

Bible Study Collection By Ben Huot

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By Ben Huot

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Inspired by a Bible study on Job and research on study Bibles

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Solutions

What if the Bible is True?

Many, in our country today, think science answers all problems, so Christianity must be false. They fail to see why they should care, when they have the impression that they can be good without God. They often see losing your faith as growing up emotionally.

The thing is that Christians can and probably are wrong on a lot of things. They likely do add their culture to their faith and have questionable politics. The thing is, despite all their flaws, what if the Bible is actually true?

The Bible does not give easy answers and does not end our suffering in this life. But God never claimed to. God is completely honest and the Bible does explain why the world works the way it does. Many of the ideas expressed are not even fully accepted by Christians.

Christ is central to our thinking, but many, on both sides, only like certain aspects of Him. We like prophecy today, because it is our side winning and everyone agreeing we are right. We fail to accept all of who Christ was. Christ would be considered a big failure, by current Christian and secular standards.

He was God in the flesh and He could not even convince those, who were experts on the Bible, in their time, that He was fulfilling prophecy. Is it better to win and be understood by people or reconciled with God? We often see our biggest problems as physical like illness, poverty, or crime. Christ said our biggest problem is sin.

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We seem to think that the disciples understood and accepted Christ's teachings, were perfect examples, and not real people, with the same problems we have. This is perfectly explained in the Apostle Paul's letters, to the various churches. Even the greatest heroes of the faith made fatal errors and thought they were totally unqualified, to do what God asked of them. Yet they still carried on His message.

Christ pulled at least two major revelations, that must have shook the disciples' faith, to its very core. Christ appeared to them, to have been totally defeated and later left them completely. We see this all as inevitable and comforting, but I think they thought, at the time, that was hard to accept.

So the situation the Church in America sees itself today is not something so different conceptually, than we see in the Bible. This is actually very much a proof the Bible is still relevant today. I often was frustrated, when I could not communicate well and I felt misunderstood, but Christ was the most misunderstood Person of all time.

Many of those in the Church focus on the suffering Christ went through on the cross. We fail to see things and cannot fully comprehend how difficult it must have been, for Him to live as a person. When we see the temptations of Christ in the wilderness, by the devil, they were all about finding a shortcuts, to solving real needs, but doing it in the wrong way.

Christ must have been very discouraged, even before His ministry. He had at least all the authority of God, but couldn't use it to help Himself or others. He also had to be a helpless baby, later realized He was God, and then had to follow human

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parents, who later thought He was crazy. He also never had a wife.

We think we have been defeated and are helpless and alone. We do not really know what that means, to really be in that situation. Sure, we suffer extreme tragedies, but at least our losses don't compare to God having to totally turn on His son. He did this, to save some people, who think they are too good to follow Him.

Life is difficult, because the consequences of sin in the world are severe. It is exasperated by selfishness and pride of other people. Furthermore, we cannot change any of this, outside our limited bubbles and often not there either.

The Bible should encourage anyone, who feels misunderstood, but it comes at the price that we cannot be in control. It is not our right, to tell others they are wrong, or think we are better morally than them. We also do not have the full picture, or have anyway to know who is really a Christian.

Our job is to obey, not to agree. It is ok to not understand, or to struggle with God. The proof of your faith is to follow Him, despite this.

We have to have faith, to please God. Even in Heaven, faith is still important. We might get shocked, when we go to Heaven and ask for answers, as to why we had to suffer. Christ may very well say, "why have you allowed sin in your life?"

Speed of Time

The solution to our problems is right in front of us, but there is too much noise to sort through and determine what is the most important. To solve this, we must see what all our problems have in common.

What has changed in the same time frame? Essentially time has sped up. We are both going through resources and accumulating trash at an accelerating rate. The common way in which our modern world can be easily explained that is different from the traditional world is in our conception of time.

What do all the things sages say have in common? How is prayer like meditation? How does a person learn discipline? What is the key to applying this to our lives? This can all be reduced to slowing down our thinking, speaking, and acting.

Most people think that the way to survive a disaster is to quickly gather huge amounts of supplies. But people who have huge amounts of supplies often give up, while those with few or no resources thrive. This is because they have a positive mental attitude.

By slowing down, you keep from panicking and make better decisions. Most things take longer than we plan and, even in emergencies, we often have much more time to act than we realize.

Jesus was never in a rush. He constantly left to talk with His Father and did so even more often, the more His stress increased. People need silence and rest. This is how we learn to think.

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Today we are too busy to take care of ourselves. God gave us limitations as a blessing, not a curse. Only those who do evil have no chance to rest.

The key to self mastery is to realize we all need God. But this will only start, when we place boundaries on how much we allow others to do our thinking for us. No one has time to do everything.

