

Message: “The Case for Christ Part Three”, Week Five of “Is He Really Who He Says He Is? Series”, presented by Reverend Kristen Lowe on 04-02-2017 at Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.

In today’s Gospel scripture, Jesus reveals his divinity to his disciples. He explains that he is God in human form. He reassures them that there is hope through him and that in this form, he is able to fulfill the prophecies.

John 14:1-11a

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

Like the disciples of old, be reassured that Jesus is indeed God. Amen.

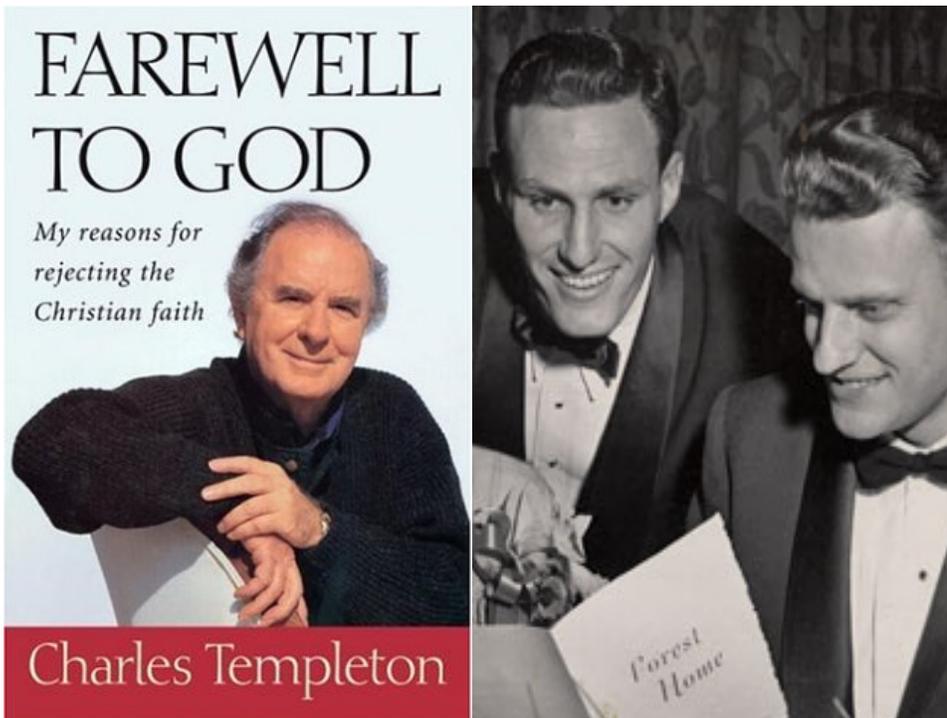
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We've been following award winning Chicago Tribune Journalist and former atheist, Lee Strobel, who set out to disprove Christianity. This was a man who was rabid for the truth. The evidence he found led him to a life-changing encounter with Jesus—and that was only the beginning.

Strobel's experiences and influence opened doors for him to talk with all kinds of famous, influential and interesting people. But Strobel has said that, by far, the most fascinating interview he ever conducted was with a man named Charles Templeton, the most famous spiritual skeptic in Canada.

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Strobel was doing a question-and-answer session at a church in Canada. An atheist reporter stood up and asked him what he thought of Charles Templeton’s book *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*. Strobel said he’d never heard of the book or of Templeton. But he was intrigued by the book’s title, so he bought it and read it—and was surprised to find out that Templeton was once a Christian evangelist and the pulpit partner of Billy Graham!

In fact, many people thought it was Templeton who would emerge as his generation’s biggest evangelist, because he was viewed by some as being more eloquent than Billy Graham. He preached nightly to stadium crowds of 30,000 people.

But then Templeton lost his faith. He even tried to talk Graham out of trusting in the Bible, but Graham stood fast and ended up becoming—as we all know—one of history’s greatest evangelists. Templeton, the agnostic, went on to become Canada’s most notorious critic of Christianity.

Strobel found himself identifying with Templeton, so he wanted to hear him out. So he tracked him down, and the eighty-three-year-old Templeton agreed to an interview.

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Should one continue to base one's life on a system of belief that-for all its occasional wisdom and frequent beauty-is demonstrably untrue?

Charles Templeton

They sat in the living room of Templeton's Toronto penthouse, and Strobel asked him why he no longer believed in God. Templeton asked some pretty common questions like: Why would a loving God allow pain and suffering? How could God send people to hell? And How can Jesus be the only way to God? But then, a couple of hours into the interview, there came a dramatic turn. Strobel asked Templeton what he thought of Jesus, and his tone changed 180 degrees, from critical and biting to thoughtful and reflective.

Templeton began to ponder Jesus. He said, “He was the greatest human being who has ever lived. He was a moral genius. He was intrinsically the wisest person I've ever encountered in my readings.”

