



THE JOURNEY

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1

Beginning the Journey

COMING TO FAITH IN GOD and accepting Jesus is a decision, a choice. We travel a journey towards making that choice which may be very long, very short or anything in between. There is a time when we decide. Then there is the journey that we travel following our decision. It may be that you are able to recognise which of these three stages of the journey you find yourself. Sometimes our hearts and spirits lead the way on these journeys and sometimes our minds. Eventually though head and heart come to agree.

We have a good example of the journey towards decision when we look at two people meeting and developing a relationship which eventually leads to marriage. My wife and I met when we signed up for the same night school class. We hoped to learn how to speak French. An unrealistic hope as it turned out. However, we got chatting in the coffee break and eventually made a date without a great deal of enthusiasm. Other dates followed and gradually our friendship and affections grew. We began to fall in love and did fall in love. A year from our first meeting I was absolutely sure that she was the girl for me. I proposed, using those decisive words, *"Will you marry me?"* Brenda wasn't ready. I proposed again. She was in love with me at this time I am sure but really scared to make a decision. This was for life. On my third proposal she said yes, with some trepidation! We got engaged, and from that time on our relationship, our love, grew even stronger. It has continued to do so through our fifty nine years of marriage. I use this illustration to explain that the basis for our decision to marry was a developing relationship that finally produced the desire and confidence to make it permanent.

There are obvious similarities in our journey towards making a decision to put our lifelong trust in God and his son Jesus. Make it your priority to develop your relationship with them. Get to know them and how much you are loved by them. The time will come when you will want to make things permanent and you will have the confidence to do so. The best known characters in the Old Testament are Abraham and Moses. Abraham is recognised as the father of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian Faiths so we can learn much from him. He is a great

example. When initially called by God he needed some time to discover who God was and what he was like, time to grow in understanding and relationship. His relationship grew into a friendship. The Bible clearly says, *"Abraham was a friend of God."* When God first spoke to Abraham he said this, *"Abraham, I will bless you and you will become a blessing to many."* I would like you to accept that God wants to bless you. I know a young lady who has a great compassion for people who are living troubled lives. She will go to any lengths to help them through their troubles and has been successful in many cases. She has seen many people experience transformed lives. How is that? Well, she doesn't hesitate to say to them, *"You need God in your life. Ask Him to help you sort things out."* Those who have done this have found to their amazement that God has been quite ready to help without judging them. It is a good starting point in developing a friendship with God. Who wouldn't want a friend who is always ready to help? Trust me when I say that God wants you as a friend. Jesus wants you as a friend and he wants you to join with him in his purposes. At the very heart of the Christian faith is friendship with God, friendship with Jesus and friendship with people. So I recommend that as you journey towards a time when you might choose to walk with God permanently, just focus on discovering that He is real. There is a Psalm which says, *"Taste and see that the Lord is good."* If you are not yet ready to make a decision, continue patiently looking into things with the help of a non-judgemental friend who already has a strong faith. One excellent way of doing this is to join what is called the 'Alpha Course'. Alpha provides an opportunity to explore many of the fundamental questions of life and to be able to ask any questions that you might have about the Christian faith. The course is used nationwide and internationally. Millions of people have found faith in this free, informal, discussion based environment.

One frequent barrier to faith is that people often people say they are not 'good enough' to become Christians. No one is, join the club. On the first page of my previous book 'Choosing Heaven' I introduced you to a criminal who couldn't have been further along the road of not being good enough. His qualification for paradise was turning to Jesus and putting his trust in him. The same applies to us all. We all have a level playing field here. The truth is, becoming a Child of God is accepting our identity. We do not become somebody's child because of our behaviour. If our own children behave badly we continue to love them... whatever. How much more does God keep loving us through everything. The Bible says that *"NOTHING can separate us from the Love of God"*. Of course, our lives will be transformed through God's love but we do not earn our faith. If we allow God, He wants to come into our hearts and lives to heal us. To heal trauma, bitterness, addictions, guilt and anything else that is weighing us down. God loves a good clear out! Whatever kind of mess our lives are in, however bad, God

