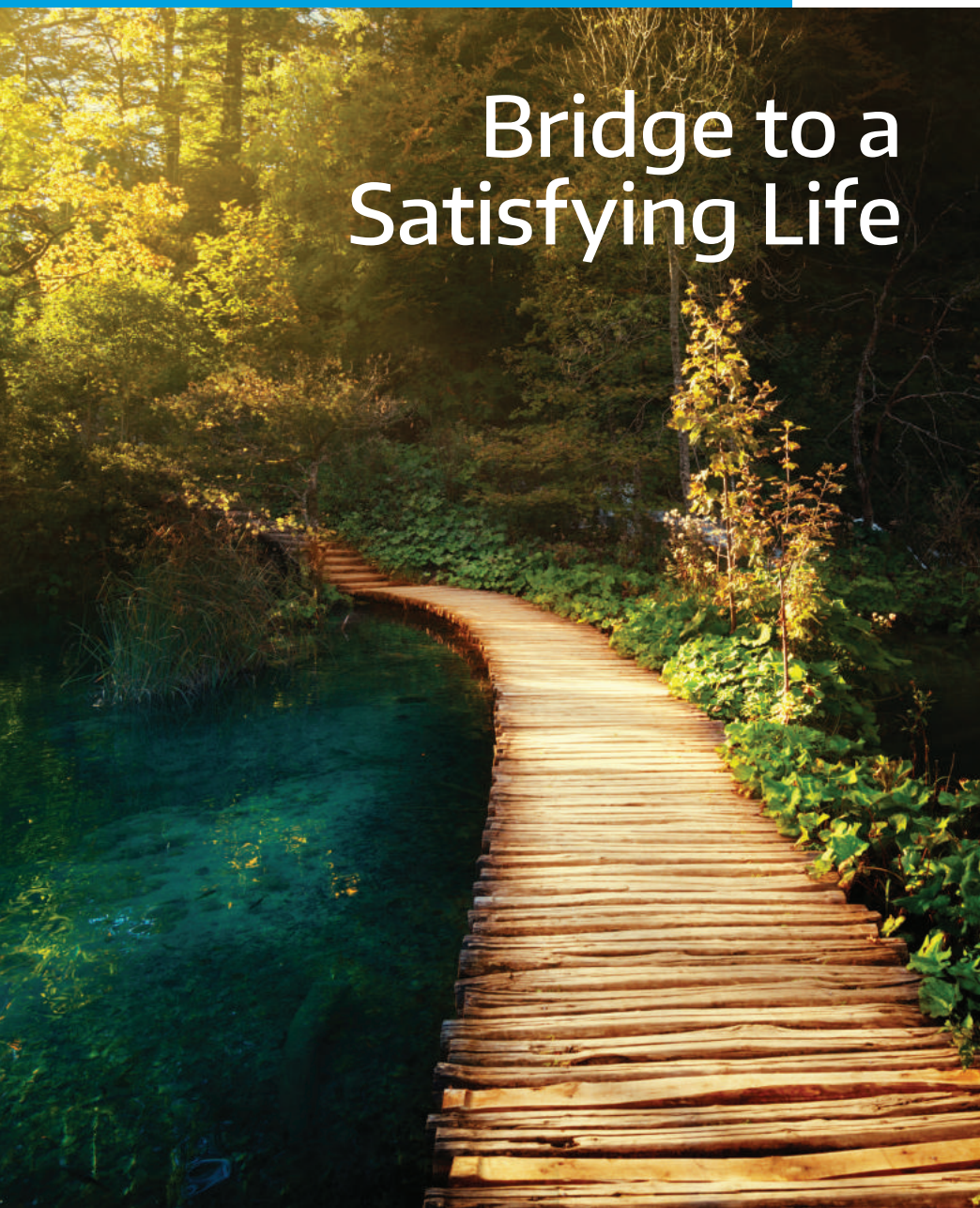


DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

5


Bridge to a Satisfying Life





THEY FOUND HIS SKELETON beside a makeshift shelter on a desolate island in the Mid-Atlantic. The anonymous seaman kept a journal that detailed his four-month ordeal. He'd been set ashore on Ascension Island by the Dutch fleet in 1725 for some unmentioned crime. Soon he was reduced to drinking the blood of turtles just to quench his raging thirst. The man's physical suffering was intense, but an even greater pain stands out in his journal: his overwhelming guilt.

He penned tormented entries such as: "What pangs do wretched mortals feel who leave the paths of righteousness, pleased to increase the numbers of the damned." This seaman's greatest isolation on that lonely island came from his sense of separation from God. That is what proved unbearable in the end.