Strobel was shocked. He said, “It sounds like you really care about him.” Templeton replied, “Well, yes, he was the most important person in my life. I know it may sound strange, but I have to say... I adore him! Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus. In my view, he is the most important human being who has ever existed.”

And that's when Templeton uttered the words Strobel never expected to hear from him. As tears flooded Templeton's eyes, he said, “And if I may put it this way—I... miss... him!” And he broke down weeping.

What in the world was going on? Here was a hardened agnostic, the author of a book called “Farewell to God,” and he was crying over missing Jesus! Strobel tried to get him to elaborate, but he seemed embarrassed. Finally, with a wave of his hand, he said, “Enough of that.” And he changed the subject.

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Charles Templeton had walked away from his faith, but like the Prodigal Son, something was beckoning him to return Home. Even though Templeton tried to shake off God, Jesus continued to shake up his soul. Strobel said it was the most haunting moment of any interview he'd ever conducted.



So let me ask you today: Have you ever walked away from God? Maybe you're here today thinking about your spiritual life, and you're realizing that you've wandered far from home. Or maybe you've replaced God with other priorities and walked away from God emotionally. You rarely pray anymore. You don't search the Scriptures often, and yet something inside of you wants to return.

Some people have a strong sense of urgency that they desperately need to get back to God, but they're just not sure how to do it.

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A few years ago there was a news story about a terrible flood in Houston, Texas. The story told of a single mom who was home with her two young children and realized there wasn't much food in the house, and the rain was getting heavier and heavier. So she left the kids alone at home and drove to the grocery store so she could stock up on food. But in the short time she was gone, the floodwaters rose. When she tried to drive home, she found the road blocked by water. She was in a panic, so she took another road and tried to approach from a different direction, but that path was blocked, too. And so was another.

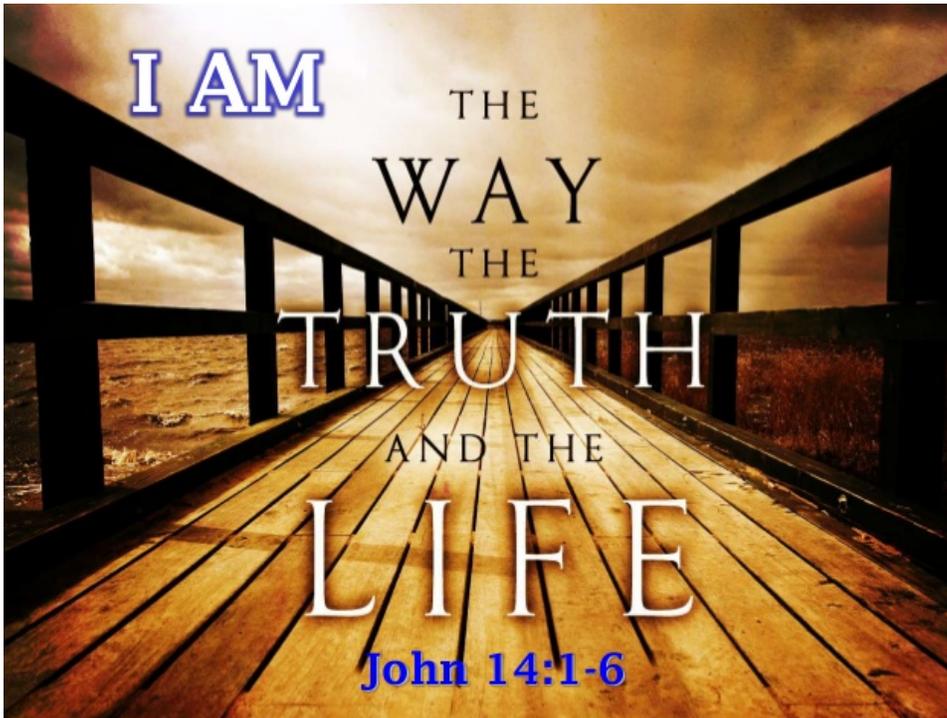
Can you imagine how frantic that mom was to get home to her young kids? Some people feel that today—they're far from God, and they have a sense of panic.

In John 14, Jesus was talking to his disciples about his true home.

“My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

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Some of us have a deep desire to be at home with Jesus; we want to go to the place he described. But we feel like Thomas, when he said, “I don’t know the way.”

