

THE WAY

WHAT JESUS ACTUALLY INVITED US INTO

A short invitation to rediscover the gospel as reconciliation with God, life in His Kingdom, transformation through Christ, and the lived way of following Jesus.

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A free Scripture-rooted brief. No signup required.

THERE HAS TO BE MORE THAN THIS

There is a question I think many people quietly carry.

Sometimes it comes after years in church.

Sometimes it comes after walking away from church.

Sometimes it comes when suffering strips away the answers that used to satisfy us.

Sometimes it appears in the middle of prayer.

Is this really all Christianity is?

Believe certain statements. Attend certain meetings. Avoid certain sins. Defend certain doctrines. Try to be a good person. Then someday, when you die, hopefully you go to heaven.

I believe the Christian hope absolutely reaches beyond death. I believe in resurrection, judgment, eternal life, and the restoration of creation.

But I have become increasingly convinced that if Christianity is presented primarily as an arrangement concerning where we go after we die, we have reduced something Jesus announced as much larger.

Jesus did not walk through Galilee merely announcing:

"Here is how to go somewhere else later."

He announced:

"The Kingdom of God has drawn near."

Mark 1:15

Then He called people into it.

Follow Me.

Abide in Me.

Love one another.

Forgive.

Repent.

Pray.

Seek.

Ask.

Knock.

Lose your life.

Find it.

Take up your cross.

Become like a child.

Love your enemy.

Care for the forgotten.

Seek first the Kingdom of God.

Receive the Holy Spirit.

Remain in My love.

Jesus was not merely preparing people to die.

He was teaching people how to live with God.

That distinction has become deeply important to me.

This brief is an attempt to explain why.

It is not an invitation to replace one religious system with another. It is not secret knowledge. It is not a claim that I have discovered something unavailable to ordinary Christians.

Everything I am talking about is sitting openly in the Scriptures.

My invitation is much simpler:

LOOK AGAIN.

Open the Bible. Look at Jesus. Listen to what He actually announces. Watch what He actually does. Notice what happens to the people who encounter Him.

And ask whether the gospel might be even better than the version many of us inherited.

1. JESUS ANNOUNCED A KINGDOM

One of the easiest things to overlook about Jesus is also one of the most obvious.

He talked constantly about the Kingdom of God.

His ministry begins with the announcement:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark 1:15

Something had happened. Something had arrived. Something was now available.

The prophets had spoken for generations about God restoring His people, defeating evil, forgiving sin, pouring out His Spirit, establishing justice, raising the dead, and renewing creation.

Jesus stepped into that story and announced that the decisive moment had come.

The King was present.

And where the King went, signs of His Kingdom appeared.

The sick were healed.

Outcasts were received.

Demons were driven out.

Sinners were forgiven.

The proud were confronted.

The poor heard good news.

Enemies were commanded to love one another.

Those crushed beneath religious burdens were invited into rest.

The Kingdom was not merely a political territory.

It was the reign of God breaking into human life.

This is why Jesus could teach His disciples to pray:

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:10

The Christian hope certainly includes what God will finish in the future. But Jesus also

teaches us to desire God's will here.

In people.

In families.

In communities.

In acts of mercy.

In forgiveness.

In truth.

In justice.

In secret prayer.

In transformed hearts.

In ordinary human life.

The gospel announces not merely that human beings can someday leave earth. It announces that through Christ, human beings can begin coming under the reign of God now.

2. SALVATION IS MORE THAN SURVIVING DEATH

One of the verses that has increasingly shaped how I understand salvation is found in Jesus' prayer before His crucifixion:

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

John 17:3

Notice the language.

Jesus does not merely describe eternal life as endless duration. He describes it relationally.

TO KNOW GOD.

That does not mean future resurrection is unimportant. Quite the opposite. The New Testament looks forward intensely to the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation.

But eternal life is not simply something Christians wait to receive after their biological death. In Christ, it has already begun.

"Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life."

John 5:24

Not merely will someday have.

HAS.

The life of the age to come begins invading the present.

Salvation therefore includes far more than relocation after death. It includes:

reconciliation with God,

forgiveness,

freedom from the dominion of sin,

a new identity,

the indwelling Spirit,
adoption,
renewed desires,
a transformed mind,
learning obedience,
becoming capable of love,
participation in God's Kingdom,
and ultimately resurrection and new creation.

We are not saved because we successfully perform Christianity. We are saved by the grace of God through Christ.

And that grace does not merely change our destination. It begins changing us.

3. THE CENTER IS JESUS

None of this makes sense apart from Jesus Himself.

Christianity is not fundamentally a philosophy about becoming a better human being.

The gospel begins with what God has done.

Human beings do not climb their way back to God through enough knowledge, morality, ritual, suffering, religious affiliation, or self-improvement.