Human beings have been struggling with that isolation of the heart ever since Adam and Eve “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” after eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:8). The strange new emotions of shame, guilt, and fear compelled that first couple to run away when God came calling. Those feelings are unfortunately quite familiar to us now.

What is it that causes a separation between us and God?

“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

Sin throws up barriers; it separates us from God. But this great gulf that isolates sinful human beings from a holy God is not His doing. God didn’t run away from Adam and Eve—they ran away from Him.

1 | Satisfying Our Hidden Hunger

Before sin spoiled the picture, Adam and Eve enjoyed a personal friendship with their Creator in the beautiful Garden of Eden. Tragically, they bought into Satan’s lie about becoming as wise as God, and broke the bond of trust with their Maker. Their sin resulted in alienation—an alienation that quickly extended to the first family, tearing it apart (Genesis 3:15 to 4:8). Separation from God did indeed result in death, “for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve found life a lot tougher on the outside. Childbearing and tilling the soil now came with blood, sweat, and tears. But much harder to endure was the emptiness of heart that began to plague them.

Their close bond with God broken, they found themselves vulnerable to all kinds of hidden longings, unsatisfied desires, and painful yearnings. They were not unlike that seaman abandoned on an island, surrounded by the greatest tragedy of all: the loneliness of sin.

What condition now exists for all of humanity?

“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Since Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God, “all” (the entire human race) have fallen into the same sin pattern and are subject to death, sin’s ultimate penalty.



Having lost our connection with God through sin, we all experience a great heart hunger for the kind of security that only God can give. We often try to satisfy this hunger in temporary ways—a shopping binge at the mall or the mad race for a promotion at the office. Some turn to alcohol, drugs, online escapes, or sexual promiscuity. But all these yearnings and unfulfilled drives are merely symptoms of our loneliness for God. And there is no cure except experiencing His love in our life.

What is the only way to satisfy the hunger of the human heart?

“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

There is no cure for our condition except as we experience God's love in our life. Real satisfaction will come only when that separation between us and God is bridged and we're able to live in His presence.

2 | Bridging the Chasm of Sin and Death

God's heart ached on the day Adam and Eve turned their backs on Him. And He is still eager to restore the broken relationship (2 Peter 3:9). He isn't content just to look sympathetically across the chasm of sin and death that separates us from Him. He has decided to build a bridge. How did God Himself become a bridge across the chasm caused by sin?

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"
(1 Timothy 1:15).

Jesus laid Himself down as a sacrifice for sin, paying the death penalty Himself. And He makes His life of perfect righteousness freely available to all who seek forgiveness at the cross. The cross of Christ bridges the gap between our restless yearnings and the peace and joy God can give. It connects the land of sin and wasted living with the country of unending life.

Why was Jesus willing to come to our world?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17).

By coming to our world—His life, death, and resurrection—Jesus made it possible to forgive and save sinners without trivializing sin. The bridge of Christ's broken, bleeding body spans the

chasm, enabling all who place their faith in Him as Saviour and Lord to walk over into eternal life.



3 | Seven Essential Facts You Should Know About Jesus

These seven facts about Jesus are not true of any other man who has ever lived.

1. Jesus Came From Heaven to Earth

How is Jesus identified?

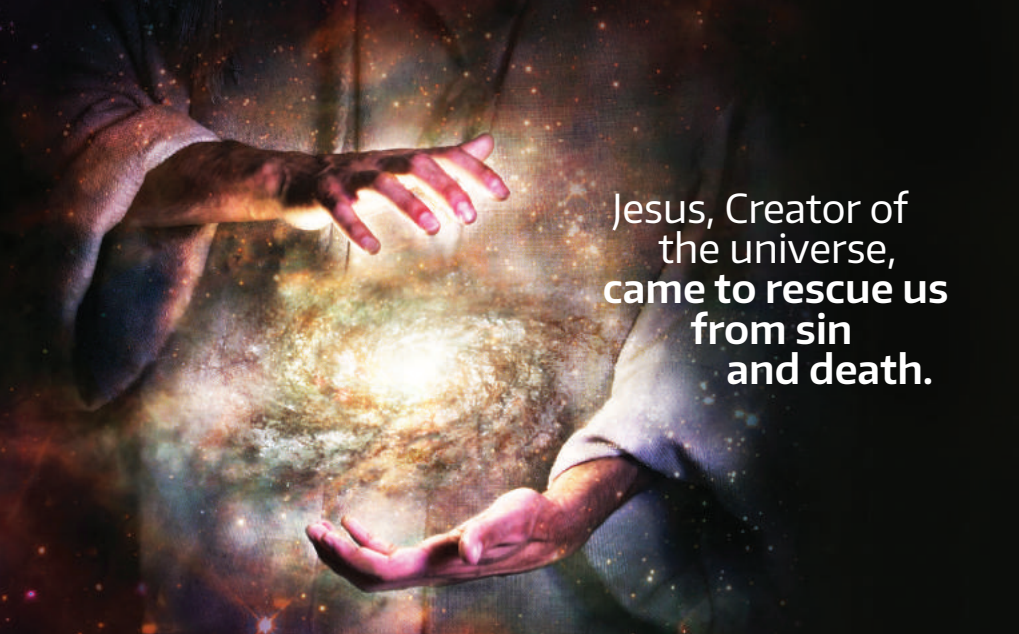
“His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Though Jesus was born of a human mother (Matthew 1:22, 23), He is God—God in human flesh. How long did Jesus claim to have existed?

“Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58).

Jesus notified the world: “*I am* the self-existing One; I have always existed and always will.”

Dwight L. Moody, the Billy Graham of the 19th century, once said of the incarnation of Jesus, “It would have been a great sacrifice for Jesus to come and be rocked in a silver cradle, be nursed by an angel, and be fed with a golden spoon. But the



Jesus, Creator of
the universe,
came to rescue us
from sin
and death.

Creator of heaven and earth came and took man's flesh, and was born in a stable of poor parents in the worst possible environment."

What was the purpose of Jesus' birth on this earth? An angel told Joseph at the time of Jesus' birth:

"She [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus, the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3, 14), was willing to come to our world to rescue us from sin and death. His very name is a promise that enables weak human beings to find true happiness and eternal life.

2. Jesus Lived a Sinless Life

"Jesus the Son of God. . . was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:14, 15).

Jesus lived a real, flesh-and-blood life of moral perfection. God did more than try to talk us out of a life of sin. He laid out His

best argument in the life of Jesus. Satan, Christ's great adversary, plotted throughout Jesus' earthly life to seduce Him into sin. From the temptation in the wilderness at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry to the long night of agony in Gethsemane just before the crucifixion, Satan unleashed his fiercest assaults against Jesus. But Jesus stood firm against every temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 22:44). He experienced the full range of human problems and temptations. So He understands our struggles and needs. He is able to "sympathise with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15).

Why was it necessary for Jesus to live a sinless life?

"For He [God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus took our sinful life upon Himself and offers us His sinless life in its place. This is why He came to our world. This is how sinners are justified—declared righteous before a holy God—solely on the merits of Christ.

3. Jesus Died to Take Away Sin

How many people have sinned?

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

What is the penalty for sin?

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Why did Jesus die?

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to

die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7, 8).

“Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

All of us have sinned and are subject to eternal death—the ultimate penalty for sin. But Jesus became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), He died in our place, thus paying the death penalty for us. His act in dying is a gift, therefore “the *gift* of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

One day, in the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz, the commandant announced that 10 prisoners would die because a man had just escaped. Ten names were read to the crowd. When the last one heard his name called, he sobbed in agony: “My wife and my children!”

Suddenly an older prisoner pushed his way toward the front. It was Father Maximilian Kolbe, a saintly man who managed to share the love of God even amidst the horrors of Auschwitz. “Herr Kommandant,” Kolbe said, “please, sir, may I take his place?”

The dumbfounded SS officer ordered Kolbe to join the other nine on their way to Block 13. In its dark, smelly basement, they were to be starved to death. During the next several days, the men could hear prayers and songs of praise coming from Kolbe’s cell. Finally, he was killed with an injection of carbolic acid.

Father Kolbe had lived a life of heroic virtue in the most trying circumstances. But he was willing to lay it down freely for a





stranger in need. Love like that is almost beyond human comprehension. But Jesus laid down His perfect, righteous life as a gift—for the most unworthy. Because of His death, “we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).


4. Jesus Rose From the Dead

Jesus’ death on the cross wasn’t the end of His remarkable story. We have a living Saviour who is still at work in our world!

“If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Corinthians 15:17, 18).

Muhammad and Buddha have presented to the world some great philosophical truths. They have inspired the lives of millions of people, but they have no supernatural power to give life since they still remain in their graves.

Because Jesus rose from the tomb the third day after His death (Luke 23 and 24), what promise is He able to make to us?



A chorus of testimonies claim freedom in the power of the risen Christ

“Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19).

Only Jesus has demonstrated, by coming out of the tomb, that He can overcome the grim specter of death. Jesus is alive! The One who appeared after death and announced, “I am He who lives,” (Revelation 1:18) can now offer us life that is both abundant and eternal. He will live in our hearts if we invite Him in (Revelation 3:20).

Is the risen Christ present to meet our needs today?

