

# REVISIONING JESUS



**A JOURNEY GUIDE**

INITIATED BY ANDREW CHUA



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## Revisioning Jesus (version 0.1)

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Like my own life, I hope this is a continuous work in progress that is developed through collaboration. Feel free to email any comments, suggestions, improvements or your interest in being more involved in collaborating on future versions of this to [jesusyourfriend@gmail.com](mailto:jesusyourfriend@gmail.com). I'm also interested in you sharing with me any thoughts, changes in lifestyle, projects, dreams or forms of art inspired by this work.

The pdf of this is freely downloadable from [andrewchua.com](http://andrewchua.com).

If you can help me turn this more into a collaborative project, please contact me. I haven't done it as a wiki because I think the presentation layout is also important. Layout is currently been done in Adobe InDesign CS4. If you want me to help modify it for your own purposes, I'm open to your ideas too.

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I don't know what you think of God or Jesus, or whether you even care much about them at the moment, but thanks for being open-minded about looking at this stuff as some one who wants to lead and take responsibility for others and have some part in shaping their lives.

**A lot of how you think and behave right now is crap.** Ok, maybe I'm just talking about myself here, because I know that I don't always think and do things that is the best for me. I find that even when things are going great, that if I allow how I think and do things to be questioned and challenged, I find new ways of doing things that usually end up better. So I reckon it's useful to every now and again question what I think I know.

This is a chance for you to explore what you think about existence.

How you think about the bigger questions of life matters, as it is the lens in which you will see yourself, what you value and then how you relate to others and the rest of existence.

And after the universe (and possibly multi-universes), you can't think of something much greater than the concept of the entity that makes the claim it created everything in existence. But don't worry this journey guide isn't about trying to convert you, but just present views for you to consider.

Then again maybe you've got this all worked out already and you'll complete this reflection guide quickly and comprehensively. If so, at the very least, you'll end up with a clear record to share with others about what you believe and what your life is about at this point in your life.

# Personal Confession time..

Everyone works out of certain frameworks. Whether I think a mate is doing the right thing chasing after someone quite different in age to him will be based on what I already believe. Even if I want what is best for him, some of my own opinions are going to colour how I relate with him.

Here's some upfront confessions about what I believe:

**God respects all our personal journeys.** He's a big believer (and the inventor) of us making free choices in our lives. You have your reasons for why you believe and live right now.

**God wants to improve the lives of everyone,** no matter whether they believe in him, another religious system, nothing at all or something else.

**God hates religion.** OK, maybe hate is a strong word but certainly when Jesus came onto the scene, Jesus got most angry at the people that claimed to speak on God's behalf. He even smashed up stuff in their holy meeting place. Sure there is value in current religious systems, but he was more interested in 'real life'.

**There's lots of wrong ideas about what Jesus and God are about.** Unfortunately some of those wrong ideas are said by people who call themselves his followers. Inaccurate ideas can have serious consequences on how you live, your goals, and effects on others.

**Everyone who calls themselves Christian don't always reflect Jesus** and he's not too happy about that.

**I believe the writings called the Bible are the real thoughts of God,** but we have to remember like any form of communication, unless we understand the intent of the speaker and the situation it was said in, we can get the wrong idea about what is being said.

# common ideas about existence

You may or may not currently hold these views. As previously said this journey guide isn't about necessarily trying to change any of your views. Feel free to mark any you believe in or want to discuss further.



- God and religion were just primitive humans ways of making sense of their lives.
- God is an illogical concept.
- The existence of God explains so much of why humanity and the world is as it is.
- Science proves religion is wrong.
- There is no proof for God so therefore he is only an imaginary concept.
- There is so much proof of God's existence but people choose to ignore it.
- People's religious beliefs are private things and should largely be kept to themselves.
- God hates the kind of person I am, so it doesn't make sense to believe in Him.
- Religion is about how to live morally right.
- There is nothing that is absolutely 'good' or absolutely 'evil.'
- Religion is good for kids, but eventually we grow out of it.
- Humanity doesn't need religion in order to be good.
- Religion has to evolve or adapt to change like all human-made laws.
- Getting rid of different religions would reduce violence in the world.
- All religions are basically about the same thing.
- There are many paths to God, not one religion has a monopoly on what is true.
- There is only one true God.
- Jesus never existed or if he did he was just an ordinary human being.
- The Christian bible is largely a work of fiction
- The Christian bible is the perfect literal record of the words of God.
- God is all powerful but chooses not to interfere at all with humanity or the world.
- God demands all people live the way he created them to live or suffer punishment.
- God is personal and is intimately involved in all aspects of an individual's life.

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# DOODLE / IMAGINE / DREAM SPACE



*USE THIS PAGE TO DOODLE, IMAGINE OR DREAM WHAT WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE EXISTENCE FOR ALL PEOPLE AND CREATION. YOU MIGHT WANT TO WRITE LYRICS TO AN ORIGINAL OR PREVIOUSLY COMPOSED SONG, OR SCENES OF A DANCE IN YOUR SOUL.*

# life - but not as we know it?

## Read Matthew 5:1-12

Consider the following when reading the passage:

- ▽ This is Jesus' first public gig, the launch of his career as God's representative on earth.
- ▽ Matthew, the reporter, is a Jew and writing to Jews. They don't like to say 'God' as they think people will forget how special God is if they use his name or refer to him directly like that. Matthew uses the phrase 'kingdom of heaven' while the other biographers of Jesus, Mark & Luke, use 'Kingdom of God' and John uses "Eternal Life."
- ▽ "Disciple" is term meaning "apprentice" or someone who wants to learn off another
- ▽ "Blessed" is another term for 'those that God loves best or is most impressed with.'
- ▽ When the Jews refer to family relationships such as 'children' of so-and-so, they mean that individual(s) thinks and acts like their father or mother.
- ▽ The prophets were appointed by God to remind others about God's view on major events.
- ▽ The Bible often repeats the same thought if it is really important.



What doesn't make sense to you about this passage?

What kind of people are God saying are 'blessed'?