will come in if we ask and enjoy Himself sorting it out. There is a hymn that was popular some while ago that started with the words: 'Jesus take me as I am, I can come no other way.' How do we practically make our decision? There are some words of Jesus, well known and frequently quoted that go like this. *"Look, I stand at the door of your life and knock. If you will open the door to me I will come in."* Our decision is made in prayer. Keep it as simple as you like. Saying to God and Jesus, *"I open the door of my life to you, please come in."* is sufficient. Often it is helpful to add to this according to what is on your heart. You could use this simple prayer of mine if you wish: Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God and I open the door of my life to you. Thank you for forgiving my past. Please come in and help me to live freely and make me whole. It seems incredible to me that such a simple prayer, sincerely and truthfully spoken, can unlock Heaven for us. How, in a tiny moment of time we can step into a new life.

It is self evident that our time in this world is temporary and I hope you are persuaded that you can look forward to an eternal dwelling place prepared by God. It is called Heaven. Perhaps you have already made your choice to trust God with your life and destiny and are ready to continue the journey that follows the decision. I often joke with people that the Christian journey from here on is a 'Journey into the Unknown' and there is some truth in that. We have handed our life plan over to God and only he has full knowledge of it. God said to the great prophet Jeremiah: *"Jeremiah, I know the plans I have for you. Remember this. They are plans for your good and not for your harm."* You are about to continue your journey with God and continue developing your great friendship with Him. My understanding of this is that we should travel this journey in the deepest and fullest knowledge of his love. The apostle John wrote this. *"Our relationship with God did not start with us first loving Him, but with Him first loving us."* We are God's children, that is what we are! It is well understood that children need to be bathed in the love of parents from the beginning, if they are to be able to fully express love to others. Children growing up without any love are often emotionally damaged and find it difficult to trust or love other people. When children are deeply loved they find it easy to love out of the love they have first received. We took our three year old Grandson out a while ago. His Mum and Dad have poured love into him. When we took him home and stood at the door to leave I found him hugging my leg and pressing his cheek against it. When I picked him up he threw his arms round my neck and pressed his cheek against mine. He had learned how to love from his parents and we need to learn how to love from God.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome he said, *"We cry out to Him, Abba Father."* The nearest we can come to translating that into English is *"Daddy."* I know that it is a deep, deep mystery that we as mere human beings can enjoy an individual, intimate, loving relationship with the one who created

the universe, but that is just how it is. When we choose to believe it we begin to experience it. Millions of people can testify to the truth of it.

Too many people believe that coming to faith involves signing up to a set of beliefs and then starting to follow a set of rules and behaviours and then going to Church. It is simply accepting that God loves us, that His love knows best for us and choosing to live our lives with Him. We become a Child of God. Yes, we may then want to do things such as look for a Church or meet with other people who believe but our relationship with God and 'Becoming a Christian' is not based on these things! In fact we are not becoming something else, God leads us on a journey of becoming who we truly are and were always made to be, before the stuff of life turned us into a different version of ourselves. What an amazing journey to go on!

The following chapters are simple introductions to various aspects of the Journey of Faith. I hope you find them helpful.

Prayer

2

ENDLESS BOOKS have been written on prayer. I have read many. They are helpful, but the only way we can really begin to learn prayer, is to practice it. Someone once said “We learn to pray by praying”. We are uniquely individual and our prayer lives will reflect our individuality. I suspect that people who are very formal will develop a formal kind of prayer life that is right for them. I am very relational, informal, and humour plays a big part in my life. This is reflected in my prayer life. I see God as having a great sense of humour. I don’t see Him as particularly formal. I find Him to be an exceptional friend. He understands me perfectly, so it is easy to talk to Him. When He gets serious about something I get serious too. It seems that when I become concerned about something and am moved with serious intent He shares my heart and we work it out together. If I am asked “What is prayer?” I would say that for me it is all about relationship with God, talking everything over with Him, discovering His heart and purpose on every matter, and coming to agree with Him. I love to discover and understand his thoughts and ways and to be part of seeing them work out. Everything that is impossible for me, I know is possible for Him. I have access, through prayer, to all the resources of Heaven. God is a God of mighty works and I have the honour and privilege to ask Him through prayer to come into all kinds of situations to bring all kinds of blessings to the people I am concerned for. Although rarely does He work in the way I expect Him to. I can know the thrill, excitement and happiness of seeing prayers answered. I am sure that God wants us to know his heart and respond to it. Prayer is a marvellous partnership with a loving God.