God comes toward us.

The Word becomes flesh.

Jesus enters human history.

He teaches.

He heals.

He confronts evil.

He reveals the Father.

He eats with sinners.

He touches the unclean.

He carries our suffering.

He willingly goes to the cross.

He dies.

He is buried.

And He rises.

The cross is not a decorative symbol attached to Christianity. It stands at the center.

Christ gives Himself for us. Sin is confronted. Mercy is opened. Reconciliation becomes possible.

The accusation against humanity does not receive the final word.

And resurrection declares that neither sin, violence, empire, accusation, nor death ultimately possesses the authority to define reality.

JESUS LIVES.

That changes everything.

Christian faith therefore does not begin with:

"Improve yourself enough to reach God."

It begins with:

God has acted in Jesus Christ.

Repent. Believe. Receive. Follow.

4. REPENTANCE IS AN INVITATION TO TURN

The word repentance can sound threatening because many people have heard it primarily as religious condemnation.

But repentance is one of the greatest gifts in the gospel.

It means I am not trapped forever inside the person I have been.

I can turn.

My mind can change.

My loyalties can change.

My habits can change.

My understanding of God can change.

My relationship with sin can change.

My direction can change.

Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom contains both commands:

REPENT AND BELIEVE.

Turn from what destroys you. Trust the One calling you home.

Biblical faith is therefore more than agreeing that certain theological statements are true. Faith becomes trust. Dependence. Allegiance. Movement.

If I genuinely trust Jesus, eventually that trust begins affecting where I walk.

This does not mean believers achieve sinless perfection. The New Testament clearly assumes that Christians continue learning, stumbling, confessing, receiving correction, and growing.

Grace is not God's reward for finally becoming flawless. Grace is what allows sinners to come home in the first place.

And grace becomes the ground from which transformation grows.

5. JESUS SAID, "FOLLOW ME"

It is possible to believe many things about Jesus without arranging our lives around Him.

Jesus repeatedly moves beyond intellectual agreement.

His invitation is:

"Follow me."

The recurring call of Jesus in the Gospels

Christianity was originally described simply as the Way.

That language matters to me.

A way is something you walk.

Discipleship is lived.

It happens when forgiveness costs something. When temptation is real. When prayer feels

dry. When your enemy has a name. When suffering has entered your home. When telling the truth could cost you. When mercy interrupts judgment. When pride has to die. When nobody is watching.

When you must decide whether Jesus' words are beautiful religious sayings or instructions for life.

Discipleship cannot be outsourced.

Another person can teach me Scripture. Another person can encourage me. Another person can pray with me. Another person can correct me.

But nobody can follow Jesus for me.

Nobody can repent for me.

Nobody can love God for me.

Nobody can surrender my heart for me.

Nobody can forgive my enemy for me.

Nobody can cultivate my secret life with God for me.

Eventually the invitation becomes personal.

FOLLOW ME.

6. GOD WANTS THE HEART

One of the great biblical tensions is that human beings repeatedly turn living relationship into manageable religious machinery.

The prophets confronted this constantly.

People performed sacrifices while practicing injustice. They observed religious calendars while neglecting mercy. They honored God with their mouths while their hearts wandered elsewhere.

Jesus continues that confrontation.

He does not reject obedience. He deepens it.

Murder is traced toward hatred.

Adultery is traced toward desire.

Public prayer is contrasted with secret prayer.

Religious performance is contrasted with sincerity before the Father.

External cleanliness is contrasted with what proceeds from the heart.

Jesus continually moves toward the source.

Because God is not merely attempting to produce compliant behavior. He is forming people.

This is why transformation matters.

The goal is not merely:

"I successfully avoided punishment."

The deeper work is:

What kind of person am I becoming in the presence of God?

Am I becoming more truthful?

More merciful?

More courageous?

More capable of forgiveness?

More willing to serve?

More resistant to evil?

More faithful when nobody sees?

More able to love?

More like Christ?

The New Testament calls this fruit.

And fruit cannot be taped onto a dead tree. It grows from life within.

7. THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES THIS LIFE POSSIBLE

Christian transformation is not simply disciplined self-improvement.

Jesus promised His followers the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit teaches.

Convicts.

Guides.

Comforts.

Empowers.

Produces fruit.

Reminds believers of Christ's words.

Gives gifts for the building up of others.

The biblical hope had always been deeper than merely giving humanity better rules.

God promised through the prophets that He would write His law upon hearts and place His Spirit within His people.

That is extraordinary.

Christianity does not announce:

"Try harder until you become worthy of God's presence."

It announces that through Christ, God makes human beings His dwelling place.

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

1 Corinthians 3:16

That does not make every private thought divine.

Christians still need Scripture. Discernment. Correction. Wisdom. Community. Humility.