What kind of people does society say are those that should be loved most, or that we should be most impressed by?

**What does it mean for people who don't fit into the categories that Matt 5 mentions ?**

**What kind of suffering do you think will be faced by those committed to be like Jesus ?**

**What do you think Matthew 5:10-12 means for you personally ?**

**If God is in charge of everything, why do you think he allows people that are trying to live like He did to suffer or even be killed ?**

**Is there any value in suffering ?**

# what shapes us?



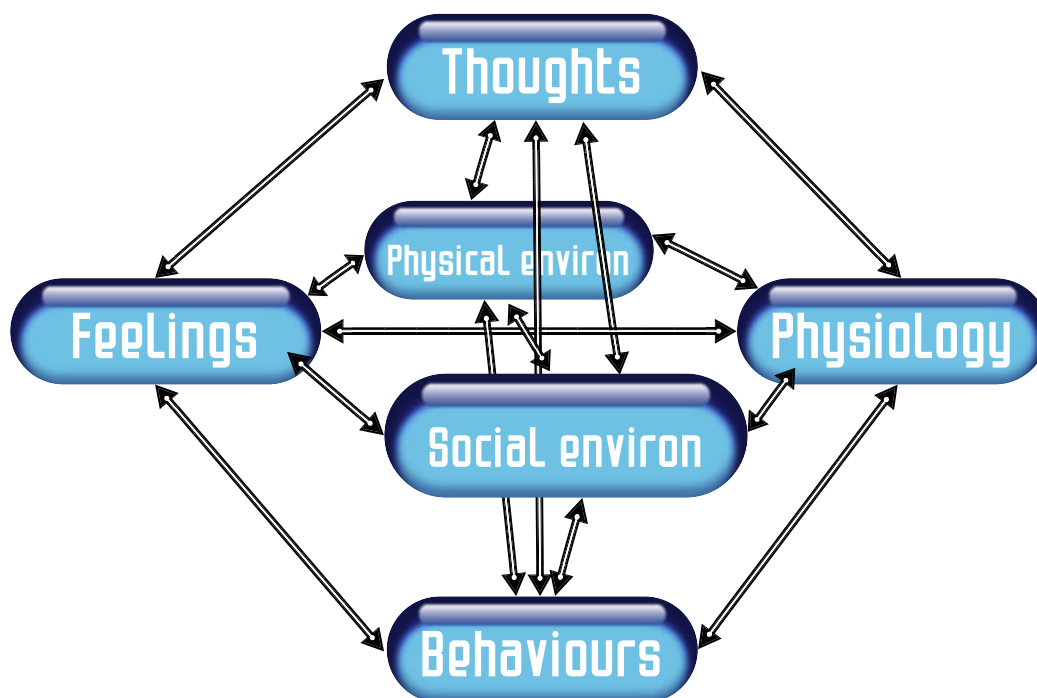
Think for a moment about going to the toilet (the more solid going). Write down what you think triggers it, determines how and when you go, what you actually do during the process, how you finish and what else you do around the experience of it:

What do you think has shaped you to approach going to the toilet this way?

What differences in approaching this activity do you think other people may have to you?

Going to the toilet is an activity or function that's basic to every human (almost all animals) and yet how you do it is shaped by so many different factors. In western settings, whether you scrunch or fold is usually an amusing question. Additionally, males and females tend to wipe in opposite directions. We certainly don't treat it the same way animals do, and the processes around it can be quite different across many different cultures. In fact, all basic functions of survival have variations across the world. Eating differs across cultures in what we eat and what we don't, what tools we use to eat with, how much we eat and when we eat. Similarly what and how we drink, sit, sleep, clean ourselves, relax, relate to others, identify others and increasingly approach sex are shaped by many factors.

A useful model of considering this is a 3-D lattice structure:



Essentially this diagram conveys that how we think, feel or behave at any moment could be the result of other factors like our physiology (eg needing to go to the toilet, or just the temperature of the room, or the presence of others). However our feelings, thoughts and behaviours can also have a continuous influence on our physiology, or the environment we exist in.

Going back to the toilet example, you probably think the way you approach is reasonable and generally logical. That is sometimes we can 'justify' why we behaved the way we did, even though it is sometimes not our thinking that comes first. So much of what we do in life is a result of other factors rather than because we think it is best. However when pressed sometimes we justify or 'rationalise' rather than face that it might not always be a 'positive' or 'helpful' approach.

By the way, physiologically speaking, western modern toilets don't encourage the most efficient posture for excreting faeces. This example may be a subtle metaphor for so much of how we would benefit from rethinking so much of how we approach life.

# cultural filters

There are a lot of assumptions made in Australian society about how we should be and what we should care about.



Describe a well-adjusted healthy person

Describe a good and comfortable lifestyle

Describe a successful person

**What is important for a fair existence for people**

**Therefore what specifically should a church (or any other group of Christ imitators) try to do for or offer people outside their group**

**What do you think the answers would be like for someone ....**

# clarifying your beliefs

*"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless  
and so is your faith."  
1 Corinthians 15:14.*

What is ok to wear in public and what isn't? What jobs are worth doing and not worth doing? When is the right age or time for sex? Should everyone be allowed to live without any restrictions on their lives? What are ok ways to get back at or punish others?

Even if we don't know why we believe what we do, what we do believe shapes how we think, feel and act towards ourselves and others, what we value and what motivates us. Therefore it is valuable to pause and think about what you believe. Whether you call yourself Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist or nothing at all, it is useful to have to clarify your view about God and Jesus.



**God is most likely/ definitely real/not real because...**

*(Provide evidence for how God has or has not personally affected your life to explain why you think or feel God is real or not)*



# what I think god is like



Tick the words you think best describe God. Don't worry too much if you're not sure of some of the meanings - just don't choose those. Feel free to add additional words at the end.