My three year old grandson is at that stage where he is just beginning to learn how to converse. When we go to the park he trots along at the side of me chatting away. “*Look at that G’andad. What’s that G’andad? Can I have an ice-cream G’andad?*” He has picked up a phrase I use with him. “*That looks interesting Zac.*” Now he says to me, “*That looks interesting G’andad.*” He has picked up a phrase from Brenda. “*This is a bit tricky Zac.*” Now when he is having difficulty

with something we get, *"This is a bit tricky."* I think I will start using that phrase with God. I am frequently in the 'bit tricky' zone. We are children of God. That is what we are. Practice being a child of God and go for a walk in the park. In the future, as your prayer life deepens, don't lose the habit of walking in the park chatting. My daughter and I go out once a fortnight and we have a very strong relationship. We usually go for a walk in the country and have a cafe stop. Our conversation ranges from hilarious humour to the most serious conversations you could imagine. We share our concerns, our plans, and our hearts. Almost always we come to the same mind over things. We love one another's company and encouraging each other is at the top of our agenda. We always come back filled with fresh hope, excitement for the future, strengthened and encouraged. This is an illustration of prayer. The same happens with my son. We are great friends. We spent three weeks touring Western Australia in a camper van and never had a cross word. We were able to quickly agree on where we went and what we did. It was great time of fun and adventure, and at times deep and serious conversations about life. This is how it can be between us and our father God.

Often it is appropriate to just sit in silence in God's presence and enjoying the stillness. It is in these times that I find 'God thoughts' invading my mind and understanding. If you are new to praying may I suggest that you begin by simply chatting to God and enjoying his company and give Him the opportunity to enjoy your company too. It is important to understand that you cannot get prayer wrong! You cannot say the wrong thing! The Bible is full of prayers in the book of Psalms that express anger and disappointment with God or things that have hurt us. Trust me. God is big enough to handle our truth. He needs us to be honest so that He can meet us where we are at and help us move forward from that place of pain.

I could have provided a very competent technical manual on prayer in this chapter. There are many ways of praying. I chose not to because my convictions about relationship praying are so strong that I wanted to get those across above all else. However, I will mention the 'Cry for Help' prayer. In purely human terms it is only a heartless person that will not respond to being asked for help. You will know that yourself. What goes on in your heart when someone comes to you and says, "Please can you help me?" The best of you comes out and you give any help that you are able. Many people have started their faith journey through desperation. The only person they have had to turn to is God. When they do it seems that he cannot resist the cry. God has a much bigger heart than we do and has available an endless reservoir of love, mercy and compassion, along with unlimited power to meet their need.

Some time ago Brenda was looking out of our front window, when an unapproachable neighbour who kept very much to himself, walked past. His head was bowed and his look of sorrow was obvious. Brenda prayed, *"God if we can help him show us how?"* The next morning he came to our door. This had never happened before. He had come with an invitation from his daughter for Brenda to attend a sales party. Brenda's reply was, *"Do you know that God has sent you round here for help?"* His eyes filled up with tears and he said, *"I am desperate and am considering suicide. Last night as I lay on my bed, I looked up and cried out, if there is anyone out there, please help me?"* We talked to him about his troubles. His wife had left him. He had lost his job and car, he was an alcoholic, he was about to lose his house and he had a cancer. We prayed with him and invited him to our church. He came and heard the gospel message. His house sold and he left the district. Three years later he came to see us to thank us for the help we had given. He was a completely new man. He had found a really good church and become a Christian. His cancer was healed. He was free of his addiction. He had a new wife and was employed. That's not a bad result from a single desperate cry to God! I have included this story because I guess that this book is likely to include people in desperate situations in its readership. If you are one of them I hope this helps you.

