Real Faith for the Real World.

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Absolute Truth Ministries

real faith

Bible Basics for the Thinking Mind

Daniel W. Jarvis

real faith

Dear Friend,

This workbook is designed to help you get a clear picture of the message of the Bible, and how it has the power make a difference in your life and eternity. We'll cover issues like the purpose of life, the answer for humanity's greatest problem, and what it takes to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Often we hear of a watered-down, ritualistic version of Christianity, but the faith of the Bible is much more *real* than mere tradition. It is active, vibrant, living, and joyful. It is not ashamed to proclaim the absolute truth, and does not mince words about the real issues of life. Real faith is embracing a relationship with God, as revealed to us in the Bible.

A young man once asked me: "How do you know the Bible is really the truth?" I told him that I believed the Bible was a *self-proving* Book. All you have to do is read it with an open heart, and its truth will become plain to you. The fact that you are reading *Real Faith* shows that you are at least considering the message of the Bible.

I trust you will not be disappointed.

Seeking God's Truth,

Daniel W. Jarvis

P.S. Don't rush through this study. I recommend doing one lesson a day for five days.

The date I completed this study:_____

My personal response to God after reading *Real Faith*:

Dear God,

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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My plan to continue learning the message of the Bible:

_____
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Absolute Truth is a non-denominational, non-profit Christian ministry that seeks to give the world a right view of God. Log on to our website for Bible-based learning tools, multi-language materials, challenging articles, and personal growth resources..

"Real Life" *(the second workbook in this series) is available as a free download at our website.*

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The question now comes to you:

Are you willing to put your faith in Jesus and repent of your sins? Are you willing to let Him be the Leader of your life? _____

It is not a decision that others can make for you, nor is it a decision that you should put off for the future. God wants you to be part of His family, to have you as His child. He has an exciting mission for your life, and for your eternity. If you are willing to follow Jesus Christ, pray and tell Him of your decision.

In these 5 lessons, we have considered the main message of God's Word, the Bible. We have explored our life purpose and seen how short we fall of fulfilling it. We have learned about God's rescue plan through Jesus, and we've been honest about the "cost" of following Him. *These are the basics of the Christian faith.* But there is much more to discover about the Bible. If you will commit yourself to reading and thinking over just a few chapters of the Bible each day, you can continue to learn life-changing truths from God. (It is helpful to begin with the New Testament, so you can build your understanding of Jesus and His teachings.)

If reading *Real Faith* has been helpful to you, or if you have any questions about what you have read, we would love to hear from you. We can also send you some Bible study tools to help you dig deeper into God's Word.

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Lesson 1 -- Beginning with the Bible

This workbook is designed to give you a clear understanding of the purpose and teachings of God's Word, the Bible. Without question, the Bible has been the most widely read book in history...with countless millions of copies being distributed in hundreds of languages over the past 2000 years. Many have died for their faith in this Book, and its message has impacted the lives of billions of people worldwide. Evil dictators and hate-filled tyrants have tried to rid the world of Christianity and the Bible...but they have never been able to stop it! In fact, more people are reading the Bible today than at any other time in world history!

The Bible gives us hope for the future, help for the present, and healing for the past. It is filled with exciting stories of adventure and battle, sacrifice and love. Upon its pages we find wisdom, comfort, truth, purpose, and joy.

What does the Bible say to someone like me?

To answer this question, let us take a journey through this amazing book to discover the power it contains. Only by reading it for ourselves can we get a real understanding of why the Bible is different from every other book or religion. And, before you begin, ask God to help you understand what you read. Ask Him to show you the answers for your own life as you begin to study His Word!

"God, I want to know your truth. I am going to spend a few minutes each day looking into the Bible, and I pray that You would give me the ability to understand what I read. Please be with me as I begin this study."

As you study, look up the Bible references to fill in the blanks and answer the questions.

To help you find things in the Bible, it has been divided into books, and each book into chapters, and each chapter into verses. Check the Table of Contents in your Bible to find out where the "books" are located.