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Your top 7 words to describe God	1	2	3
	4	5	6
			7

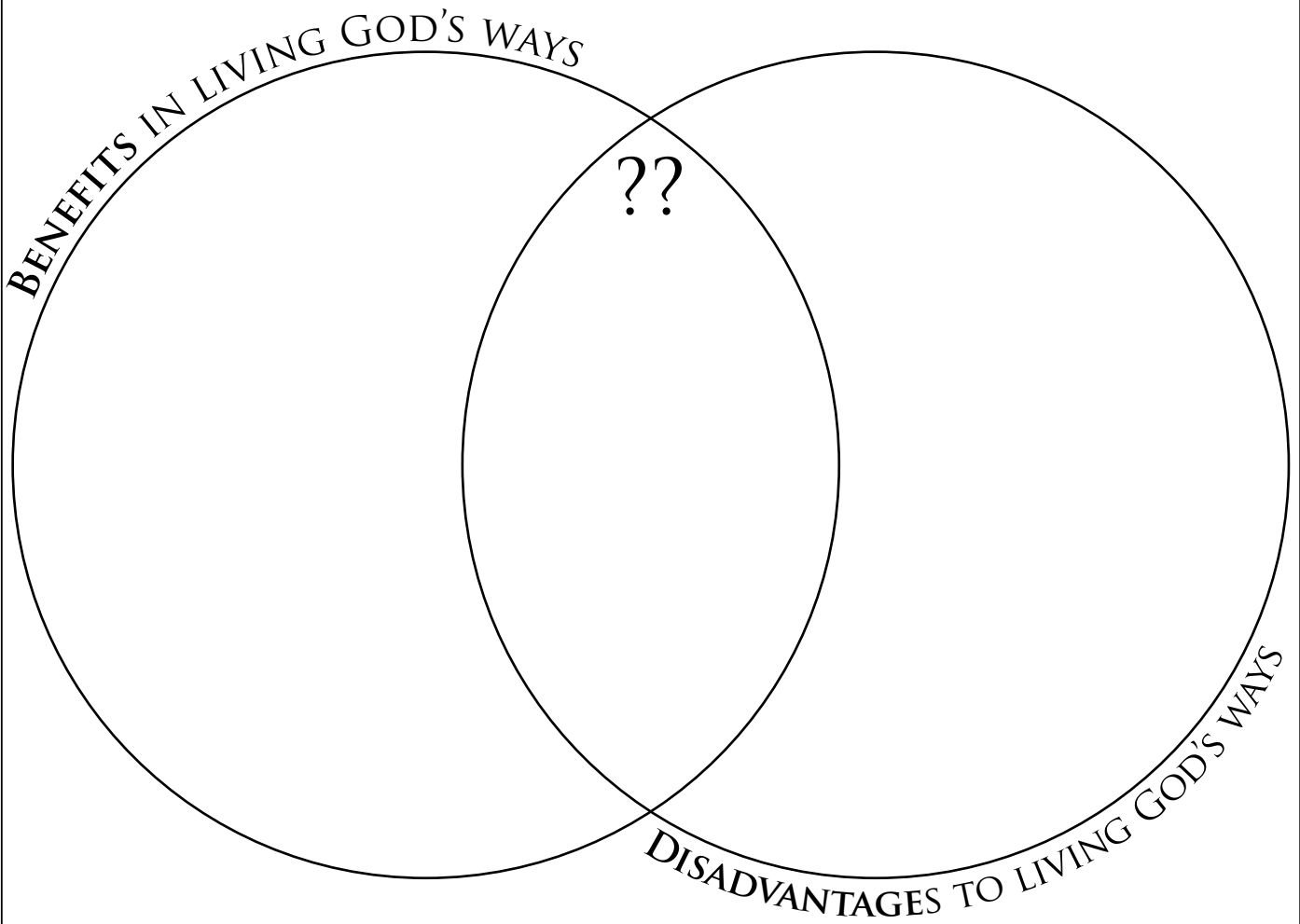
**What does God (he/she/it) actually think of humans ?**

**How does God in reality affect the lives of humans ?**

**What does God want for humanity and the world ?**

**What will God do about people who don't do what he teaches or wants us to do ?**

How does it benefit/disadvantage someone (you) to live like God teaches is or wants us to do?



Other questions about God should we think about or you want answers for...

# what I think Jesus is like



Tick the words you think best describe Jesus. Don't worry too much if you're not sure of some of the meanings - just don't choose those. Feel free to add additional words at the end.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> crude         | <input type="checkbox"/> good          | <input type="checkbox"/> non-existent  | <input type="checkbox"/> sneaky       | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cruel         | <input type="checkbox"/> gracious      | <input type="checkbox"/> obedient      | <input type="checkbox"/> squeamish    | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cynical       | <input type="checkbox"/> greedy        | <input type="checkbox"/> obnoxious     | <input type="checkbox"/> stable       | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dangerous     | <input type="checkbox"/> grieving      | <input type="checkbox"/> omnipotent    | <input type="checkbox"/> stimulating  | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> deceitful     | <input type="checkbox"/> gruesome      | <input type="checkbox"/> omniscient    | <input type="checkbox"/> stingy       | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decisive      | <input type="checkbox"/> grumpy        | <input type="checkbox"/> open-minded   | <input type="checkbox"/> stubborn     | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |

Your top 7 words to describe Jesus	1	2	3
	4	5	6
		7	

[Edit My Profile](#)

## Jesus Liberator

[Wall](#) [Info](#) [Photos](#) [+](#)

If you were to create a Facebook account for Jesus, what would it say about what he was like as a person?

What things about being human do you find it hard to imagine Jesus doing (eating, dancing, going to the toilet, farting, ejaculating, getting frustrated with others, getting angry, getting tired, etc)?

What areas of your life do you think it would be difficult for you to think, feel and act like Jesus?

# to follow god...



What do you think someone needs to do to be acceptable to God?

What behaviours do you think is important for someone to be a good follower of God?

What beliefs do you think is important for someone to be a good follower of God?

Anything else?

# missing the point

Have you ever seen a movie that you really enjoyed and thought was great and later you talked to someone else you knew about it and they didn't like it at all? Somehow you both experienced the same thing and yet reacted totally differently to it. Sometimes it's because of individual tastes, but sometimes it's because you really 'got the movie' and they missed the point of it, choosing instead to focus on more minor aspects of it rather than appreciate the bigger picture.