Try fasting from electronics, entertainment, or buying things. Spend the time saved to seek God. The only way we find God is by not giving up. We must show we are really committed to Him.

We only make peace with God, when we accept we cannot have everything. We cannot solely focus on our own needs and still be happy Christians. The Bible is controversial because it forces us to choose. We cannot be both at the center of our future and still have room for God in our lives.

For God to be in our lives, we need to withdraw from the spotlight. For God to be greater, we need to shrink. We can never be at peace, if we desire to be the center of attention, because everyone else wants the same thing.

This is why some people reject God and will not spend eternity with Him. If we won't accept that God is more important than us, then we will never be happy anywhere, even in Heaven. For those who will humble themselves before God, in every area of their lives, we need not wait until we die to reconcile with God.

God does not carry us away to Heaven, or ask us to do something we cannot understand or relate with. God has brought Heaven to

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Earth. God has made the ultimate effort to reconcile with us. But we need to make a legitimate effort, to accept His offer.

But today we all are too lazy, to be honest. We need to make time for both God and ourselves. We need to wait for God to speak to us. We also must accept His message will likely come to us through people we encounter in our daily lives and in the Bible.

Time is the source of our problems and the solution is to slow down.

Less of Everything

Ironically, for this tiny part of history, for this very small portion of the world's population, most of our suffering comes from having too much. Few outside this bubble could imagine our lives because they are so ridiculous. We all have access to so much of what anyone of any other time in recorded history would call magic that it is ironic that we still have problems.

For us to think we would solve our problems by having more energy is the same way an addict thinks. Many of us do suffer some of the things people outside this bubble do, but most our current problems would be solved if we actually had less wealth.

Just like the Internet should bring wisdom, spread the faith, and help us solve problems, but instead brings so much evil. The Internet is so filled with crime and confusion, that we can never make practical use of its potential capabilities for good.

We had this happen before. The French Revolution was going to bring freedom and equality within one generation. Instead, it led us down the road to Nationalism in Europe and after 2 world wars, Europe lost both its empires and its faith.

In Les Miserables, they sing about every man being a king. The problem is when we have this much power, we then get all the problems royalty had. One of those is paranoia.

I am very lucky, after serving in the US Army, not long before 9/11, to only have Schizophrenia and chronic allergic pink eye. I understand very well what paranoia is as that is one of my biggest issues as well.

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It is interesting that most of the conflicts we have now are with groups of people who have little to nothing of value and are very mobile. This is a problem as old as history. Throughout history they were known as barbarians, mongols, pirates, terrorists and hackers. It is a problem and a high cost, for those who hold wealth, to keep it from being stolen by others.

We do not think we have wealth, because we live in a world where we interact with people even wealthier than us. The truth is the what is considered poverty in America is an income greater than 75% of the world's population. We think that if we had only a little more a month we would be happy, but billionaires think similarly.

We see this obsession with more in Bibles for instance. We stuff so much material in study bibles that they literally fall apart or the text is so small that we need a magnifying lens to read it. The world is being hugely influenced by America and our bad habits. That is actually our foreign policy. We are working to get the world addicted to our culture, so we can control them with our technology.

We actually hack the Chinese and Russians more than they hack us. The Cold War was won by machines not people. Why do you think the Russians or the Iranians got so interested in computers right after they were defeated with them?

We could end this internet crime in one day and make the world more peaceful instantly. Just let the other nations run themselves how they see fit. We see the world as coming against us but the world sees us as coming against them.

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We can be happy again. Too much stimulation can actually cause pain. The cost of constantly wanting more means you can never rest. Instead of turning against each other, to try to get as much as we can, we should try denying ourselves.

History

Unresolved

About five centuries ago, the modern world started. This was the first successful challenge to the power of the Hapsburgs, in religious issues.

After the success of the Crusades, the power of the Pope was so unilateral and unchallenged that they did things I think that they would later regret. The period of reform goes back to the time of at least Saint Francis of Assisi. Most of the reforms the Roman Catholic Church tried to wipe out, by killing everyone, as they saw it as a revolt and heretical.

By the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Hapsburgs were the big world power everyone else wanted to defeat. They included the entire empires of both Spain and Portugal, which included most of the tropics around the entire world, as well as big parts of modern Belgium, Germany, Southeastern Europe, and Italy, at one time.

This was around the time, when the armies of central and eastern Christian Europe combined and finally found some success against the most powerful Islamic Empire of the time, called the Ottoman Empire. This empire covered most of what we now think of as the Arab world. They actually did not become mostly Arab and Muslim, until the early 20th century though.

The real instability occurred, when France decided they did not want to be part of the Hapsburg Empire. To achieve this, they decided to ally themselves with the Ottoman Empire. France decided to fund the new Protestant movement, in what is now called Germany. At the same time, the French persecuted their own people, who converted to Protestantism.

