

# LEARNING TO BE LED BY *God*



The Incredible  
Journey

GARY KENT

# *LEARNING TO BE LED BY GOD*

Have you ever read the Bible and wondered how in the world people who should have known better made so many mistakes? Or, even worse, maybe you've taken a good look at your own life and wondered how in the world you could have made so many mistakes. Well, let us look at what God says in the Bible about the unwise things we do, and how you can stop doing them.

On the landscape of great literature, the Bible really stands apart from the crowd. The fact a Book like this could

ever come into existence is nothing short of a miracle, especially when you consider its origin. It was written by more than 40 different authors, ranging from statesmen to fishermen, over a period lasting more than 1500 years—and still, the whole Book is in perfect agreement.

Now you try to get perfect agreement from 40 different people, especially on the subject of religion, and you'll understand what a miracle that really is.

But you know, for me, one of the most remarkable features of the Bible, and one of the things that points to its authenticity, is its blunt honesty when it comes to the history of God's people. If this Book was simply a work of religious propaganda, as some people have suggested, I don't think you'd find some of the stories between its pages that you do.

For example, even though the Bible

describes Noah as a righteous man who found favour in God's eyes, with surprising candidness, it tells the story of his failure with alcohol. And even though Moses was handpicked by God to lead His people into a new land—with no attempt to hide his deficiencies, the Bible records that Moses had a hot temper, and he committed murder. And David—who the Bible says was a man after God's own heart – was also a murderer and an adulterer.

You see what I mean? The list goes on and on. The heroes of the Bible are not larger than life. Instead, they're refreshingly human, and God doesn't try to gloss over their mistakes. And that tells me that the authors of the Bible honestly felt they had nothing to hide.

Now of course, when you're reading the Bible, once in a while, you're tempted to think that you wouldn't make the same mistakes that you

read about in God's sacred history. In fact, when you read about some of the mistakes God's people have made, it almost makes you cringe.

For example, take the Old Testament story of Samson. Here's a man whose birth had been announced by an angel, a man who had been personally handpicked by God to rule the nation of Israel. And on top of that, he was gifted with unusual physical strength—but when confronted with batting eyelashes and a pretty face, his moral strength floundered, and he fell flat on his face. And reading that story, I'm sometimes tempted to think, *"How in the world could Samson be so foolish?"*

And then there's the case of Saul, the first king of Israel. The Bible speaks very, very highly of him—another man who was handpicked by God. God describes him:

*"...a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more*

*handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people."* 1 Samuel 9:2.

Saul was tall, dark and handsome with a regal appearance that was an instant crowd pleaser. He had everything going for him, but still he throws it all away. By the end of his life, he struggles with rage, he is petty and jealous, he disobeys the very voice of God, and he dies a violent death the day after he consults a spirit medium. And as I'm reading his story, I'm astounded, thinking, "*How in the world could Saul be so foolish?*"

And then there's the case of Herod the tetrarch, a man who had been exposed to the preaching of John the Baptist, and when you read the Bible carefully, it seems as if the preaching was having some effect—that the king's conscience had begun to bother him. He had the perfect opportunity to come clean and

make things right with God—but what does he do instead? In a moment of alcoholic bravado and unbridled passion, he vows to a pretty dancing girl that he will give her anything she asks for, and to his horror, she asks for the life of John the Baptist.

Now, he could have done the right thing, and he could have refused to do it, but the Bible records that he just couldn't bring himself to back down after having shown off in front of all his friends. So, as a result, John's head is served up on a silver platter.

And of course, as you're reading the story, it's tempting to think that you would never do something like that yourself. I'd like to think I would have the moral backbone to do the right thing, and I'm sure you would, too. So, when I'm reading this story, I'm thinking, *"How in the world could Herod be so foolish?"*

But of course, the whole point of these

stories is that every one of us is prone to making exactly the same kinds of mistakes. You might never be asked to literally serve up someone's head on a silver platter, but you might be asked at a board meeting to sacrifice your moral principles for the sake of the bottom line. Or you might be asked to look the other way when you know something wrong is about to take place. And all of a sudden, when everyone's eyes are on you, and your promotion might be at stake, you find it's very difficult to muster up half the courage it would take to wade your way out of some of the predicaments Bible characters found themselves in. The truth of the matter is that we often cave in under a lot less pressure than was ever applied to Saul or Herod. And the point the Bible is making is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Some of the greatest spiritual leaders of all time still had sin in their lives, and they needed Jesus every bit as much



as you or I. Every one of us is only a heartbeat away from doing something truly foolish. Here's how the Bible puts it:

*"Now all these things happened to them (and it's speaking specifically of the mistakes the Israelites made) as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man..."*

1 Corinthians 10:11–13

In other words, we're all in this together. There is no sin that anybody has ever committed that you would not be able to commit yourself if you let your guard down. You see, when you purposefully drive the positive influence of God out of your life, you can quickly sink to depths you never dreamed possible. According to the Bible, absolutely anybody could end up on death row. One of the things

I've noticed in the confessions of some of history's most notorious criminals is that they all seem to have surprised themselves. None of them ever thought they'd be capable of doing some of the things they did.