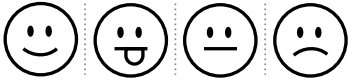
Feel free to make your own list of films, books, songs, video games, etc where that has happened for you, where people have only focussed on some small parts - eg didn't like the violence, or didn't have enough violence, or good music, or whatever...

This kind of narrow focus affects how a lot of people think about Jesus and God and what he expects of us, as individuals and as a group. Having a wider view often results in greater enjoyment and enrichment of the experience.

# god in our neighbourhood



Imagine if the celebrity you admired most came and stayed with you and decide to live with you in your life, doing stuff you do, hanging with the people you hang with and understanding life from your perspective. Rate and explain how it would that make you feel about yourself?



'Incarnational' usually refers to a god who 'becomes flesh' and lives among us (John 1:14). He enters our world and relates to us as 'one of us'. What do you think that means about how God sees humans and our lives?

What does that say about Jesus if he lived on earth for about 30 years and no one noticed he was God, nor did he make a fuss about it?



Jesus lived and breathed the specific culture he 'grew up' in. Except where it really mattered, he often did things the way everyone else around him did. People saw him just like them, a fairly ordinary bloke, he didn't wear anything special, he spoke in ways they could all relate to and talked about things they knew well. In fact the whole history recorded in the Bible has God pushing people into new cultural settings and getting them to adapt and re-understand how they should live their lives in those new contexts. Even the reason you can read the Bible in your own language is because the ideas of God can be expressed in every culture and language rather than relying and expecting people to understand it in its original language.

**What does this mean for how individuals that want to reflect or imitate Jesus should live?**

**What does this mean for how a church (or any other group of Christ imitators) should relate to and approach people outside their group they want to relate to?**

# knowing god & his goals



What ways do you think you can get to know God?

- |  |  |                                |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> praying to God                        | <input type="checkbox"/> reading the Christian Bible           | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing God through our prayers       | <input type="checkbox"/> reading other Christian writings      | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing God through God-aware people  | <input type="checkbox"/> reading other spiritual writings      | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing God through others            | <input type="checkbox"/> reading other writings/comics         | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing God directly                  | <input type="checkbox"/> singing songs or playing music to God | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> listening to Christian speakers       | <input type="checkbox"/> listening to Christian songs or music | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> listening to other spiritual speakers | <input type="checkbox"/> listening to other songs or music     | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> through our hearts                    | <input type="checkbox"/> watching Christian movies             | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> through our conscience                | <input type="checkbox"/> watching other movies                 | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> through dreams                        | <input type="checkbox"/> creating art with God                 | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> through meditation/thinking about God | <input type="checkbox"/> being active with God                 | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> through prophets (messengers of God)  | <input type="checkbox"/> spending time with others             | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sensing God in nature                 | <input type="checkbox"/> spending time alone                   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

What works best for you to know God better?

What doesn't work at all for you?

What do you think is the clearest way(s) that God communicates with you or others?

# The Bible

God created us with the ability to relate to him, so within all of us is a sense that there is something greater out there, than just what we can detect with our five physical senses. We sense the spiritual or God at times in the beauty and genius of nature, through relationships with other humans, or through our conscience. Personally (and also historically in Christian circles), I believe God gave us the Bible as a clearer record of what he wants us to know about him.

Now the Bible is not meant to be a comprehensive encyclopedia (or wikipedia) of God, the universe and everything. Like a slightly incomplete jigsaw puzzle, it doesn't worry about telling us everything, but it does give us enough pieces to make sense of what the overall picture is about. The Bible tells us all we need to know about God, but not necessarily all we might want to know. Amazingly written by different human authors, everything in it says what God wanted it to say (2 Tim 3:14-17; 2 Pet 1:16-21).

However, there is so much in the Bible, it is a book that has been misused (to support bad ideas such as wars and oppression) and incorrectly understood (to promote actions that go against God's original intentions) throughout history - especially when you read bits of it completely out of context.

Another reason why it has been misunderstood is because rather than being a single 'book' (although it does have a unifying theme), it is actually a library of books of all sorts of genres or types of literature. Inside are letters, songs, poems, witty sayings, histories, law statements and guidelines, philosophical musings, fantasy allegories, and other mini-stories.

Some songs or stories are best understood in the historical and situational context of the author. Which is why some of these are constantly remade and remixed for a newer audience, because although aspects of the wrapping is outdated, the core message still resonants well for all.

# Deciphering the Bible

Four things to keep in mind to understand more clearly how to read anything in the Bible:

- **THE BACKGROUND** - Although the meanings of the Bible is timeless, in order to understand it you need to think about the historical background and circumstances of the original audience. Don't treat it like an instruction manual for a new piece of technology. For example, Luke 13:14-15 if read literally says we should regularly be washing other people's feet.
- **THE CONTEXT** - Like any story, you need to read any verse or section of the Bible in relation to what else is around it, and the overall theme of the whole book. The Bible has been greatly misused when bits of it has been quoted out of context. Recently many misquote Proverbs 29:18 only using the first half of the verse, and missing the main point of living out what we already know of God's law for our lives.
- **THE MEANING NOW** - Everything in the Bible (well maybe not just one word or sentence on its own) has some meaning for you and your community now . It is not meant to be a history, science or even a systematic theology textbook; or just a collection of poems or philosophical thoughts, its purpose is to be a practical guide of what God is on about, His mission for all creation and the part you have to play in it. For example, in Matt 7:1 - what exactly does it mean for me to not judge others ?
- **UNDERSTANDING IT WITH OTHERS** - The Bible was not aimed at individuals, but was always written to be read and understood by groups of people - well at least two (Deut. 11:19; 1 Tim 4:13).

Now you may have heard there are many different kinds or translations of the Bible. To a large extent it doesn't matter which Bible you choose to read - find a translation that is mostly understandable to you. The New International Version (NIV) seems to be pretty popular.