Genesis 1 : 1

Book Chapter Verse

Genesis 1:1
Who is the main character of the Bible? _____
What did He do in the beginning? _____

2 Timothy 3:16
Who is the author of the Bible (Scripture)? _____
What can we use the Bible for? _____
_____

2 Peter 1:20-21
Who guided the men who put the Bible's message on paper?
_____

So, if God is the Creator of the world, and He wrote the Bible, that means that the Bible's message is very important to read! The Bible is a lot like an Owner's Manual...it is the Creator's instructions for our lives! (He made us, so He knows what is best for us!)

You can remember that the Bible is our
BASIC INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE LEAVING EARTH

<u>What does the Bible do for us?</u>

Psalm 119:11
It keeps me from _____.

Psalm 119:105
It guides my life, like a _____ for my path.

Matthew 4:4
Just like I need food to survive *physically*, I need the
_____ of God to survive *spiritually*.

2 Timothy 3:15
The Bible will make you "wise" for what?
_____

"This is impossible!" you might be thinking. "There is *no way* I could ever get my life straightened out!" Don't panic...because God knows that we are human beings. Consider these three Bible verses:

Hebrews 4:14-16
Jesus was tempted in every _____, just like we are. That means He understands what it feels like to be a human being. When you pray and ask for help and forgiveness, He understands.

Titus 2:11-12
This verse tells us that God can teach us how to say _____ to sin, and how we can live a right life here on earth. It doesn't mean that we are instantly perfect...but it does mean that God can work in us and help us grow to become a little more like Jesus every day.

2 Peter 1:3
We are taught here that God's _____
gives us everything we need for life and godliness! Without God's power, it is impossible for us to get our lives right...but with God all things are possible!

The Christian life is a lot like a journey. There will be rough spots and smooth spots. There will be times of great refreshment and rest, and times of great suffering and tough decisions. But through it all, God is with us, helping us each step of the way. For those who are willing to trust in Jesus Christ and let Him be the Leader of their lives, there is a great reward waiting. Our purpose in life is restored! Our joy in life is made complete! Our eternity in heaven is made sure!

Special Project:
Read Revelation 21:1-7
What will eternity be like for those who have real faith?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When facing persecution, you may wonder if it is worth it. Consider what Paul said concerning his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What are the light and momentary troubles achieving?

_____

What does Paul choose to focus on?

_____

--you must repent of sin in your life. Repentance means to turn around, to change your mind. Perhaps as you went through the 10 Commandments in Lesson 3, you realized that your lifestyle is not what God wants it to be. Repentance is when you tell God that you are willing to give up evil and start following His lead. Consider:

Acts 17:30-31 According to this, why must we repent?

_____

Isaiah 55:6-7 What is God willing to do for someone who turns away from evil?

_____

_____

--you must let Jesus be your Master. Back in the beginning, when Adam and Eve sinned against God, they decided to be their own boss. They decided to rebel against God. God wants you to reverse that decision today, and give Him the leadership of your life. This will involve many things, including:

- Setting aside time to pray to your Heavenly Father (Matt 6:7-13)
- Forgiving those who sin against you (Matthew 6:14-15)
- Loving God and others with your whole heart (Matthew 22:36-40)
- Beginning to live the way Jesus did (1 John 2:6, Colossians 3)
- Sharing the Good News with others (Matthew 28:19-20)
- Making time in your life for church & Bible study (Hebrews 10:25, 2 Tim. 2:15, Psalm 119:11)

Probably the most important thing that the Bible does is *teach us about Jesus Christ*. Once, when Jesus was teaching his followers, some of them decided to leave, because they didn't want to change their lives and give up their old ways. Jesus asked Peter if he was going to leave as well. Read what Peter said in John 6:68-69. From Peter's statement, we learn that Jesus alone has the words of _____ _____.

So, if the Bible teaches us about Jesus, and Jesus has the words of eternal life, then we need to pay close attention to the message of the Bible. It will not only give us wisdom for our lives today, but it will also prepare us for our future after death!

Special Project

Copy Psalm 19:7-11 from your Bible.

Lesson 2 -- Why Did God Make Me?