We can not finish a chapter on prayer without addressing the amazing truth that as well as talking to God we are also meant to hear God! I could write a whole book on this alone but for now it is only important that you know that God wants to speak to you and that you can hear His voice. God speaks in many ways but as you tune in and begin to pray you might simply start to feel a change of heart towards things in your life or an increased compassion or tolerance to those we find difficult. We may feel an inner prompting to say something or to refrain from saying something in a situation. God speaks to us through the Bible and He speaks through Creation, through other people, through our emotions, dreams, through opening and closing opportunities or through an inner knowing or conscience and through His presence. Often we simply begin to see things that we did not see before. Learning to hear God is an exciting and life changing experience.

So, in summary... get praying! And remember, God truly has been waiting all your life to hear your voice!



The Bible

THE BIBLE can be an intimidating book for most people! Often portrayed as large, heavy and dusty. However, this could not be further from reality. The Bible is a book about God, people and Life. It is the most amazing book and tops all the best seller lists every year, so much so that they do not even count it. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 different books written by many different authors over a period of about 1,200 years. History books, prophecy books, letters, songs and poetry and wisdom books. The Old testament is the part of the Bible from Creation to the time before Jesus was born. The New testament starts with the Life of Jesus and then follows the lives of the disciples after His death and resurrection through a number of accounts and letters. Much of the Bible involves the stories of those who journeyed with God and there is so much from their lives that we can learn about God, ourselves and His purposes. Some people call the Bible God's love letter to us.

There are many things in the Bible that need explaining to us. If you are new to bible reading, please don't feel put out if you find parts of it difficult to understand. As you continue your journey, take the trouble to find someone who has a good understanding of the Bible and has the ability to explain it. If you have read 'Choosing Heaven' then you have already made a great start. You have in effect read the first five books of the New Testament! That is amazing. You already know most of what is really important. Well done. If you now chose to read for ten minutes a day you will soon work your way through the New Testament. With regard to the Old Testament, some of it is quite difficult, but Genesis and Exodus are action packed and entertaining to read. They are the best books to start with anyway. That is why they are first and second books. If you can develop the habit of reading the bible regularly, I promise you that it will become a lifelong blessing. I will pass on to you this bit of helpful advice... Don't

be fussed about the things you don't understand. Be happy to pass them by to begin with and focus on the things that you do understand. You will also find that certain passages will begin to stand out or 'speak' to you. This is exciting and it is a way that God speaks to us and guides us. Verses such as *"If God is for us, who can be against us."* And, *"Nothing in Heaven and earth, of even under the earth can separate us from the love of God."* are plain speaking, and easy to understand. Jesus himself said, *"People cannot live only on bread. They need every word that God speaks to them."* One of the main ways that God speaks to us is through the bible. It is excellent food for the soul and gives health and strength to us. And remember, as I mentioned earlier, that every year the Bible is the world's best-selling book. It is life giving and life changing.

4

Baptism

AS WE READ through the New testament we see various individuals and groups travelling their journeys of faith. When they choose to believe the message of God then they choose to be baptised. This seems to be the response to becoming a Christian. Jesus himself was baptised and he and his disciples baptised all those who believed in him. When he gave his disciples their final instructions just before he returned to Heaven, he told them to go everywhere with the message and to baptise all those who responded. Biblical baptism involves being completely submerged in water. When we receive baptism, we are following the instructions of Jesus and the example set. The best way to understand what is going on in baptism is to watch somebody being baptised! It is a profound and joyful event. There is a 'happening' that I would find it impossible to explain. It is similar in many ways to a wedding ceremony. When Brenda and I boarded the train to London after our wedding, we could have asked, "What has changed?" We are the same two people who have travelled on a train together before. But everything had changed. We were now, quote, 'joined together in matrimony'. We had publicly committed our lives to one another. We now belonged to one another and were happy to be so.

Baptism is a symbol of God's forgiveness. Forgiveness for every mistake we have made in the past and all the things we will do in the future. This is absolute forgiveness by God, which we never could earn or pay for. It is a pure gift of love and mercy. When we are plunged in the water it symbolises being washed clean. Our old life where we lived separate from God, dies, and we rise to a new life in Jesus Christ. The new birth we experience includes our birth into the family of God. Now we are children of God. That is what we are. We have millions of brothers and sisters worldwide, including those who have left the earth and gone to Heaven, and those who will live on the earth. The technical term used for

this is 'The Universal Church.' If you choose to be baptised, a fuller explanation will be offered from those you have asked to baptise you.