Personally, I think the English language used in most Bibles is still a bit awkward. Jesus comes across as formal and a bit too stiff, or he comes across as too middle-class rather than someone who relates well to everyone and was about real life, rather than just focussed on 'spiritual matters',

# Exploring the Bible within a group

Read Matthew 6:5-13.



Matthew 5:25 & 6:1 comments about who Jesus is talking to. What types of people do you think were there? What were their backgrounds? What were they interested in or after?

Jesus makes some comments about how we talk to God. (Matt 6:5-8). What shouldn't we do when we talk to God?

*It's probably unlikely they were chasing after religion, but more interested in how their lives could be better. The majority again were unlikely to be that educated or interested in just purely philosophical or theological issues. Have a go at rewriting Matt 6:9-13 without an religious jargon. Explain in your own words what you think he was trying to say about how we talk to God.*

# what does jesus want?

They say "everyone wants something." What was Jesus about? We can get a sense of that by looking at what they end up talking most about. The single thing Jesus talks most about is the "kingdom of God".

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matt. 4:17*  
*"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15*  
*But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." Luke 4:43*

The phrase "Kingdom of Heaven"; "Kingdom of God" and "eternal life" is used interchangeably by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in their accounts of Jesus' life.

In the time of Jesus, the 'known' world was ruled by the ultimate king, Caesar. 'Good news' was actually a political term, describing any of the victories of Caesar. By conquering others, Caesar was able to bring greater peace to all, and better rewards.



For the people living in the 'kingdom of Caesar', how did Caesar affect their lives?

References for "Kingdom of Heaven/God" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3; 5:10; 5:19; 5:20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11; 11:12; 12:28; 13:11; 13:24; 13:31; 13:33; 13:43; 13:44; 13:45; 13:47; 13:52; 16:19; 18:1; 18:3; 18:4; 18:23; 19:12; 19:14; 19:23; 19:24; 20:1; 21:31; 21:43; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1; Mark 1:15; 4:11; 4:26; 4:30; 9:1; 9:47; 10:14; 10:15; 10:23; 10:24; 10:25; 11:10; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Luke 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1; 8:10; 9:2; 9:11; 9:27; 9:60; 9:62; 10:9; 10:11; 11:20; 13:18; 13:20; 13:28; 13:29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20; 17:21; 18:16; 18:17; 18:24; 18:25; 18:29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16; 22:18; 23:51; John 3:3; 3:5).

References for 'eternal life' (Matt. 19:16; 19:29; 25:46; Mark 10:17; 10:30; Luke 10:25; 18:18; 18:30; John 3:15; 3:16; 3:36; 4:14; 4:36; 5:24; 5:39; 6:27; 6:40; 6:54; 6:68; 10:28; 12:25; 12:50; 17:2; 17:3).

**What did it mean to the people living in that time to hear Jesus talking about a different kingdom soon to be in place?**

**What do you think John 17:3 means?**

**What do you think Jesus meant by 'kingdom of God'?**

**The early followers didn't call themselves Christians (which means literally little Christs) but said they were followers of the Way. How useful is it to talk more about what we're on about is more about the way you live rather than a 'religion'?**

**You might have heard of Martin Luther King's speech "I have a dream". The 'dream' he referred to was the 'kingdom of God'. What other modern terms or ideas can be used instead of the term 'kingdom'?**

# DOODLE / IMAGINE / DREAM SPACE



*HAS YOUR IDEAS OF THE ULTIMATE  
EXISTENCE CHANGED? USE THIS SPACE TO  
UPDATE YOUR DREAMS OR DEEP GROANINGS*

# how was jesus going to do it?



When Jesus prays in what we call the Lord's prayer "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven", what do you think Jesus meant?

Matthew 28:19-20 is generally considered the clearest direction Jesus gives to all who regard him well as what they need to do. Do you think he is giving them instructions to form an organisation to create structures to do these things, or was he expecting them to do take personal responsibility for this?

What do you think he meant by "go"?

What do you think he meant by "make disciples of all nations"?

**What do you think he meant by “baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”?**

**What do you think he meant by “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”?**

**What do you think he meant by “I am with you always, to the very end of the age”?**

# like a virus?

Over the last couple of years there have been real fears about worldwide pandemics: AIDS, ebola, bird flu and swine flu. The concern is that once someone is affected, through their contact with others the virus spreads easily and thrives in an exponential way. One, becomes two, then four, then sixteen, sixty-four, then 4096, and so on. It's growth by multiplication rather than addition.

Viral marketing is highly regarded by the advertising world as the best way of spreading their messages. You've probably seen a few viral videos already through the 'net and been involved in helping others see the same.

"Go" is an action word that implies spreading out, rather than waiting for someone else to do something or come to you. It is not something that should be contained. And God lived his message, he didn't just remain far away from humanity, he came to them often. From the very start, it talks about God walking with and relating with the first man in his space and setting. And that interaction of a God who comes near continues throughout the Biblical story. The creation of the Jewish nation, started with God asking a seemingly ordinary man and asking him to go from his familiar home and life and to go out into the unknown to new settings and new people. When they became numerous to be considered a race, they were again asked to go into new settings, again and again and again. Then at the start of a new way of dealing with humanity, God actually goes from his 'home' into the world of humans by being born and living a human life on earth among the rest of humanity. And then, Jesus says for them to pass-it-on in a similar fashion. Go from the familiar to new settings and new people. Spread out.

Historically, this has been called the mission of God (*missio deo*), whereas today a lot of Christian leaders are talking about missional DNA of God's people. Every Jesus fan, follower, student, imitator, Christian or whatever title they give themselves should have as a vital part of their psyche or beliefs that they should always be spreading (missional) and infecting and impacting others and the world around them. Every individual is responsible for this, and wherever they are and whatever they are doing they need to keep in mind they are God's people who are spreading his dream of 'the reality of God's dream for the world'.

The comparison to a virus is important, because with the wrong DNA, bad things happen. And God's people with the wrong DNA or wrong understanding (or even just poor understanding) of God end up replicating and spreading the wrong thing, and God's people end up behaving in ways that don't resemble Jesus at all, even if they are being sincere and well-intentioned.