Throughout history, human beings have always searched for the purpose of life. Some try to fill their lives with religious rituals, some try to find satisfaction in drugs, alcohol, and sex, and some try to fill the emptiness of life with money. Others look to deep philosophy or mystical enlightenment, and still others just give up altogether and decide there is no reason to bother with life.

The words of a popular song make the statement that: "There is more to this life, than living and dying, more than just trying to make it through the day..." What more? Other than living and dying, what is my life purpose?

The Bible gives some exciting reasons why God created us. It wasn't so that we could just be born, live, have children, then die. There is *much* more. Let's open our Bibles and explore the plan that God had in mind when He made you!

The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible was written by a man who was searching for purpose in life. And, he tried just about everything. He was the king of Israel, and he was one of the wealthiest men in all of history. He had everything money could buy...houses, land, a great army, multiple wives from all over his kingdom, lots of power, special wisdom...this guy had just about everything we could ever dream of... but read what he said in *Ecclesiastes 1:2*. Everything is _____!

After his search for purpose was complete, he wrote down his conclusion in Eccl. 12:13. He said that the "whole duty of man" was to _____. In 12:1, he tells us to remember our _____.

It makes sense, doesn't it? If we want to find our purpose in life, we should look back to the Creator who made us!

Lesson 5 -- Counting the Cost

During the ministry of Jesus on earth, many people wanted to follow Him to see the miracles and hear the great words of wisdom. But the crowds got thinner when Jesus told the people that in order to follow Him, they would have to give up everything and let Him be in charge. That is why Jesus encouraged people to "count the cost" before they became Christians. To follow Jesus means giving up control of your life, and instead, letting God direct you. Remember that His Word, the Bible, is your instruction manual.

Luke 9:23
What three things did Jesus ask us to do if we want to be His disciple?

1. _____
(this means giving yourself up, letting God be in control of your life.)

2. _____
(the cross is a symbol of death, and in order to be a disciple of Jesus, you must be willing to let your "self" die —reputation, ambitions, etc.— and let Jesus live in you.)

3. _____
(this means that whatever Jesus says, we must learn to obey. There may be hard times along the way, just like Jesus faced hard times, but we must let Him be our Leader.)

There are awesome benefits and joys for a Christian both now and in heaven, but there also may be many challenging things ahead for those who believe in Jesus. For example:

--you may face persecution. Persecution is when people make fun of you or mistreat you because of what you believe. This happened to Jesus, and to most of the Christians mentioned in the Bible, and it may happen to you. Read *John 15:19*. Jesus said here that you do not belong to the world, but He has chosen you out of the _____.

"You, _____(your name)_____ are officially declared right by the Court of God, and all sins that were committed by you have been fully and completely transferred to the account of Jesus. The suffering and death of Jesus have taken care of the guilt and penalty that you deserve. From this day forward, you are set free from the bondage of sin so that you can begin to follow Me and live out My plan for your life. You are placed into My family with a guarantee of eternal life in heaven."

Ephesians 2:8-9 By _____ we are saved through _____. This salvation is a gift from _____!

We don't deserve a second chance like this, but God is gracious and merciful to us. He is willing to give us something we could never earn and in no way deserve--He is willing to give us a place in His kingdom forever. Some people think they can earn their way into heaven by trying to be good or performing religious rituals...but these are meaningless without the grace and mercy of God. No human effort could ever get us into heaven, only the sacrifice of Jesus and the merciful love of God.

Consider the words of the well-known song: *"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see!"* Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve, and when we consider how much we have sinned against Him, and the fact that He sent His Son to die for us, we must agree: *God's grace is amazing!*

"Dear God, thank You so much for Your great love toward me. I know I don't deserve Your grace, but You have given me a second chance through Jesus Christ. Thank You that even though I have sinned so much against You, You still love me. Help me as I seek your truth and attempt to follow You. Amen."

Special Project
Read *Romans 8:31-39* two times, very carefully. Pray that God will teach you about Himself as you read.

Genesis 1:26-28
We were created in the image of _____. God made us very differently than the rest of creation (plants, animals, stars, etc.)...He made us to be His sons and daughters. God made mankind in His own _____ so that people could have a personal relationship Him--that they could *choose* to love and obey God.