History. Evidence. We remain capable of misunderstanding.

But Christianity makes a staggering claim nonetheless:

God desires to dwell with His people.

Not merely near them. Within them.

8. THE CHURCH IS A PEOPLE BEFORE IT IS A BUILDING

This also changes how I think about the Church.

I do not believe Christian community is unnecessary. Quite the opposite.

Jesus gathers a people.

The New Testament repeatedly describes believers as a body. A family. A flock. A temple.

A priesthood. A people.
We need one another.
Teachers matter.
Pastors matter.
Elders matter.
Communities matter.
Tradition can preserve wisdom.
Institutions can accomplish enormous good.
But none of these things are Christ Himself.
The institution serves the Body. It does not replace the Body.
The teacher points toward Christ. The teacher does not become Christ.
The building can house believers. The building is not the Church in its deepest biblical sense.
Christ remains the Head.
And God's people remain living stones in His dwelling place.
Whenever Christian structures help people encounter God, know Scripture, love one another, serve their neighbors, grow in wisdom, protect the vulnerable, and follow Christ, they are doing something beautiful.
But when religious structures begin substituting compliance for transformation, fear for love, institutional loyalty for truth, or human control for the lordship of Christ, Christians have every reason to return again to Jesus.
The answer to unhealthy religion is not necessarily isolation.
It is Christ at the center again.

9. THE KINGDOM BECOMES VISIBLE THROUGH LOVE

Jesus gives His followers an astonishing identifying mark:

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:35

Not branding. Not political power. Not rhetorical dominance. Not the ability to win every argument.

LOVE.

But biblical love is not sentimental passivity. Jesus' love tells the truth. Defends the vulnerable. Confronts hypocrisy. Forgives enemies. Feeds people. Touches lepers. Welcomes children. Restores sinners. Weeps. Serves. Sacrifices. Endures.
Love and truth are not enemies.
Justice and mercy are not enemies.
Forgiveness and moral seriousness are not enemies.
Jesus holds together realities human beings constantly separate.
The Kingdom appears wherever people begin learning to do the same.
Micah speaks of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.

Jesus speaks of the weightier matters of the law as justice, mercy, and faithfulness.
James tells us that faith without works is dead.
John tells us that claiming love for God while hating our brother exposes contradiction.
The inward life with God eventually moves outward.
Encounter becomes transformation. Transformation becomes action.

10. SUFFERING DOES NOT MEAN GOD HAS ABANDONED YOU

Many people discover that shallow religion works until suffering arrives.
Then the slogans collapse.
The Bible never promises Christians a life free from grief, betrayal, persecution, confusion, loss, or weakness.
Jesus Himself weeps. Jesus suffers. Jesus is betrayed. Jesus is falsely accused. Jesus experiences abandonment by friends. Jesus dies.
Christian hope does not exist because suffering is unreal.
Christian hope exists because resurrection is real.
The pattern at the center of Christianity is not:
pain means God left.
It is:
death does not receive the final word.
This has become more than theology to me.
There are things suffering can expose that comfort allows us to ignore. There are places inside us where borrowed answers eventually stop working.
And sometimes the cry that remains is simply:
God, I need You.
That cry can become a doorway.
Not because suffering itself is holy. Not because every tragedy was secretly good. Not because every painful event should be spiritually romanticized.
But because even in places of grief, God can meet human beings.
Faith can become something deeper than explanation.
It can become trust. Presence. Perseverance. Prayer.
A life learning that darkness is real, yet darkness still does not overcome the Light.

11. THE KINGDOM IS HERE - AND STILL COMING

There is an important tension in the New Testament.
The Kingdom has come.
And the Kingdom is coming.
Eternal life has begun.
And resurrection still lies ahead.
Christ reigns.
And Scripture still looks toward the final defeat of death.
Believers are new creations.
And creation still groans.
We should not erase either side.

Christianity is not merely about escaping earth after death. But neither is Christianity simply about improving this present world.
The hope is larger than both.
God is restoring His creation.
Scripture looks forward to resurrection.
Judgment.
The defeat of death.
A new heaven and new earth.
God dwelling with humanity.
Tears wiped away.
Death no more.
The Christian story begins in a garden. It ends in a renewed creation filled with the presence of God.
And between those two scenes stands Jesus Christ: crucified, risen, reigning, and making all things new.
The future matters.
But the future Kingdom casts its light backward into the present.
We begin learning its life now.

12. SO WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The gospel is the good news that God has acted decisively in Jesus Christ.
Jesus is Lord.
The Kingdom of God has drawn near.
Christ died.
Christ rose.
Sin and death do not receive the final word.
Forgiveness is available.
Reconciliation with God is available.
The Spirit is given.
Human beings can become children of God.
We can repent.
We can believe.
We can follow Jesus.
We can begin learning the life of the Kingdom now.
And we can look toward resurrection and the restoration of all things.
That means Christianity is not merely:
"Believe this so you can go to heaven when you die."
It is something much richer:

COME HOME TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

Know Him.
Receive His mercy.
Learn His voice.