That's why it is important to revisit our beliefs and what we think God is about every now and again to ensure the wrong DNA isn't passed on.

# Learning to be you



Write down all the behaviours and actions you performed in an average normal day, also include any interactions you had with anybody else.

Now, go through that list and circle any that you do because you read it somewhere exactly how to do it that way. Then fill in the following table:

Total # ticked	Total # of behaviours

*A large majority of how we actually behave in our lives is an amalgamation of how we have seen other people behave. The way we speak is largely because we follow those around us, which is why we have clues to where someone comes from by their accent which they learned from others around them.*

If you give thanks before you eat, what do you usually say?

*So like all our behaviours, how we behave related to God is generally likewise the result of the people we have observed. Think about how you behave when you pray, what words you may use, and what you pray about.*

# Being a disciple



What do you think the significance of Jesus spending three years with only just a small number of people around him almost 24/7?

*The fact that we learn most through observational contact should makes us think about how we develop as "disciples". The word "disciple" is usually translated as 'student' but I think the better term is 'apprentice', that is someone that is trying to not only learn knowledge but actually how to do things the same way as their tutor. Learn the effective method first through observation and imitation, and then experiment and build on it later. To be a Jesus apprentice would obviously include all those bits after it like baptising and getting them to follow all that Jesus commanded.*

How would someone learn best how to imitate Jesus ?

Considered Jesus modelled how to develop disciples (which was followed also by his disciples taking on their own apprentices), how different does modern Christianity or church do this ?

How effective do you think you've been trained to imitate and reflect Jesus in these areas:

- How I approach my physical state
- How I approach my mental state
- How I experience my imagination
- How I experience food
- How I experience drinks
- How I experience rest and sleep
- How I experience my sexual desires and attractions
- How I experience my appearance
- How I experience boredom
- How I experience flatness
- How I experience loneliness
- How I experience anger
- How I experience frustration
- How I experience loss
- How I experience joy
- How I experience peace
- How I experience and show love
- How I experience unfairness
- How I experience temptation
- How I judge others
- how I experience self-discipline
- How I relate to my family
- How I relate to my peers
- How I develop friendships
- How I relate to unfamiliar people
- How I relate to people on the fringe
- How to care for difficult people
- How to care for people against you
- How I use my time
- How I approach local issues
- How I approach global issues
- How I approach the economy
- How I approach money making
- What I spend money on
- What I need to survive on
- What I should sacrifice
- How I experience God in the everyday
- How to recognise God in others
- How to see God's work
- How I reflect on my life
- How I spend time in silence and quiet
- How I communicate with God
- How I hear from God
- How I understand the Bible
- How I question the Bible
- How I question God
- How I make requests of God
- How I experience impatience with God
- How I experience anger to God
- How I experience disappointment to God
- How I submit to God
- How I share my experience of God with others
- How I personally can help others experience God for themselves
- How I personally can help others grow in their experience of God

What other areas of life would you appreciate training:

Who do I currently know who could help me more with some of these ?

# Why should you disciple?



Jesus said to each of his followers to have the missional DNA within to spread out and to make disciples. When do you think he meant for someone to start making their own disciples and taking on their own apprentice?

Read what the teacher and church planter Paul writes in Phil 3:12-17. What's your reaction to that?

In other passages like 1 Cor 4:16, Eph 5:1, and Phil 4:9, Paul urges others to imitate him. Why?

Ever thought you knew something and then got asked to teach it to someone else? Did actually having to teach or train someone else help you better in your mastery of it?



# How to disciple?

The easiest way to start apprenticing is just spend time with them regularly and in all sorts of situations. Don't limit it to just situations where you or them are totally in control. Jesus brought his disciples with him everywhere he went, no matter whether he was going to be welcomed or not, whether he was feeling up to being around other people or not, whether he was going to deal with them directly or just have them hang around to eavesdrop or spy on him.

Don't over-spiritualise the experience by trying to train them 'spiritually' each time you connect, but also remind yourself every now and again that you are intentionally trying to show them how to become more like Jesus as you try to become more like Jesus.



Write down one (1) person you can start discipling within a week.

How will you involve them in activities that you currently (or will) do:

> to experience God more?

> to develop further as an apprentice of Jesus?

> to share with and help others experience the kingdom dream reality of Jesus?

# Support from others

Think of anything you've achieved in your life. Was it all due to your own efforts? Were there others encouraging you, helping you out behind the scenes, just being there when things got too hard, or being around so you could share the success of achievement with?

Catching up with people that want to help you achieve your goals is invaluable, and it is even more helpful when they have the same or similar goals also.

Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians (2:19-22, 4:11-16, 4:29) and more succinctly in Hebrews (10:23-25) about the benefits of catching up with others for the purposes of mutually supporting each other to develop more as imitators of Jesus and to help others experience more of the Kingdom. This is significant when taken together with Romans 12:1-2 which provides the only New Testament reference to how to define the word 'worship':

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer 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."*

Regular Christian gatherings should be more like a coaching session or Weight Watchers support group rather than a concert where most people sit with their backs to others watching a small group of people do stuff. Jesus developed his disciples through intimate personal contact, and we should imitate his model too.

Sure there is value in mass big performance events, but we shouldn't see them as the primary model to develop as Jesus' apprentices.

Instead Jesus main way of developing his apprentices was by having them observe him relate to others, and then sending them out to try it themselves (Matt 10, Mark 6, Luke 9, Luke 10), and then debrief their successes and failures, providing feedback on how to improve and develop further (John 21).

Additionally, eating was a big part of the stories about Jesus and also in the stories Jesus tells. In fact when people were against Jesus, one of their insults about Jesus was that he was 'a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."' (Matt 11:19; and Luke 7:34). The Old Testament spoke a lot about the importance of hospitality and Jesus continues to use the idea of an open party or banquet to describe what the Kingdom of God is like (Matt 22, 25; Luke 14). He even said everything we had a full meal (Matt 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 6) we should remember him - so, it's kind of strange we remember him now with a sip of grape juice and a bit of bikkie, instead of a full meal. Maybe that's why so many feel like we only get a little piece of Jesus, rather than feel like he's in every part of our lives.