You see, nobody is born a master criminal, or mass murderer, but every one of us could end up there if we allow the wrong things into our lives. So we really ought to sit up and pay attention when the Bible points out some of the mistakes our forefathers made, because we are prone to making the very same mistakes, and a loving God is trying to spare us from the suffering and heartache those people went through.

And yet, in spite of pages and pages of warning from God, the human race still prefers to strike out on its own and do things its own way. I imagine that angels must wring their hands in anguish when they see us making the same mistakes over, and over, and over

again—especially when things have been laid out for us so clearly.

One of the most striking examples of human stubbornness is the long history of God's chosen people in the Old Testament. After more than 400 years of Egyptian slavery, God finally sets His people free—and you'd think they'd follow God ecstatically back to the land of freedom. You'd think, after crossing the Red Sea on dry ground and watching God miraculously destroy their enemies, that they'd have a faith in God that was completely unbreakable. But no sooner had they traveled three days into the wilderness, than they started to complain.

*"Moses", they said, "what in the world were you thinking when you brought us out here into the middle of the desert? Are you trying to kill us? We don't have a drop to drink!"*

Now it's hard to believe, that just a few days ago, they were standing on the

eastern shore of the Red Sea, singing the praises of God. You'd think that they'd understand that a God who can part the Red Sea can also give you something to drink. But the average human being has a very short memory. The history of God's people—tragically—is the history of people who love to complain.

Even after God miraculously provided fresh water, it only took a few more weeks until they were complaining again. "*Moses*", they said, "*what in the world were you thinking when you dragged us out here into the middle of the desert? Back in Egypt, we had all the food we could eat—but now we're all going to starve to death!*"

Just imagine: only a few weeks had gone by since God had changed the bitter waters of Marah into sweet drinking water, and only a few weeks had gone by since God had told them that He would preserve their health—

but still they found cause to complain.

And that, unfortunately, is the story of God's people. The Bible describes the chosen people as a hard-necked, stubborn people whose number one pastime was complaining. They refused to rest in the knowledge that God was leading them—even though they could visibly see the presence of that God in a cloud that led them across the wilderness.

The Psalmist speaks about this problem:

*"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"*  
Psalm 81:10

Now here is God's explicit promise to provide for His people, if only we would trust Him enough to follow—but the next few verses record one of the saddest chapters of the whole Bible.

*"But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of*

*Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.” Psalm 81:11,12*

You'll notice that God isn't talking about atheists, or pagans, or unbelievers here. He calls them “my people” – these are the ones who claim to love Him – and with tears in His voice, God has to record that they want nothing to do with Him. And in the end, because He is a loving God, and because He will not force people to follow Him against their will, He gives them up.

What a tragedy, when God had such great plans for them! He had been planning to set them up in Palestine, in the crossroads of the ancient world, so that every nation on the face of the planet could see for themselves how good a relationship with God can be. Israel was supposed to be a beacon of light to the entire planet, heralding the arrival of a Messiah who would give His life for the sins of the world.

But instead, they refused to do it. In spite of every advantage they dug in their heels, like a stubborn old pack mule, and simply refused to do it. And that carried them down a path of misery and heartache. Listen to the rest of the chapter, beginning in verse 13, where God says:

*"Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to Him, but their fate would endure forever. He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; And with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you.."*  
Psalm 81:13-16

You know, it really makes me wonder just how stubborn modern Christians can be. Just like ancient Israel, God has promised us a tremendously bright future. In the book of Isaiah, we read

of a new Promised Land where we won't have to deal with heartaches or suffering anymore.

*"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying."*  
Isaiah 65:17-19

The future God has planned for us is so exciting—so magnificent—that we'll hardly remember how hard life was here. And God's promise is that if we'll cling to Him, and stubbornly follow Him wherever He asks us to go – even if it's through the occasional spiritual wilderness—one day soon, we'll safely arrive in The Earth Made New, and we'll actually see Jesus face to face.



But you know, in spite of the fact that God has always kept His promises, and in spite of the long history of God's miracles, and in spite of the huge price God has paid for our salvation, there is still a tendency in the human heart to complain. And it all boils down to a simple lack of trust.