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After fighting a number of wars, some world wide, the French finally agreed to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the Holy Roman Empire, in what is now Germany. The other end of the deal was that the Hapsburgs were to let those in this Pre-German area choose to be a variant of Protestantism. This was only on the condition that local rulers had previously converted first. This is the very first treaty of what later became the legal basis of modern international law. This was the start of what we call things like human rights.

The theological explanations are all over the map and the exact issues are not interesting, to most people today. Suffice it to say, they are essential irresolvable issues. One of the major issues is the interpretation of Scripture. Many people, on both sides, felt very strongly about this. They decided to confess their beliefs in public, knowing full well that they would be executed the next day for it.

The Churches basically were at each others throats, until the time of Napoleon. Napoleon was a dictator who ruled France, because after the French Revolution was finished killing their king and queen, they could not agree on anything.

Napoleon hated the Catholic Church. He looted it to fund his war campaigns. He also set the course for the founding of modern Germany and modern Italy. Additionally, he finished off the Spanish and Portuguese empires, that were already weak by then, both directly and indirectly.

After he was defeated, the eastern half of the Hapsburgs empire ended up being weak. They were in this position, because they lost the other half of their Empire, about a hundred years earlier. They decided to stop marrying outside the family, so they didn't

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have to give up power to foreign rulers. They ended up losing the Spanish Empire part to France basically.

So the big powers still left in Europe, with substantial armies, were the British and what was left of the Habsburg Empire. So the Habsburgs strategy was to shift alliances and make peace with former enemies. This decision allowed them to avoid having to fight more than one country at a time.

So they made this peace treaty with the British, that all of Europe honored, until World War I. This was the height of the British, French, German, and Italian empires. These countries basically took over the areas of the Arab and Muslim world and their areas of influence from Africa to Southeast Asia, because those empires became weak. This all happened in a very short amount of time.

Around this time, there were about 5 major revolutions including the French, American, Enlightenment, scientific, and romantic. This all lead to nationalism and World War II, where Europe finished destroying what was left after World War I and they lost their empires. History textbooks of most countries divide themselves into 3 sections. Before the 19th century, the period up to 1945, and after 1945. These correspond to the major technology revolutions.

This history goes back to Christianity getting involved in politics, which I think is a mistake. At the onset of the Middle Ages, Western Europe ended up joining together Church and state, to solve a very obvious problem then. The churches in the east ended up being terribly persecuted. The common factors are that they both got involved in politics. They were then manipulated to give one group in power justification for their policies.

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So the problem is that the Church wants to have unity, while maintaining a certain set of doctrines. One of the big challenges, that may just not be possible, unless we radically change how we look at Scripture, is that you cannot have unity and consistent doctrines over time. This goes back to how the Bible is written more in a literary style than a legal document.

Part of the problem is that we look at it in a culture that is anti-intellectual, anti-supernatural, and very political. What did God intend though?

I personally think that God wanted to force us to decide to fully embrace His ideas or entirely reject them. I think we are going through an existential crisis as a Church, a world culture, and in the minds of every person on the planet. I think God is a romantic at heart.

I do not believe God will come back in my lifetime, though. I think that God uses forces that do not correspond, to political parties. He uses weather, economics, and technology, to drive change in cultures and in individual people's lives.

Many people, in a small part of the world, believe God is irrelevant to them, but most of the world today and almost all of the world throughout history strongly disagree.

I believe that religion is already becoming more influential in America today, in the mainstreaming of feminism and science fiction. I do not believe it follows party lines though. The most popular idea in politics today is to not vote.

America Never was Christian

The world in the 21st century is not giving up on religion. In fact, the world is more obsessed with religion than ever before. Europe and America combined are a small percentage of the entire world population.

The constitution is not based on Christian principles and most founders were not theologically similar to Evangelicals at all. Many of the ideas Evangelicals today in America have are from England of the 1700s and 1800s.

The way our country sees ethics and morality is vastly different than what the Bible teaches. These ideas come from the Enlightenment, not the Bible. Modern atheism and New Age religion come from this period.

Fundamentally, the Bible teaches that God sees freedom and rights fundamentally different. Anyone teaching differently is basing it on erroneous information either maliciously or out of being taught things that are not factual.

In the Bible, we are either slaves to sin or slaves to God. This is a purely spiritual distinction. The terms used are intended to impress on us the fact that we need to take seriously our spiritual situation.

God chose to save us at the greatest cost to Himself, as we chose to not follow certain basic rules. We have value, because God chose that. He has the power and authority to say so just as He had the power and authority to create reality with His voice.

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The only similar concepts between Christianity and American government pertain to the Bill of Rights. These are the legal equivalents of kindness and mercy. These character traits are ones Christians need to have, to prove they have saving faith.