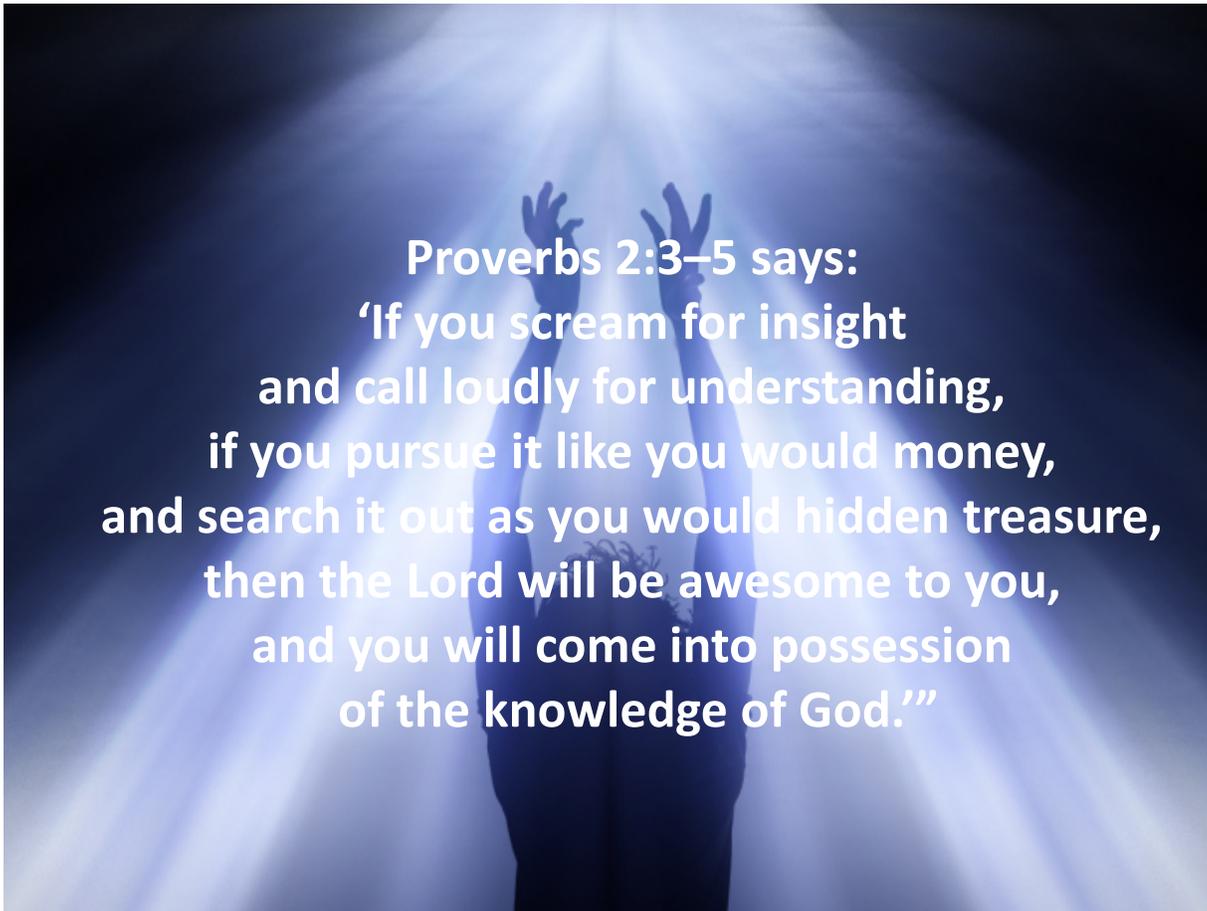
Do you ever feel like that—like something’s missing, you’re searching for satisfaction, for peace of mind, for security, for meaning, for hope?

When Thomas asked Jesus how he could know the way, Jesus answered him (and all who ask that question): “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Remember Charles Templeton? Well, It turned out that Templeton’s eight objections to Christianity were the same ones Strobel had wrestled with when he was an atheist. So Strobel hit the road and traveled around the country to get solid answers to each question from top scholars, and then he wrote a book called *The Case for Faith* to respond to those issues.

The book ends with Strobel mailing the manuscript of the book to Templeton, along with a note that said, “Chuck, I hope you’ll take to heart what Proverbs 2:3–5 says:

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**Proverbs 2:3–5 says:
‘If you scream for insight
and call loudly for understanding,
if you pursue it like you would money,
and search it out as you would hidden treasure,
then the Lord will be awesome to you,
and you will come into possession
of the knowledge of God.’”**

‘If you scream for insight and call loudly for understanding, if you pursue it like you would money, and search it out as you would hidden treasure, then the Lord will be awesome to you, and you will come into possession of the knowledge of God.’”

As for the rest of the story, Templeton’s wife, Madeleine, later wrote to Strobel and said Chuck’s Alzheimer’s had gotten worse, he had cancer and was blind in one eye. But she read him the manuscript and said he really appreciated it.

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Strobel never knew if Templeton came back to Jesus before his death, but Madeleine did tell a newspaper columnist that right before Chuck died, he said, all excitedly, “Can you see them? Can you see them? Angels are coming to take me Home.” I truly believe that God doesn’t give up on any of us... and even as we are in the dying process, God continues to beckon us.

Where are you today? Do you find yourself longing to come Home to God? Wherever you find yourself on your spiritual journey, I hope you’ll embrace the truth of Christ and allow him to bring you back Home. Amen.