Walk by His Spirit.
Become His disciple.
Let Him expose what is false.
Let Him heal what is broken.
Let Him teach you to forgive.
Let Him teach you to love.
Let Him change what rules your heart.
Join His people.
Serve others.
Seek justice.
Love mercy.
Walk humbly.
Carry your cross.
Lose the life built around yourself.
Discover the life hidden in Christ.
And wait with hope for the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation.
That is not an escape plan.
That is a new creation beginning inside human beings before the final new creation arrives.

13. IF SOMETHING IN YOU IS SAYING, "I WANT THAT"

Then start with Jesus.
Not with me.
Not with an algorithm.
Not with the loudest preacher online.
Not with the people who promise that they alone possess the hidden truth.
Go to the source.
Read the Gospels.
Watch Jesus.
Listen to His questions.
Notice who approaches Him.
Notice who He confronts.
Notice who He comforts.
Notice what makes Him angry.
Notice what makes Him weep.
Notice what He says about the Father.
Notice what He says about money.
Power.
Forgiveness.
Prayer.
Enemies.
Religion.
Sin.

Mercy.

Judgment.

Eternal life.

The Kingdom.

And then do something dangerous.

Ask God to change you.

Not merely to confirm what you already believe. Not merely to make your life easier.

Ask for truth. Ask for mercy. Ask for wisdom. Ask Him to expose what needs to die. Ask

Him to teach you how to follow Christ.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Matthew 7:7

So seek.

A SIMPLE PLACE TO BEGIN

If you have not read the Bible in a long time - or ever - start with one of the Gospels.

Read slowly. You do not need to understand everything immediately.

Write down what surprises you.

Write down what troubles you.

Write down what attracts you.

Write down what Jesus actually says.

Then continue into Acts and the New Testament letters and watch how the earliest Christians tried to live after the resurrection.

Return to the Hebrew Scriptures and begin seeing the larger story Jesus entered - the creation, Abraham, Israel, Exodus, covenant, prophets, exile, restoration, wisdom, temple, sacrifice, Messiah, and Kingdom.

Christian faith has roots.

Context matters. History matters. Language matters.

But none of those things are ends in themselves.

Knowledge should eventually lead us closer to truth.

And for the Christian, truth ultimately brings us again to Christ.

SCRIPTURE PATH

These passages provide a starting point for exploring the themes in this brief.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Mark 1:14-15 | Matthew 5-7 | Matthew 6:10, 33 | Luke 4:16-21 | Luke 17:20-21

KNOWING GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE

John 3 | John 10 | John 15 | John 17:1-3 | 1 John 5:11-12

THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 | Mark 15-16 | Luke 24 | John 19-20 | Romans 3-8 | 1 Corinthians 15 | Hebrews 9-10

GRACE, FAITH, AND NEW LIFE

Ephesians 2:1-10 | Romans 5-8 | Galatians 2:20 | Titus 2:11-14 | 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

REPENTANCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

Mark 8:34-38 | Luke 9:23-25 | Luke 15 | John 8:31-32 | James 1-2

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ezekiel 36:22-28 | Joel 2:28-32 | John 14-16 | Acts 2 | Romans 8 | Galatians 5:16-26

THE CHURCH AS GOD'S PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 12 | Ephesians 2:11-22 | Ephesians 4:1-16 | 1 Peter 2:4-10

LOVE, MERCY, JUSTICE, AND FORGIVENESS

Micah 6:8 | Matthew 5 | Matthew 18 | Matthew 22:34-40 | Matthew 23:23 | Luke 10:25-37 | 1 Corinthians 13 | 1 John 4

SUFFERING AND HOPE

Psalms 22 | Romans 5:1-5 | Romans 8:18-39 | 2 Corinthians 4 | 1 Peter 1 | Revelation 21-22

ONE LAST THING

Please do not believe something merely because I wrote it.

I am still learning. I am still being corrected. I am still following.

I have known failure, grief, confusion, sin, suffering, mercy, and restoration.

And the longer I walk, the less interested I become in pretending faith means possessing every answer.

What I know is that Jesus keeps drawing me toward the Father.

And again and again I have found that Christianity becomes most alive not when God is merely discussed as an idea, but when truth moves from information into encounter, from encounter into transformation, and from transformation into a life actually lived.

So test what I have written.

Search the Scriptures.

Ask questions.

Learn the history.

Listen carefully.

Love people.

Remain humble.

Pray.

Seek God.

And above everything else:

FOLLOW JESUS.

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The Way - What Jesus Actually Invited Us Into

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