We should limit the power of the military and law enforcement. In countries where no one gets away with crime, many people also are in prison because they were doing something Americans claim is their right. This includes the freedom to practice their religion.

Any country our size throughout history was referred to as an empire, regardless of how they described themselves. We also control most of what goes on in the world via our technological, economic, and military superiority. We actually created this world we blame others for, as we were the only world power for at least 30 years.

One of the ways we control the world is by getting the majority of the world's resources cheaply and easily. This is accomplished by putting in corrupt leaders. We then pay them off to keep their populations in continual poverty.

We have hundreds of small wars going on at all times, to enforce this. We also train people to commit crimes in foreign countries, to manipulate people into doing what our leaders want. This is how the Department of Defense works.

They do good things for bad reasons and bad things for good reasons. They also believe in sacrificing a few people and many animals to suffer greatly for a larger group of people. This is the way every powerful country operates and the difference is mostly geography and history.

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At this point, the entire world economic, political, and social system is based on electronic surveillance and it's democratization. The technology spies from big nations had 20 years ago now is available inexpensively and designed for novices. There is now very little difference between police, organized crime, militaries, governments, and corporations.

Personal information is now worth more than oil. Mostly it is a bubble. It cannot be worth more knowing what you might buy, than you actually buying something. Governments though will always pay for it, as well as criminals.

This situation, the US deliberately set up for the world, is much like the books 1984 and Animal Farm by George Orwell. Democracy is the same as Imperialism. It looks different, if you live long in a 3rd world country, than it does within America. This is because we live in the homeland of the empire and we have American citizenship.

The reason why we have freedom of speech in America is because there are so many voices, that it all gets lost in the noise. There are also some very powerful people, who most people listen to and will believe anything they say. We are less knowledgeable about the rest of the world than most other countries and this is by design. Not only do we have a anti-supernatural bias but also an anti-intellectual bias in America.

Many people now think America is wealthy, because God has blessed us with this. If that is true, then why do most Christians in the world live in poverty that makes our country's homeless look rich? Why also are they persecuted in very painful ways, unlike anything we ever have or will have in America?

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Psychology

Never Change

We are in a society that thinks it both possible and wise to change others' views at the drop of a hat. We have a poor understanding of others because we have a poor understanding of ourselves. We arrive in this situation, because our culture does not emphasize self reflection or give us time to do so.

We live in a very anti-intellectual culture, because why would those in power want to raise more leaders or deal with new ideas? Most people throughout most of recorded history and the world today are often smart but not very educated classically and that is not by accident. Today we are afraid that our culture will be dictated by politics and not by facts but this has happened since ancient times across every culture.

One of the biggest cross cultural concerns of the ruling elite throughout most of history was legitimacy. Our leaders realize they have to justify why they should lead our country. This happened and was the reason why we have Confucianism and Russia as we now know it. Western Europe developed the way it did for the same reason. It was a big concern amongst Arab rulers too.

This idea of election plus advertising by mass media is brilliant, because it gives the illusion of choice, without any risk to our leadership. The US is still new to history and so did not have the deep divisions that most of the world has had for centuries or millennia. This creates divisions amongst issues our leaders don't care about because they are irrelevant to them.

Basically our leaders care about money and popularity. They are as concerned about major changes in society as we are because

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rapid change means they lose power. Power to them is like a drug that they are addicted to and it is the one thing that matters to them.

It is interesting that the only thing we can agree upon is in business where we can all agree on the objectives - money. One of the biggest ways we can differentiate ourselves from non-believers is by using means other than money and power to further evangelize the world.

It is unwise to change your beliefs based on argument because otherwise you would change your views just because someone else is better at arguing. We see the world in terms of trying to make sense of the world in terms of our earlier experiences and this is how it should be. Our leaders understand this and this is why they appeal to emotional arguments and repetition, not logical reasoning.

It is similar with the military - they do not expect you to change how you believe and they do not care. They do not teach you complex skills that require you to have advanced degrees to understand. They teach you to respond fast and do some very specific but simple things under great stress.

The military likes you being weak and afraid because that means you will follow orders better. Courage is defined as acting in spite of fear. If you act without fear when you are in danger, you are being foolish, not brave. The military does not want heroic individuals or creativity.

The reason why we dominate the world and not other countries is that our culture is based on cooperation not individuality. This works well for combat with foot soldiers armed with guns. We

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are better at logistics than the rest of the world. In some cultures, middle level management is encouraged to be creative while in our culture we discourage it at this level.

The corporation is very much run like the military. It is very hard to get someone to re-enlist in the military. I was able to leave early from the military, because of my mental illness. I was stationed in Hawaii and everyone in my unit wanted to leave as well. People were given huge monetary bonuses and / or big concessions, like choice of base and going to school full time while being paid, to re-enlist.