According to verse 28, humans were supposed to be _____ and _____, so that the whole world could be full of God's children. God wanted earth to be covered with people who could have a loving relationship with each other and with Him...and He wanted us to take care of the world He had made.

Matthew 22:36-40
Once Jesus was asked by a religious teacher what Jesus thought the most important command of the Bible was. Maybe this guy was looking for a complex answer that would impress the audience. But Jesus' answer was very simple. He told him to: _____ God with all your _____ _____ and _____, and secondly, to _____ your neighbor as much as you love _____. Pretty simple!

So, when they asked Jesus to explain the most important thing that humans could do...He told them that we should _____ God and others!

The more we grow in our understanding of God, the more we grow to love Him. When we put this love in action we find ourselves seeking to help others, having prayers to pray, and songs to sing. We enjoy life as we take delight in all that God has given us and as we begin to live with God at the center of all we do. God gives us strength and joy to fulfill His mission for our lives.

So, the short answer to the question, "Why did God make me?" is this: God made you because He wanted to have an eternal relationship with you...*He wanted you to be part of His family.*

But there is a problem! *Read Isaiah 59:2.* What is the problem?

_____

_____

Our iniquities (sin--evil thoughts, actions, and words) have separated us from God, so we cannot do what He created us to do! We can't enjoy a personal relationship with God if our lives are full of evil and selfishness. Sin keeps us from loving God, fulfilling His purpose for our lives, and enjoying the life that He gives us. Sin has messed up everything!

The good news is that the Bible tells us how we can have our sins erased and our relationship with God renewed. In the next lesson, we will learn more about sin and exactly what God has done to fix the problem! For now, pray and ask God to help you understand your purpose of life.

"Dear God, I thank you for making me. I really want to understand how I can make my life count for something that matters. I'm tired of trying everything the world has to offer and always feeling empty. I want to live the way you created me to live. I want to learn how to love you and obey you, and I want to fulfill the mission you have for my life."

Special Project:
Read 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

These verses teach that God wants to live with us and be close to us. Why do you think He cares about us?

_____

_____

These verses also teach that God wants us His sons and daughters to stay away from evil things. Why do you think God says this?

_____

_____

_____

You see, the gospel (Good News) of the Bible is this: Jesus died as a sacrifice to deal with our sins, once and for all. Each of us deserved to face the judgment and wrath of God, and to be punished for our rebellion against the Creator. But Jesus came and suffered for us, so now, God is willing to pardon sinners on the basis of what Jesus did.

God couldn't just let our sins go, and forget about them. He is a good and perfect judge—it would be a breach of justice to simply ignore the wrong that has been done. So, He made the ultimate sacrifice by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. Our "wrong" was taken care of by the suffering and death of Jesus, so that we can be freed from sin and never have to face the condemnation of God!

1 Peter 2:24
Jesus died on the Cross ("tree") for us, so that we could be set free from _____ and live for righteousness.

Romans 8:1
There is no _____ for people who are in Jesus Christ!

The Good News doesn't stop there, however. Jesus not only died for our sins, but He also was raised to life by God's power! This shows us that God has the power to raise us and give us a home in heaven, if we have been forgiven by Jesus.

Romans 10:9
You must confess with your mouth, what?

_____

You must believe in your heart, what?

_____

Imagine it this way. God is willing to legally pardon you for your sins on the basis of what Jesus did, then make you part of His eternal family. Perhaps His statement would look something like this:

Special Project
Look up Matthew 13:40-42 -- At the final judgment, what will it be like for those who are guilty of sin?

_____
_____
_____
_____

The Bible teaches that God does not want to send people away for eternal judgment, but because God is perfect and good, He cannot let evil go unpunished. *2 Peter 3:9* explains that God is _____ toward us, not wanting anyone to perish. In the next lesson we will discover what God did to give us hope--a way to find forgiveness of sin and how to be set free from the bondage of sin.

"God, I realize that I have broken your commandments. I don't deserve your mercy, in fact, I deserve your judgment. But I believe I am ready to give up my lawbreaking ways. I want to understand your plan to forgive my sin and set me free. Help me as I continue to learn about the Bible. Amen."