Cooking is not only a valuable skill to feed yourself, impress friends and potential partners, but also a way of helping people experience the kingdom of God, especially if they are others that can't do the same back.



How else can you help others experience the 'kingdom of God' ?

# gatherings of jesus imitators

**"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." Colossians 3:16.**

Paul encouraged all who were interested in Jesus' way of life to meet together for mutual encouragement and support to live it out. Sharing about God and his ideas can train or remind each other what life is really about or experience more of being in relationship with God; work out how to avoid or get around problems we face reflecting God in all of our lives; or how to further feel encouraged and supported as we strive to help others experience practically God's ways in their lives.

From the world's view point, 'Christianity' started as a rebel Jewish sect or cult - and so initially was avoided and ridiculed, and later persecuted. As an illegal subversive underground movement, they met where ever they could in secluded places. For at least the first two hundred years of its existence, Christians never owned or had a building dedicated to meeting together with God - because they believed that God "does not live in houses made by men" (Acts 7:48) but was everywhere. They were focused on what would spur them on to continue living for and reflecting God, and to never ever forget who they were and what they were on about.

But after about three hundred years of being a subversive movement, a Roman Emperor (Constantine) became a believer, and the religion of Christianity started to take on and reflect the splendour and ceremony and glamour worthy of the most powerful leader of the known world. It also became more structured and all sorts of layers added to it in order to be a mass delivery system to cope with the huge influx of people wanting to jump on the religious bandwagon to be associated with the Emperor.

So we now have what we call 'worship services' - where Christians can retreat from the pagan world and feel only now are they in the presence of God (if it is a good service). The 'service' (is this where we get served our spiritual food?) usually has to have singing and a lecture from the Bible and where Christian fellowship is to be enjoyed (while sitting in rows arranged like a classroom). What does the New Testament say 'worship' is about anyway (Romans 12:1)?

It is hard to imagine that this would be the same set-up for an underground movement that was obsessed with trying to keep their faith in an omnipotent God (who is in control of the whole universe) alive and relevant in the midst of persecution.

So keeping in mind that followers of God are encouraged to gather to build each other's faith and its impact on their lives and others, what do you think could or should happen when they come together...



**What areas of life should be explored from God's view ?**

**What things about God should be explored further (and why)?**

**How could these issues be explored (ie, is the classroom lecture the only way)?**

**Knowing that we gather to be encouraged and trained to 'remember God is in control and that we are his change agents in the world', what actually activities can (or should) we do to help us achieve these goals when God's followers gather ?**

**Rather than deal with vague concepts so they will be applicable to everyone, how can individuals be challenged to share and discuss what it practically means for themselves in tangible ways ?**

Put together a building up time of Christian fellowship focused on God using either of the following suggested theme:

- Why do we celebrate the execution and death of one illegitimate Jewish terrorist?
- What does it actually really practically mean to be Christ as a teenager today?

# connecting personally with jesus

As previously said, Jesus needs to be the grand trainer and coach. That means following some instructions even when we personally don't feel like it or think is the most logical thing to do. We need to submit to him and just sometimes obey without question. That's why, historically, so many use the phrase "Jesus is lord." Not because we are brainless robots, but because he is the one that knows best.

So, to be imitators of Christ, of course, we need to connect with him. Now God is with us always - in every microsecond of our day no matter where we are, who we are with and what we are doing - caring for us and wanting us to see the world around us through his eyes. But we can easily ignore and forget his constant presence and not think of him at all - even people that do 'good and righteous' things all the time forget that God is present and don't pay any attention to him. Enjoy his presence and seek to see life with him.



What are ways that I can allow this to happen more in my daily and weekly life?



# checkups to keep thinking right

As I said in the initial hiya section, we all have areas of thinking that are wrong. I have some ideas about God and Jesus that many others will think are wrong. Some of these ideas I think I have strong Biblical justification in support, others are based more on personal desires and needs that I rationalise, while others have no justification at all because I haven't thought enough about them. In fact every significant Biblical character (ok, maybe not Jesus), as well as all the great writers, teachers and leaders of God have had areas of wrong thinking in their lives (and responsible for injecting the wrong DNA into modern Christianity at various points of history).

In fact I think one of the problems we have today is too many people running around fighting over who has the right vision of Jesus and God based on human summaries of what God is about rather than revisiting over and over again who and what Jesus was about.

This is not to say that I'm against creeds or doctrinal statements. Paul attempts one in Colossians 1. I'm also including two over the next two pages. They are useful to draw our attention to what might be significant for our time and situation. But God gave us the whole Bible to help us understand him. To think we can summarise the whole Bible into a few lines on one page and use that as the sole judge of what is right (orthodoxy) and wrong (heresy) about God seems a bit presumptuous. The Pharisees tried to do that with the Old Testament and ended up missing the point.

And this is a lesson we need to re-learn continuously. You would think that big church leader Peter after given such a clear vision from God in Acts 10, should have known better from that time on. But later in Galatians 2, Paul had to tell Peter off for going against the same thing.



If we don't use compliance to doctrinal statements as the main way of dealing with heresy, how should we approach dealing with heresy?

What does Matthew 13 have to say about how God deals with heresy today? How has he modelled this in how he deals with humanity?

# examples of creeds

## the apostles' creed

Initially written in 140AD,

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the Maker of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:  
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He arose again from the dead;*

*He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father  
Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and  
the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost;  
the holy catholic church;  
the communion of saints;  
the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body;  
and the life everlasting.*

*Amen.*

An expansion of the Apostle's Creed was created at a council of all the main leaders of various Christian churches called the First Council of Nicaea to define unity of beliefs for the whole of all Christian followers in 325. Later versions also were created and agreed upon.

 What do you think prompted them to create this ?

Why do Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches continually come together every few decades to revisit and modify their common creed ?