This is why it is so hard to get good NCOs or Sergeants, who act as middle managers in the military. This is why managers move up a company so fast and also move around locations so often. You easily get burned out, when your life is the company. You are responsible for things getting done no matter what it takes for them to get done.

The difference between the corporation and the military are money and difficulty level of circumstances. The military is paid so low that many who have a child and spouse are under the poverty line in America. They often receive food stamps while in the military and after leaving. You also have the likelihood for personal physical or psychological injury. I told you that I ended up with Schizophrenia and chronic allergic pink eye. I believe I got off very easy.

There are so many people who lost legs in the military that it is even common for high ranking officers. I thought the gas chamber was rough, but many service members deployed to the Middle East got smoke from burn piles, that gave them colon cancer. The military just recently was pressured into routinely

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screening for that. They still use burn piles though, like they have for the past 30 years or more.

Order of Revelation

One of the major misunderstandings of the Bible, for both believers and unbelievers, is that they think that the Old and New Testament somehow show a fundamentally different God. Christianity is a revealed religion like Hinduism or Islam, which means that God gradually revealed more about Himself over time.

One of the big differences ethically, that the Bible shows about morality in the Old Testament, is that God reveals the concept of divine command ethics before value ethics. Just like when my parents raised us and I experienced in Army Basic Training, the first thing you learn is to follow orders without explanation. Later you get explanations. But you must always remember that, although it is nice and helpful to be given explanations, you need to do as told, no matter what, without question or delay.

The brain operates this way too. The reptilian brain responds very simply and very fast, in times of danger, when you need to run away or otherwise act without thinking. This does not require the more complex intellectual brain and purposely bypasses it. Schizophrenia affects this rational part of the brain. People like myself, that suffer from it, do not always do things that make sense from a cultural point of view.

One of the points of showing the history of a nation and how it responded to God not only provides us a way to to reflect on how we act in relationship with Him, but also allows us to see the idea of corporate sin. This is where the Prophets come in and prepare the way for Christ.

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Basically, the Prophets go the opposite direction as the history of Israel. One man turns into a nation in the history, while the prophets talk at first about judgement on a national scale. Later, they go to talking about what God wants us to do as individuals. Christ ends up dwelling inside us, while previously He basically was tied to a building in one city, and in between was a Person like us.

Like anyone young, we don't understand well at first why we need to do things our parents say that seem irrelevant. Later on, when we become adults, we understand why we were taught those fundamental things as kids. We are equipped to understand our parents point of view eventually. Then we can survive on our own and often times are able to take care of others.

In the military, they start out with a clean break from your past. You are then put into a situation that forces you to see directly why you need to cooperate. This is sometimes referred to as trial by fire. You are thrown into a chaotic situation and you have to figure it out quick.

Basic Training, as most infantry training in the military, is all designed this way to test you psychologically. This is because the most advanced skills only require a 6th grade level developmental intellect. You are also tested early on for physical fitness standards.

Just as the parent or Drill Sergeant is thought of as cruel, many of their children or trainees later realize they were firm but loving. The same is true with God. God trains us to stay away from evil not because He wants to deny us fun, but that He wants to keep us from suffering later pain.

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In the Old Testament, God deliberately waited to bring Jesus, so that they could be prepared to understand the severity of the consequences of sin. This was necessary, so that they could understand the point of Jesus' death and resurrection. We often talk about the suffering of people in the Old Testament, but not enough on the suffering of Christ. Jesus suffered in many ways His entire life which, many of which we choose not to understand.

The disciples then were totally abandoned and were utterly confused twice. The death and resurrection of Jesus was not clear to them at the time and then Jesus left them again. It makes you wonder how we would respond to Christ's second coming, if we cannot understand the most basic and fundamental aspects of His lessons for us.

For people who talk a lot about having faith and forgiveness, who are we to tell God what is right and wrong? We expect those who know much less than us, as unbelievers, to give up their entire belief system on faith, but we do not have the faith to accept God at His Word.

Why We Don't See

Many Christians think that they would want more perception of the supernatural. It makes sense from a worldly point of view. We often confuse ethics with the supernatural, we are a very visual culture, and it sounds like a secret. So everyone wants to know about it.

My pastor once said that a person can know either too much or too little about the supernatural. Either way the devil is pleased. The world is a dangerous place. It would stand to reason in a bigger world, with more possibilities, it is actually more dangerous. Just like most sins, it appears fun at first, but it later produces depression and turns people into slaves to their addiction.

Christ was considered foolish in His generation. He appeared irrelevant and someone who just did not get us. He very much knows us better than we know ourselves, or even the devil knows us. We have a very romantic view of power and opportunity. We think if only we had more influence or money, we could solve the world's problems.