One of our biggest problems is our inability to see the big picture the way that God sees it. Our limited understanding doesn't allow us to see the end from the beginning, and so the minute we don't understand what's going on, or the minute things get just a little bit uncomfortable, we dig in our heels and protest. And if you think about it, it's kind of a foolish thing to do.

I'll never forget what happened during the birth of our second child. I had injured my back the day before my wife went into the hospital, and our oldest daughter developed a nasty case of

conjunctivitis—and so of course, when my wife was in the maternity ward, I was responsible for taking care of a two-year-old girl. Now normally, I think I would have been able to handle it, except for the fact that my back hurt so badly that I literally had to crawl around the house on my hands and knees, and to make matters worse, like every other child her age, my daughter was a very active two year old.

Trying to keep up with her was like trying to keep an octopus inside a fishing net, and the crowning act of my frustration came when she saw me crawling down the hall on all fours, and with wild delight, she yelled, “HORSIE!” and jumped on my back. I fell over and started screaming in pain, wishing against all odds that my wife would come home from the hospital. But of course, she’d only been there for half a day, and it wasn’t about to happen.

So, I found myself completely alone, dealing with somebody who simply didn't understand what I was trying to do. My daughter just wasn't able to understand why Mummy couldn't come home, or why Daddy couldn't cook like Mummy, or why Daddy didn't know how to make a ponytail. She didn't understand, because she was operating with imperfect knowledge.

And, you know, the thing that really drove the point home for me was when it came time to give my little girl her medicinal eye drops. I can't begin to tell you how much she hated those eye drops—and she had to have them three times a day. I would sit beside her on her little bed, gently tilt her head back and bring the little bottle of medicine up over her eye—and the minute she saw it, she'd pinch her eyes shut and start crying. *"No, Daddy, please no!"*

And because she wouldn't cooperate, I had to hold her head and pull her eye

open, and with my daughter kicking and screaming, I had to squirt the drops into her eye. And you know something, I hated every minute of it. In fact, it didn't take long until both of us were crying, and the easiest thing in the world would be to simply stop giving her the medication. But if I did that, her eye infection would never clear up.

You know, that afternoon, as I sat on my daughter's bed, holding her head and fighting the urge to cave in to her pleading, it occurred to me that God must suffer terribly when we dig in our heels and refuse to cooperate.

There was no need for the children of Israel to spend all those years in the wilderness—if they had only cooperated, the suffering would have been over in a heartbeat, just like my daughter's suffering would have been over much faster if she'd just cooperated. They would have been at home in the Promised Land much

faster if they had just trusted God to get them through the experience. But the book of Hebrews, chapter four, makes it clear that they utterly failed to rest in God's promises.

As God's children, we need to understand that we don't really understand everything. Our knowledge isn't complete. Sometimes, in faith, we need to simply trust that God knows what He's doing, even when He requires us to go through some pretty difficult circumstances. Like Jesus, kneeling in Gethsemane the night before we put Him to death, we need to be able to say, *"Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."*

You know, some of our biggest blunders and mistakes happen when we try to control our own lives. Samson messed up when he tried to solve his problems his own way. Saul messed up when he tried to run his life his own way. And maybe, right now, you've messed up,

too. Your life is a mess, and you don't have the relationship with God you know you should have.

And like the Israelites, because you don't really understand everything, you're quick to complain and give up on God. But in Jesus Christ, we have a sterling example of someone who never gave up faith—of someone who trusted God enough to pass through the toughest of experiences. Today, Jesus stands in the most exalted place in the universe.

You know, in Revelation 14:4, the Bible says that those who finally end up in the heavenly Promised Land are the people who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Sometimes that means you're going to have to follow Him through tough places, but if you stick with Him, you'll get there. Note the words of the Bible—God's people are those who pass through great tribulation but trust Him.

In Revelation we read:

*"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.".*  
Revelation 7:13-17 (KJV)

Let me ask you a question: has your life really been going the way you hoped? Wouldn't you like to have Someone to

trust—Someone who will one day wipe away every tear? He's waiting to hear from you, right now.



## NOTES

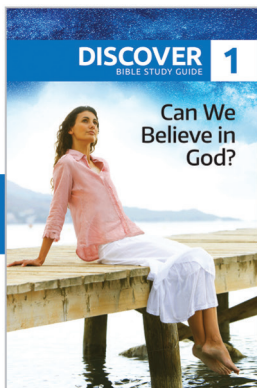
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## The Incredible Journey



Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for The Incredible Journey ministry. He holds a B.A. in Theology, M.A. in Ancient History & Archaeology, and M. in Divinity. He has produced and presented numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

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