**“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”
(Matthew 28:20).**

Men and women all over the world are sharing stories of how Christ has delivered them from the worst addictions and the deepest emotional traumas. A chorus of testimonies point to the power of the risen Christ.

One of our former students wrote these words of gratitude on one of his answer sheets: “I was an alcoholic. One day after leaving the bar, I saw a card in the gutter advertising your Bible course. I

picked it up, filled it out, and received my first true knowledge of Christ. Shortly after taking the Bible course, I offered my heart to God and lost the taste for whiskey.”

Jesus took possession of this man’s life and gave him the ability to overcome addiction. A new power had entered his life—one that proved stronger than his old desires. Because Christ is the risen Saviour, He can save all who come to Him for help.

5. Jesus Ascended to Heaven

After His resurrection, Jesus returned to the Father:

“When He [Jesus] had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9).

Just before His ascension, what promise did Jesus make to His followers?

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3).

6. Jesus Ministers as Heavenly Priest

Jesus constantly seeks to prepare you for a place in heaven. He came to this planet, lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended so that people everywhere could accept the gift of salvation (eternal life) and live forever with Him. The following words of Scripture clearly portray His goals for us:

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same,

that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. . . . Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:14-18).

According to this passage, Jesus came into our world on a rescue mission to:

- ▶ Deliver people from the misery of sin.
- ▶ Reconcile men and women to God.
- ▶ Permanently remove the cause of sin, suffering, and death by destroying the devil.

Jesus as our Priest, our Mediator, continually appears in the Father's presence on our behalf. The same Jesus who blessed the children, rehabilitated the woman caught in adultery and forgave the dying thief, is working in heaven right now to minister to our needs. "He is able to aid those who are tempted."

7. Jesus Will Return

Before returning to heaven, what promise did Jesus make?

Jesus . . .

CAME as God in human flesh.

LIVED a sinless life in our place.

DIED for our sins.

ROSE from the grave to deliver us from death.

ASCENDED to prepare a home for us in heaven.

MINISTERS each day as our High Priest.

IS COMING SOON to take us to be with Him forever.

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3).

When Jesus returns, He will deliver us—once and for all—from the sin, sickness, tragedy, and death that plague this planet. He will welcome us into a new world of eternal happiness and eternal life—in the presence of God. Future *Discover* Guides will explore what will happen when Jesus returns.

4 | Unfailing Love

John and Ann Betar married on November 25, 1932, in Harrison, New York, making them—in 2016 when this story was broadcast—the longest living married couple in the United States! They were married when John was 21 and Ann was 17. Their families objected to the marriage, so they eloped.

“Don’t worry,” an aunt consoled Ann’s father a few days later, “this marriage won’t last.” But in 2016, when John was 104 and Ann only 100, they were still happily married after 83 years of living together.



The secret, John told the media, is to “get along, compromise, and be content.” After more than 83 years of marriage, the affection between them is still obvious. Ann sits, lovingly holding John’s hand—frail and withered—still linked together in a love that has continued through all the ups and downs of decades.

That’s the kind of love relationship that Jesus longs to have with you—only even stronger and more lasting. A relationship that

Continued on page 16

WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. If you belong to God and are following Him, what three promises does Jesus give to you? (John 10:27-29)
 - (a) Verse 27: "I know _____." (sheep = God's people)
 - (b) Verse 28: "And I give them _____." ("never perish")
 - (c) Verse 28: "Neither shall anyone _____ them out of My hand." (or, the Father's hand—see verse 29).

2. (a) What practical proof will be evident in your life if you truly love God and are abiding in Him? (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-6)

(b) Does this mean that you will never sin? (1 John 1:5-2:2)

3. What does God promise to do if you sincerely confess your sins? (1 John 1:9)

4. How does the Bible define sin? (1 John 3:4)

5. How complete is the transformation in your life when you accept Jesus' sacrifice for you? (2 Corinthians 5:17, 18)



spans the years and all the ups and downs of daily living. A relationship that nothing and no one can destroy. A relationship based on love, trust, and commitment.

Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself in order to demonstrate His unfailing love for you. The Bible says that His love is so powerful that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Christ’s great sacrifice has created a bridge that restores the alienation sin has caused. He wants to draw you across the chasm and into His arms. Will you respond and pray this prayer?

My Decision

- ☐ I am thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus and His love for me.
- ☐ I invite Jesus into my life. I accept Him as Lord and Saviour of my life and ask Him to forgive my sins, which separate me from Him. I want to experience His unfailing love and eternal life.

My Prayer

Dear God, I need You. I am sorry for my sins and ask You to forgive me. I believe that Jesus died for my sins. I give You my life and receive Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Thank You for hearing me and helping me to follow Jesus. In His name, Amen.



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