You may be wondering about Christening, or infant baptism. Most people are rather shocked to discover that infant baptism and Christening are not in the Bible. This can be a relief to many who have felt there is something wrong if their parents did not have them Christened. Infant baptism was not instituted by Jesus but appeared later in the 6th Century and gained popularity with the Church. I will let you make your own investigations on the matter. The Baptism Jesus instituted was full immersion for young people or adults who were able to make their own choice about whether to follow Jesus and to accept the gift of forgiveness. Free will is extremely important to God.

5

Holy Spirit

IN THE BIBLE when John the Baptist was baptising people he said “I baptise you with water but Jesus will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.” When Jesus came up out of the water after being baptised by John, we read that the Holy Spirit came to rest on him like a dove.

This baptism of God’s Spirit is still available today and is available to everybody. There are thousands of people who can testify to this experience and the life changing effect it had on them. Ultimately, it is an wonderful spiritual experience of being filled with the reality of God’s love which empowers us to live as he wants us to live, secure in His love. This can happen either by asking people who have already had this experience to pray with you but it can also happen directly without any human intervention. It often feels like an intense welling up inside of love generally accompanied by tears or joy.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit sent from Father God to be available to us and with us on the earth. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as our ‘Comforter’, ‘Counsellor’ and the one ‘called in alongside to help’. He is also described as the Spirit of Truth who helps us to know the Truth about God, about the world and about ourselves! He helps us personally in the process of our healing and transformation which we will talk about later in the chapter on healing.

An ancient prayer that you can pray if you choose is simply this; “Come, Holy Spirit”.



Healing

THE ENTIRE BIBLICAL RECORD of Jesus' life is filled with accounts of him healing people both emotionally and physically. For Jesus, this was a central demonstration and expression of God's love for people, to see them free of the terrible afflictions and diseases they carried. The same is true today. God's heart is that everybody is healthy and whole as He created them to be. Sadly, this is not true for so many people in the world and there are many resources we can direct you to which address this very difficult issue of suffering.

However, God does heal today and we want to focus this chapter on this truth. There are really two kinds of healing. Inner healing and physical healing, although we may often discover there is a link between the two. Science is finally catching up with the Bible in the understanding that our emotional wellbeing is very often connected to our physical wellbeing. Healing can happen as a sudden event, which we might call a 'Miracle... or through a gradual process of transformation. Over time, as we are gradually soaked in the love and knowledge of God this soaking-up begins to have an effect on our minds, emotions and bodies. I have experienced both these types of healing in my own life and can testify to it in the lives of countless others.

The Bible says that God knows how we are made, how we are knit together... both physically and emotionally. His plan is always to restore us to full wholeness. Forgiveness is often a key part of this process. Receiving God's forgiveness for ourselves can be a huge weight lifted as we realise we no longer have to carry the burden of our mistakes and the guilt and shame we might feel as a result. The process of learning to forgive others for the harm or trauma they have caused us might be a much longer journey. God helps us to forgive so that we can be free from carrying the anger and shame that impacts us from their actions. Ultimately we are going to live with the consequences of what somebody has done to us. Our choice is how much power we will give it in our lives. Forgiveness can

break the power it has over us and begin a process of God's healing in us. I wish I had room to share of the countless stories of people who can witness to the healing of trauma and pain in their lives, even carried since childhood. Much of this process needs others to help us as we deal with these things. It should always be someone who has known this journey for themselves.

Often healing happens gradually over time. People who journey with God move from anger to peace, despair to hope, rejection to feeling accepted and the growing sense of security we feel can also free us from anxiety and fear, enabling us to feel more confident about the future. We may notice we are no longer so easily irritated with people we find challenging and we find that in common situations we are surprised to find ourselves reacting differently in healthier ways. The love of God can also free us from the fear of death and from lifelong addictions.