Many Americans see our role in the world is to make other countries emulate our behavior. We then expect them to be able to have our wealth and the safety and comfort it allows us to have. We see the rest of the world as dangerous, with good reason, but we do not accept that the world is never fair.

The reason why much of the world is so poor compared to us is not because they are lazy. Our wealth comes at their expense. The only way everyone can get wealthier is to have the resources continue to expand, which are never limitless.

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Part of this is geography, part is history, and another part is inertia. We were basically at the right place at the right time. You can never have equal distribution of wealth, unless you have communism. If everyone had the same amount, no one would agree to the system. We in America would have much less than we do now, in such a system.

So what we should focus on is not the flashy and fleeting race to get more stuff, whether material or spiritual. Instead, we should focus on the longer and harder road, to build ourselves into more ethical people and draw closer to God. It is like the difference between spending your time purchasing things, that will soon wear out, and learning skills, that are useful for making more money.

The relatively easy and obvious path will end in pain, for ourselves and everyone else. We see how our ideas on how to run the world are not working out. There will never be enough energy, because the more we get, the more we want. Everything we want to do takes exponentially more power to run.

Solving every problem with ideology, technology, or laws does not work long term. This is because we are the root of our own problems. It is not just our world, where this happens. It has happened all throughout history.

China had a meritocracy and that almost destroyed everything. Salvaging their country required giving up their entire belief system to survive. Russia had their own utopia and they were victimized by their own police system. They ended up being a poorer and less effective version of the country that they hated most.

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The Europeans went out to civilize the world and teach them science. Later they destroyed each other in two world wars and inspired and developed the technologies for modern terrorism. Now instead of multiple empires, they have to all join together as Europe to have any power.

Even all together they will do anything for oil or electronics, neither of which can they make for themselves. They actually invented the ideas of the modern world and most its technologies and yet they are easily surpassed, by one of their former colonies.

If Jesus came to America today, do you really think He would be pleased with our country? We can all agree to the answer to that question. The problems we think caused it are opposite things. This is part of the problem.

The bigger problem is trying to solve this, without taking the long and slow route of bringing people to God, one person at a time. The Church does not need more money, power, or popularity. What we need to do is to improve the lives of the people, who we are placed in proximity to.

We cannot deal with what is right in front of us, because we are so distracted by money and power. Having supernatural knowledge will not solve our problems, because, if it did, we would be given complete access by God at birth. Furthermore, we are motivated to follow God, because we are lacking in power and this helps illustrate why we need Him. Finally, faith is based on action with, the concept of limited knowledge.

If we knew much more, we would become proud and be distracted from God. We would be unable to find peace with Him. It is hard to be both humble and powerful.

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Biography

Mind, Soul, and God

I am fully aware people in the majority of the world go through much more than myself continually. But this does not make me feel any better. It only makes me feel worse about myself.

I have had a number of mystical experiences, but they have all been very painful. I think many of us have trouble seeing God, when we are in shock. But when I have had direct spiritual attacks, God has always saved me immediately. In a number of cases God was working in the background, but in some situations I still do not understand, even decades later.

In many ways, I wrestle with fear continually, all the way back to after about a month into being a soldier. The fear I get comes from Schizophrenia and chronic allergic pink eye both of which I got from my military service.

It is a general fear of the future, but the brain wants to make sense of it. The brain does this by producing physical pain and paranoia about specific situations. I have always suffered more from paranoia than voices. I have never had what psychiatrists call disorganized thought.

I also struggle with depression from time to time. I went through a long period of depression around 2008-2010. I had to accept that the world as we know it can end at any time with no notice.

Three major changes in my life happened at the end of this struggle. I got on a new antidepressant, I moved into a new apartment, and I got the just released iPad 1. When COVID broke out in America I was pleasantly surprised things remained as normal as they did.

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I have realized Hollywood is the source of a major part of the world's suffering directly or indirectly. Over time I have been cutting Hollywood out of my life more and more.

I stopped watching news around 2008-2010, but I still read about technology news almost daily. I stopped watching science fiction in 2017. I have stopped watching Apple TV this year in 2024.

I used social media briefly, but currently have no active accounts and do not desire to ever set any up ever again. I considered using Facebook, to promote my website, many years ago. But I never did so because they would not allow you to disable comments, no matter how much you paid them, even for business or government accounts.

My first way of dealing with my illness was to stay busy. I had and still have a strong desire to give back to the world. I know living as an American has a very negative impact on the majority of the world.

Most people contribute by working jobs, but I am unable to work. I tried volunteering many times, but due to not being able to commit to doing something regularly, not having a car or being able to drive, and not being able to be around cleaners or other toxic chemicals, I have not found any volunteer positions I could fill.

