back to sleep. We don't have to be afraid of the devil.

Pilate said to Jesus, "*Don't you know I have power to crucify you, and I have power to release you?*" Jesus replied, "*You could have no power at all against me, except it was given to you from above.*"

A Pentecostal sister was driving home from fellowship, and she came to an intersection, where she had the right of way, so she went through it. A truck and trailer were coming from the side, and the driver knew he couldn't stop in time to miss her. A

policeman who was parked at the intersection, saw what was about to happen, and began to call for an ambulance and fire engine. But, he watched as the truck passed through the sister's car without touching it. The sister said, she saw the truck's wheels going through the dashboard of her car. We are told *'The footsteps of the righteous are ordered by the Lord.'* That sister's footsteps didn't end at that intersection. She could say to that truck, "You could have no power against me unless it was given to you from above."

In the 1920's, an unbeliever was going around Churches in the United States. During the service he would walk up to the front and put a bottle of strychnine on the pulpit, and say, "You people claim to believe the Bible. Jesus said if they drink any deadly thing it would not harm them. So, come and drink this and prove you believe it." He went from Church, to Church, to Church, without getting any takers. Finally, he walked into the wrong Church. Or the right one. There was a young Baptist Minister there named Roy Davis. He heard in this man's challenge, the voice of Goliath. Goliath stood on a hill and gave a challenge to Israel. "One of you come and fight me. If I win, you'll be our servants. If you win, we'll be your servants." The army of Israel pretended they didn't hear, and thought, if we ignore him, he'll go away. But he didn't. He was there morning, and evening, giving his challenge. John Wesley said, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' But Israel had forgotten that. They had forgotten they were sons of God. They had forgotten they didn't have to fight the battle in their own strength. The battle is the Lord's. The battle is *always* the Lord's. No son or daughter of God, ever has to fight anything in their own strength, if we are willing to give God a chance to be God.

The shepherd boy David, came to the camp of Israel, and heard Goliath's challenge. Then he asked, *"Are you going to let this uncircumcised Philistine defy the army of the Living God?"* That's what Roy Davis heard. An uncircumcised Philistine, defying the army of the Living God. So, he turned to an old minister seated beside him, and said "I'm not going to let this infidel make fun of the Bible." The old Brother replied, "Just sit still, and be quiet, and he'll go away." But Roy wasn't going to let him go away, and leave the army of God in defeat. He walked up to the pulpit, took the bottle in his hand, and said, "I believe the Bible, and I'm not going to let this infidel make fun of it, even if I die." That confession gave God a chance to be God for him. He drank the bottle, and it didn't harm him, because God's Word promised it wouldn't. I don't believe in fanaticism. If I drink a bottle of poison on purpose, I will die. That's tempting God, and He will not protect me in that case.

11.

Fanaticism...Religion without God

There are Churches, where they drink poison, and play with deadly snakes as part of their service. People die in the Churches, from the poison. I saw photos of a young man, who had been bitten by a snake. His arm swelled up, until it split open. The man said "I'm happy to die for the glory of God." And he died in pain on the floor. In Mark chapter 16 we are told that poison won't harm us, and snakes won't harm us. So, something's wrong here. This doesn't bring glory to God, because it's fanaticism.

In the 1980's a group of Ministers from New Zealand went to a convention in Sydney. They stayed in the best rooms, in the best hotel, and said "God would take care of it." But He didn't, and they ended up in court. That's fanaticism too.

12.

The God whom we can trust

In Matthew 6:33, we are told to *'Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and everything else would be given to us.'* When the Bible says that, there are no shortcuts. God comes first. He deserves first place, not second place, and not second best. When Israel gave their offering to the Lord, it was always the first fruits of the flock, and the first fruits of the harvest. But we can open our wallets on Sunday, and there's \$4.30 so that's what the Lord gets, and He will accept that. But he deserves better. He doesn't deserve our leftovers. Paul said *'If the first fruits are holy, then the remainder is holy also.'* So, if we give the Lord the first fruits of anything, He will bless the remainder.

\$90 with the Lord's blessing will buy more than \$100 without it. But, if you can't pay 10% then pay \$10, or \$5, and give the Lord something to bless. Tithing isn't about money, it's about trust. The Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and the wealth in every mine, so He doesn't need our money, but He does want our trust. And he wants us to give him a chance to be God and bless what we have.

It's the same with our time. Why wait until you're in bed, battling to keep your eyes open, to talk to the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings. It's better to meet Him early in the

morning, before your mind is cluttered with the business of the day, when you're calm enough to hear that 'still small Voice,' when He speaks. If we give Him the first fruits of our day, He will bless the remainder.

When I was hunting with a Brother many years ago, we arrived at our campsite at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We quickly set up our tents, and my mate got his rifle, and said, he was going hunting. It was one of those beautiful July days, when you can sit in the sun, and the temperature is just perfect. So, I said, "I'm going to sit here, and enjoy this perfect day the Lord has given us, and I'll go hunting later." We had about 4 hours until dark, and I added, "We'll get more in 5 minutes with the Lord's blessing, than we will in 4 hours without it." My friend said 'You're right.' and sat down. For the next hour we talked about the things of the Lord, and then he said, "I'm going hunting now." I decided I would too.

I crossed the clearing, and walked up into the bush, to the base of a hill I'd never been to before. I stalked along a deer trail, and a deer jumped up before me, and ran up the hill. As it ran between two trees, I shot it; then I looked at my watch, it had been four and a half minutes since I left camp. When I said, we would get more in 5 minutes with the Lord's blessing, than we would in 4 hours without it, I meant it. And I felt, the Lord gave me that deer, as if to say, "Amen. Yes, you will get more with my blessings."

Anything with the Lord's blessing, is always better, than the same thing without it. We saw that, in the life of Peter. He fished all night without the Lord's blessing, and got nothing. But, when he dropped the net into the sea, with the Lord's blessing, it was full of fish. In Romans 12:3, we read, '*God has given to every man, (and that includes, every woman and every child) the measure of faith.*' Faith is not supposed to be some far-off mysterious something, that we reach for, but cannot grasp. Faith is meant to be so close, and so accessible, that we are told in Romans 1:17, '*The just shall live by faith.*' So, take God at his Word, and give Him a chance to be God for you, and He will not disappoint you. Praise His Name!

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Ed.D.