As we mentioned briefly in a previous chapter, it is the Holy Spirit who is the one helping to transform us into the person God made us to be and healing us through His love and power in our lives. Jesus also instructs his disciples to go out and heal the sick. The instruction for believers is the same today and God wants to use all of those who follow Jesus to bring healing to others through praying with them and for them.

7

About Church

I have not been looking forward to writing this chapter, not at all. I am so aware of the negative image that exists for many people regarding church. Only church people are to blame for this and it is not my purpose to attempt a defence. I remember many years ago when, after morning service my wife Brenda said to me, *"Mike, if Heaven is like Church I don't want to go there!"*

I remember a season some years ago when I was experiencing acute disappointment and disillusionment with the church I was in. My heart was breaking because it seemed so far removed from representing the Jesus Christ that I loved. I realised that I was seeing the 'world' in the Church. In every church community there are people. And people are not perfect! We must try never to view God through the lens of the Church. So many people are put off a journey with God because of their view or experience of Church. God is not Church. Church can be an incredibly beautiful expression of God when it works well. It can also cause terrible hurt and pain. God would never harm or hurt us so we must realise that Church is a human place where our imperfection is still active although hopefully reducing!

My experience of many Churches over the years tells me that this measure varies dramatically from community to community, from individual to individual. What matters is that in response to Jesus building his church as he promised the worldliness is getting less and people are growing in love. We are all imperfect people but God is at work progressively making us more like Jesus. There is a saying, *"If you ever find a perfect church, for their sake, don't join it!"* When we talk about church we are not talking about a building but about a community of believers, a family of believers. If the building used by those believers is

destroyed, the church remains intact and can simply find another building to use. It is surprising just how many Christian communities now meet in schools, community centres, converted warehouses, homes and hotels etc. When most people think of church they think in terms of historical denominations such as Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, and so on. The media portrays church almost exclusively in terms of highly traditional, ceremonial, priestly costumed clergy with traditional hymns accompanied by a pipe organ. We are shown uncomfortable bench pews, cold buildings, and strict formality. We listen to strange religious language delivered in artificial tones. While there may be a proportion of churches that this would be true for, this portrayal is a misrepresentation of the nation's churches at large and has little appeal for most of today's generation, particularly the young.

There are lively contemporary churches everywhere where you can feel at ease and comfortable. Most use accessible language and there are no unfamiliar traditions to follow. The preaching is relevant to real life and the music is modern and sounds familiar. These Churches are attracting young families and growing rapidly. Many of these are traditional churches which have also wonderfully modernised and are experiencing the same growth. Lively music accompanies worship with new and contemporary songs. Small groups and events offer the opportunity to socialise, form deep friendships, and to serve the communities where they live. All kinds of amazing charitable works are being done through Churches to impact society.

Another very encouraging trend is this. At one time most Christians would identify themselves by their denomination. They would say, *"I am a Baptist"* or *"I am a Methodist."* And so on. Happily, more and more Christians are calling themselves just that. They will say, *"I am a Christian"*, and if asked, they will then identify their place of worship according to where they meet. There is a very lively Baptist Church near where we live where only ten percent of the congregation have a Baptist background. They are a very happy mix of many different church backgrounds or none at all. It is very important if you have accepted Jesus, to find a church where you are accepted, valued, and included. It needs to be a spiritual, God centred church made up of people who will care for you, show true friendship, and help you to grow spiritually.

How do you find the right church for you? First off, I suggest that you make your first port of call the church where a friend goes, if that is what they recommend. It is possible that they might recommend a different church to their own because they think it will be more suitable for you. Ask them to go with you for the first week or so to help you to discover if you are in the right place. It is important to say that you do not have to be invited to Church to attend! You have as much right as anybody else to attend any Church service. The Church belongs to God, not to the people who attend. It is not a members club. I am quite sure

the congregation will be delighted to see you. A famous saying is 'The Church is the only organisation that exists for it's non-members'.