This has lead me to release my writing and graphics, for free, on my websites. Websites take up a huge amount of time, but not much money, depending on how you do it.

I had to cease major development of the website this year due to its size and complexity. It will remain online and functional for

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the foreseeable future. It has already been online for 25 years now.

Recently I have come back to church in 2021 and am currently working on learning more about God and the Bible. This is one of the best things for me to spend time and money on. It is one of the few things I will take with me after I die.

Word of God vs. Word of People

I must preface this discussion, by first saying, I only speak for myself. I am generally someone, who doesn't fit comfortably, into any group of people. This is true, even though, most of the time, I wish it wasn't.

I have had some more unusual experiences at a relatively young age. These have further reinforced what I previously believed. I grew up in a normal family and was raised well and my entire family was good to me. Despite only having a lower middle class income, I was in many different activities from the time I was in elementary school. This has been the source of a lot of the stability in my life.

One of the things that affected me greatly was my military training. I came in as an individual and since I followed orders instantly and always gave 150%, I never changed the way I thought.

I went in enlisted in the Army for several reasons. One was that I got somewhat low grades in school, so I would get in debt, if I went to college without being in the service. Another reason was that I believed that God wanted me to do so. Finally, I thought it was a way to give back and do something important with my life.

I chose the Army, because I saw it as the people's service. I have never wanted to associate myself with the powerful or the dominant group. I really appreciated that the Army seemed to accept me. I came to believe that they were actually as kind with us as possible and they had a very tough job to do. The Army prides itself on being the best service for educating service members.

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I left the military early and thought at the time this was my failure. I did get an honorable discharge, but I thought it was due to my eye condition. I did not find out I had Schizophrenia, until a few years later. This was shortly after I had my first and only psychotic episode. Even when I voluntarily committed myself in a psychiatric ward, I thought I just had an emotional breakdown.

Shortly after leaving the military, I wanted to stay Christian, but I sensed intuitively that, although I appreciated and learned much from the local church I went to, that I wanted to find a different way to express my faith. Before I was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, I realized something was wrong with me. I just assumed I was a Goth for a few years.

While attending college, around that same time, I majored in business, even though I found it both difficult and boring. I was able to take a year long course in Chinese Literature and later in one of my summer terms I ended up taking a course in Existentialism. These ideas rang true with me, because I felt that I had failed as I both did poorly in college as well as I identified with some of these philosophers.

I spent about 12 years in total studying major world belief systems, but still only practiced Christianity. I never seriously considered giving up my faith or converting. My goal was to be able to honestly say to non-Christians that the Christian faith was the one true religion. I learned a lot through this process about myself and ideas that helped me deal with life and my mental and physical health conditions.

I ended up putting together Christian Existentialism and Philosophical Taoism as a coherent system, that at least made sense to me. These were ideas I already had long before studying

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them, but I thought it might be useful in explaining my ideas to others. Around this time, I moved from church to church, but I have for a long time found it easier to understand and be understood by unbelievers.

The paranoia and anti-intellectualism we now see in the Church goes back much farther than many realize. It is considered wrong, by many Christians, to study other religions or philosophies. It is often thought that, if people are exposed to other ideas, they will lose their faith. One of the major reasons why there are so many different versions of Christianity is because purity in doctrine was from early on valued much higher than unity.

People are not as rational as they think and for good reason. Many people in the Church are confused as to why not everyone thinks the same as they do, after reading the same parts of the Bible. Many are afraid that people will take ideas from other belief systems and combine them, which might cause a lack of purity in doctrine.

What they do not realize, because they have not studied much outside the Bible and Western Civilization in religion or history, is that Christianity was synchronized with Neo-Platonism in the first few hundred years of Christian history and by about 1,000 years they synchronized Christian teaching with Aristotle's ideas.

Belief systems and politics have been tied together, for all of recorded history and cultures, because if you cannot agree on your philosophical and religious views, you are going to have a hard time keeping united. You will not agree on laws, foreign policy, education, economics, and other key aspects of culture.

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One of the things many Christians and non-Christians both misunderstand is that many Protestant ideas were developed and were successful for political, religious, economic and related reasons. This is why many people have such a hard time separating politics from religion. These things generally are related for obvious and good reasons.

So many in the church say all they read is the Bible. They therefore say that all their ideas are objective and correct and anyone who disagrees is not following God. The reality is that we are influenced by our culture and if we do not study these things, we just accept the ideas of our ethnic, social, and economic groups we were born into.

I believe that the Bible is objective truth. On the other hand, the moment someone interprets it at all that is their opinion. I only hold myself to my understanding of Scripture. I base my faith on my intuitive understanding of who God is. It has always matched what the Bible says.