# *the jesus creed*

2004 Brian McLaren

*We have confidence in Jesus  
Who healed the sick, the blind, and the paralysed.  
And even raised the dead.*

*He cast out evil powers and  
Confronted corrupt leaders.  
He cleansed the temple.  
He favoured the poor.  
He turned water into wine,  
Walked on water, calmed storms.*

*He died for the sins of the world,  
Rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father,  
Sent the Holy Spirit.*

*We have confidence in Jesus  
Who taught in word and example,  
Sign and wonder.  
He preached parables of the kingdom of God  
On hillsides, from boats, in the temple, in homes,  
At banquets and parties, along the road, on  
beaches, in towns,  
By day and by night.*

*He taught the way of love for God and neighbour,  
For stranger and enemy, for outcast and alien.*

*We have confidence in Jesus,  
Who called disciples, led them,  
Gave them new names and new purpose  
And sent them out to preach good news.  
He washed their feet as a servant.  
He walked with them, ate with them,  
Called them friends,  
Rebuked them, encouraged them,  
Promised to leave and then return,  
And promised to be with them always.*

*He taught them to pray.  
He rose early to pray, stole away to desolate places,  
Fasted and faced agonizing temptations,  
Wept in a garden,  
And prayed, "Not my will but your will be done."  
He rejoiced, he sang, he feasted, he wept.*

*We have confidence in Jesus,  
So we follow him, learn his ways,  
Seek to obey his teaching and live by his example.  
We walk with him, walk in him, abide in him,  
As a branch in a vine.*

*We have not seen him, but we love him.  
His words are to us words of life eternal,  
And to know him is to know the true and living God.  
We do not see him now, but we have confidence in  
Jesus.  
Amen.*

What do you think was the purpose of this creed being written - what aspects of living out God's ways does this encourage more as opposed to the Apostle's Creed?

# where will you go today?

People commonly think that finding God's will for your life is like a treasure hunt, where God has given some cryptic clues that can be easily misunderstood and throw people off the one true path and that unless cautiously approached will result in death or severe injury. That might have been the way it worked in other religions, but Jesus broke all those rules. He said we were no longer slaves or employees not informed about their tasks, but when we choose to intimately know God, He chooses to make us fully partners in his mission to the world (John 15:15). He's interested to know where you want to go, which parts of life do you think you need to spread into while keeping in mind God's goals.

God is always working in people's lives, even those that don't identify themselves with him. Take Saul, a fanatical Jew who violently assaulted and threw in prison Jesus-followers (Acts 9). Jesus meets him, and then turns his life around. But all that Saul grew up with and experienced was used, and not wasted. The guy who was so in the "in-crowd" was obsessed about getting into the club those that were generally excluded and not even considered worthy to be let in at all. He was also a bit of a 'nerdy' intellectual, but also ended up drawing on all his learning and intellect when he spoke to others about God. God made us individuals, so we could individually bring life in our own unique way to others with Him.

So all the joys, disappointments, and frustrations that you have been blessed with, give you hints at who you should be incarnationally and missionally focussed on. And remember, there is a sense of 'go' that's generally involved, where you leave the familiar and enter in and spend more time in the 'new' and 'uncomfortable.'



Which people do you notice and feel some sort of deep sense that they need God more than others?

*(These people are usually people you already feel you can communicate well with and probably aren't being relevantly and currently engaged with in God's alternate reality).*

Being missional doesn't mean you always start up some sort of group ministry. Remember Jesus spent most of his time with just a few. Don't fall back on all models of "Go and make disciples" unless after thinking it through that you've decided it is still relevant and effective in engaging them with God. Look back on what was said about making disciples on page 37. It's more about entering their world and living it alongside them, and sharing more of your own life and goals.

And if you're not sure how to be a person with an apprentice, you might need to spend more time as an apprentice to someone else. But a word of caution, entering into someone else's life will mean sometimes you are there more for them than yourself. You can't disciple or be a disciple if it's always about what you can get out of it.

Also disciples might leave you. If you read all the people Paul writes about that at one stage were co-workers or apprentices, not all of them stayed with him. In fact he broke his friendship with one of his closest mates when that guy (Barnabas) wanted to keep having an apprentice that deserted them at one stage (Acts 15:37-39). They don't have a lot to do with each other for a while. Later on when Paul was much older, he talked about two people that stuck with him when almost everyone else left: one of those were Mark (2 Tim 4:11). Interestingly enough, not many think about how Barnabas must have felt, considering Paul was his apprentice who then left him and thought Barnabas had nothing else to train him in.

# see ya but not goodbye

This journey guide is not to be seen as the final comprehensive summary of all that you need to know to be faithful imitator of Jesus. Living like Jesus, going into the world and applying your life's experiences and perspectives to others and with others to bring about God's alternate reality will need you to continually connect with Jesus, connecting with others and constantly revisiting who and what Jesus is.

What you think about Jesus (your Christology) will determine how you interact with the world and what you are trying to achieve (your missiology) and shape the type of support and resource structure you have to achieve that (your ecclesiology). Start and focus on the wrong parts, and you could be injecting bad DNA that prevents people from replicating well like Jesus.

Take note of what I said in the inside cover about how this work is a collaborative one and feel free to get involved.

If you've been waiting at the intersection for the light or your life to change... it has... it's green.

I wish you well in changing the world. It is what you were created for.

## *Suggested references (after Jesus & the Bible) to go further into some of these ideas:*

### Exploring faith in this modern world:

Miller, D. (2004). *Searching for God knows what*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

### What mission can look like:

Claiborne, S. (2006). *The irresistible revolution: living as an ordinary radical*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

### Questioning the cultural influences on our faith and life:

Sayers, M. (2008). *The trouble with Paris (DVD & Participant's Guide)*.

### A clear modern retelling of the whole Biblical story:

McLaren, B. (2003). *The story we find ourselves in: Further adventures of a new kind of Christian*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### Missional Church & coming back to Jesus:

Frost, M. & Hirsch, A. (2009). *ReJesus: A wild messiah for a missional church*. Erina NSW: Strand Publishing.

### Being disciplined and discipling others:

Peterson, E. (1998). *The wisdom of each other: a conversation between spiritual friends*.