If you were intending to buy or rent a property, you would spend plenty of time on viewings. Different churches suit different people according to their individuality. I am convinced that if you pray for God's guidance he will lead you. If Brenda and I decided to live in a different town or city, we would explore the churches regardless of denomination and may find ourselves settling in a modernised church that was Anglican, Methodist or any other denomination. We would explore the new expression churches too and not be surprised if we settled with one of those. We would be seeking for a community of people that had a great love of God and a great love of people and a great concern for those outside the church.

Someone said to me just a few weeks ago, *"Mike, I have never forgotten what you said to me about church. It was so helpful. You said that as Jesus was building his church, be very clear that you recognise what is scaffolding, and what is being built within it. Don't look at the scaffolding and make the mistake of thinking it is the building. The structures of church, its institutions, what it calls itself, its organisation, its methodology, the way it does things, the style of services are all necessary for building but they are only temporary. They are the scaffolding."*

The church is made up of those people who believe in Christ and are joined together by his Spirit. When they form a community, they are intended to present a picture to people outside who have not yet turned to God, of what the Kingdom of Heaven might be like. Jesus insisted that his disciples love one another. *"How will people know you are my disciples unless they see this?"* he said.

I will end by listing some practical expressions of this love as taught in the bible. Be devoted to each other: Lay down your lives for each other: Be family to each other: Serve each other and show hospitality. Don't harm or irritate each other: Don't be jealous of each other: Carry each other's burdens: Be kind and tender hearted to each other: Be tolerant with each other and don't get angry: Freely forgive each other: Show kindness and compassion to each other: Be humble towards each other and don't boast. Look out for each other's interests: Do not lie to each other; Encourage and help each other and protect each other: Do good to each other and be patient with each other: Share your hopes with each other: Wow! What kind of church would that be?! I pray that you find a Church as close as possible to this description.

Conclusion

I HOPE YOU ARE INSPIRED from the previous chapters to begin or continue your spiritual journey. As you move forward, keep praying and listening and reading the Bible. Simply enjoy God and letting your heart, soul, mind and relationships be shaped and changed by him.

Each of these chapters has only touched the edge of these themes and there is so much more that can be said about each of them. On the following page are a number of helpful resources for you to read, listen or watch to give a better understanding of the things I have spoken of to help you on the Greatest Journey of your Life.

Helpful Resources

BOOKS

- **How to Pray** – Pete Greig
- **How's Your Soul?** – Judah Smith
- **The Reason for God** – Tim Keller
- **The Case for Christ** – Lee Strobel

ONLINE

- **The Alpha Course** – [*alpha.org*](http://alpha.org) is the best course on Christianity around. It is full of clear explanations and real-life stories of faith. It asks questions such as What is the meaning of Life, Who is Jesus?, Why is there suffering? You can look up a local 'in person' or Zoom Alpha in your area on alpha.org. Alternatively, if you want to explore it privately then you can access the Alpha sessions on YouTube. Simply type in Alpha course session 1 and continue from there.
- **The prayer course** – [*prayercourse.org*](http://prayercourse.org)
A fantastic series of 8 very real conversations about Prayer
- **The Bible Society** – [*biblesociety.org.uk*](http://biblesociety.org.uk)
Help reading and Understanding the Bible
- **Care for the family** – [*www.careforthefamily.org.uk*](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk)
An amazing organisation that aims to keep family relationships together, lots of true wisdom on offer
- **The Chosen** – [*watch.thechosen.tv/page/seasons%201-3*](http://watch.thechosen.tv/page/seasons%201-3) – a multi-season series about the Life of Jesus
- **I am second** – [*www.iamsecond.com*](http://www.iamsecond.com)
A free streaming library of over 150 films featuring the real stories of people who met the real Jesus. (Includes a number of famous faces such as Brian Welch)

School of Evangelism

Mike and Brenda Towle have spent their lives involved in many exploits for the Kingdom of God, including Church leadership and consultancy. However, their greatest passion has always been helping people find faith and connect with the God who loves them. They have seen countless people's lives healed and transformed.

Mike and Brenda live in Leeds and have two grown-up children and three grandchildren. Mike oversees the School of Evangelism with a small team.

The Journey has been written to help those exploring or beginning a journey of faith. It gives accessible and inspiring introductions to some of the key themes of the journey.

www.schoolofevangelism.com