There are though many, maybe the majority, of verses I cannot explain. But every belief system requires faith, because we can never be perfect and have all the information we think might be ideal. The definition of faith is belief, without being able to fully explain why.

I am a skeptic, even though I have certainty in my mind about God and the reality of what is in the Bible. What I am skeptical of is everything else, literally. I have working theories, but no absolutes. I would not suffer any more for my country and so do not consider that to be part of any of my beliefs.

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I believe I have proved my loyalty to my country by my actions and am working on doing so for my faith.

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Recommended for Bible Study

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Simple Answer

If you want a simple answer, I recommend the NIV due to it being: a more readable translation, easy to find in online and brick and mortar stores, and suitable for both entry level and advanced study. The publisher is very big and well established and has both legacy study tools as well as newly released ones as well.

General Answer

I recommend buying a MacArthur Bible Commentary or a Tony Evans Bible Commentary for practical advice on how to live the Bible. I also recommend buying a Moody Bible Commentary or Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary for academic and cultural insights, to determine what the Bible is saying to our culture. I also recommend getting a Super Giant Print Bible, for when you are reading it at length and for when you get older. I recommend these commentaries rather than study bibles as they are cheaper, easier to read in terms of font size and paper opacity, and often provide more information.

Font Sizes

Standard font size for print Bibles now is 7.5 - 9 Point, Large Print is now 9.5 - 11 Point, Giant Print is now 11.5 - 13 Point, and Super Giant Print is now 14 - 17 Point. The fonts are usually large ones like Palatino and are optimized for reading. Sizes do vary widely as there is no set point size for any of these Bible font size names.

Sewn Bindings

The most important factor in buying a Bible is if it is sewn or Smyth sewn. This means it will not likely fall apart easily and this is how it was always done traditionally with hardcover, leather, or faux leather. The NLT, although a great translation, was instead glued and did not hold up to long term use, for a number of years. They have recently made all their Bibles sewn again.

NLT Filament series Bibles were always sewn. Thomas Nelson NKJV Bibles are all sewn since 2017, if they retail for over \$10. As far as I have experienced, Holman's CSB Bibles and Crossway's ESV Bibles are always sewn. Most Zondervan NIV Bibles say they lay flat, which I think refers to being sewn as well. Other publishers sometimes choose glue instead of sewn, so always check about it.

Paper Opacity

Another important factor is page opacity. Most Bibles now have very thin paper, unless you get a Journaling Bible or a LSB Bible (made by the same group as the ones that made the NASB). There is something called Line Matching which makes up for this to some degree. Cameras amplify this so you cannot go by pictures.

Imitation Leather

I do not recommend buying hardcover online or leather anywhere. Hardcover Bibles can be dented in shipping and also can trigger security audits because some are so big. Leather today is both hard to verify, the leather is lower quality than in the past, and it is much more expensive without giving enough durability

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to be worth the cost. You can now get imitation leather, which is not only durable, but can also be dyed and embossed, to make it look more artistic, so you have a choice besides plain brown or plain black, in masculine styles.

Premium Bibles

If you still want leather, the only thing that is not imitation leather will either say genuine leather or the animal it comes from leather, like goat skin leather or buffalo skin leather. Be prepared to spend at least \$100 and as much as \$500, depending on who the publisher is. They are also not usually in the largest font sizes either. These are often called Premium, Heirloom, or Pastor's Bibles, but not Premium Value Bibles.

Gilding

Gilding is something most people would not care about but it serves a practical purpose in that it is resistant to silverfish bugs. It will shed glitter like material though. You don't have color Bibles very often that are gilded.

Bible Reviews

Youtube has many good reviewers of Bibles that will give you much more information about how to determine what Bible or Study Bible is best for you. You cannot go by the colors in the Amazon photos as they are misleading both for the covers and interior. Most of the red looking Bibles are often more of a pink in "real life". Many of the leading Bibles and Bibles study tools are very good, but some of them have print defects like missing pages. Also, avoid getting Bible references that are in multiple

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volumes online, as Amazon often mixes them up and your set won't be complete.

Budget Friendly

If you are looking for a solid Bible, at the lowest cost possible, while still being high quality, you can find what is called Gift Bibles, Value Bibles, or Pew Bibles. Hardcover is also a good option to reduce cost, but I would avoid that for a thick study Bible. You don't usually get any commentary, notes, or cross references, so it is just the Bible and nothing else.

Ultimate Bibles

The ultimate Bible I think is the multi-volume Readers Bible (excluding the paperback versions) and Family Bibles as they often have sewn bindings, larger print, and thick paper. The trade off is that they are often heavier and bigger in height and width. There used to be a lot of notes in separate books called Commentaries but most today are Study Bibles, which are easier to find as they are more popular amongst non-scholars.