Lesson 4 -- God's Rescue Plan

The Bible teaches us that God has great love for His creation. In fact, God's love for us is so great that even while we were sinning and rebelling against His plan, He still cared about us. He decided to do something truly amazing--He decided to suffer for us, so that we could escape hell and be free from sin.

John 3:16
God's love for the world is shown by what?

_____
What will God give to those who believe in Jesus?

_____

Romans 5:6-8
How did God demonstrate His love for us?

Lesson 3 -- What went wrong with Humanity?

Our world is full of bad news. Robberies. Killings. Pain. Tragedy. Abuse. War. Surely this isn't what God intended for his creation. When we read the first few chapters of the Bible, we see that God made a perfect world and declared it to be "very good." (Genesis 1:31) What happened to this "heaven on earth?"

Rebellion. Adam and Eve, the first humans, decided to go against the plan of the Creator and do things their own way. God had blessed them with the ability to choose, but sadly they used that free choice to do wrong. From that day on, sin (breaking God's law) has caused terrible problems on earth, and has separated humanity from the love and peace that God intended for them to enjoy.

The rebellion didn't stop with Adam and Eve, however. The Bible teaches that all of us do wrong in God's sight whenever we make choices that go against His commandments. To find out how you are doing at keeping God's law, go through the 10 Commandments (the ten main laws God has given human beings, found in Exodus 20) and check the box that best applies to you.

1. You shall have no other gods before me. This means that God is to have first place in your life, that you care more about Him than other people, money, success, or anything else. It means that you truly do love God with all your heart, and you prove it by obeying the rest of these 10 Commandments.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

2. You shall not make idols for yourselves. Again, this commandment has to do with how much we really love and obey God. It means that you have never worshipped a false god or made up your own idea of God. It means that you never participate in rituals or practices that have to do with powers other than the Creator.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

3. You shall not use God's name in vain. This means that you honor God's name so much that you would never think of using it in a careless, joking, or angry manner. Many people regularly use the name of God or Jesus as a curse word and never think about the fact that it offends and hurts God.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Since God is our Maker, He asks us to set aside one day out of seven to rest and to focus on Him. It means that you take special time each week to rest from work, and instead spend time praying, learning about God, and worshipping God.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

5. Honor your father and your mother. This teaches us that God wants us to honor our parents, regardless of how old we are. Honoring someone means treating them with high value and never disrespecting them. This commandment means that every time we talked back, disobeyed, or had a bad attitude toward mom and dad, we were sinning. You may not always like or agree with your parents, but God's law says you must honor them in your heart.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

6. You shall not murder. Jesus taught that this commandment goes even deeper than physically killing another person...He said if we hold on to anger in our hearts or if we hate someone else, we are just as guilty as if we had murdered. You see, God's standards apply to our hearts, not just our actions.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

7. You shall not commit adultery. Again, Jesus taught us that God looks inside our hearts, and He considers lust to be "adultery in the heart." This includes looking at pornography, being involved in any sexual activity outside of marriage, or having lust in your heart towards others.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

8. You shall not steal. God is not interested in the value of the item you stole, He is looking at your heart. Have you ever taken something that didn't belong to you? This commandment calls us to a standard of absolute honesty before God and others.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

9. You shall not bear false witness. Have you ever told a lie, fib, or exaggeration? God's standard for truth is absolute, and anytime we break this commandment we show ourselves to be liars. Jesus taught that every word a person speaks will be judged by God.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

10. You shall not covet. This means that it is wrong to be greedy for more than we need or jealous for things that other people have. These heart attitudes of selfishness are totally against God's plan, which is for us to be loving and giving toward others.

□ I've obeyed this perfectly □ I've broken this once or twice □ I've broken this many times.

According to this "test", are you innocent or guilty before God?

_____

Read the following Bible verses:

Romans 3:23 -- How many of us fall short of God's glory (perfection)?

_____

James 2:10 -- How many laws do you have to break to be a "lawbreaker?" _____

John 8:34 -- Everyone who sins is a _____ to sin!

Hebrews 4:13 --What is hidden from God's sight?

_____