

body in order to demonstrate His unfailing love. His love is so powerful that Christ “came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Christ’s great sacrifice has created a bridge that spans our indifference, that covers our alienation. Have you personally discovered that He wants to draw you over the chasm and into His arms. Will you respond and pray, “Jesus, I love You. Thank You for Your incredible sacrifice. Come into my heart and save me now—save me wholly, save me completely, save me eternally”?

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DISCOVER

BRIDGE TO A SATISFYING LIFE



They found his skeleton beside a makeshift shelter on a desolate island in the mid-Atlantic. The anonymous seaman kept a journal which detailed his four-month ordeal. He’d been set ashore on Ascension Island by the Dutch fleet in 1725 for some unmentioned crime. Soon he was reduced to drinking the blood of turtles just to quench his raging thirst. The man’s physical suffering was intense, but an even greater pain stands out in his journal: his overwhelming guilt.

He penned tormented entries such as: “What pangs do wretched mortals feel who leave the paths of righteousness,

pleased to increase the numbers of the damned.” This seaman’s greatest isolation on that lonely island came from his sense of separation from God. That is what proved unbearable in the end.

Human beings have been struggling with that isolation of the heart ever since Adam and Eve “hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden” after eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:8). The strange new emotions of shame, guilt, and fear compelled that first couple to run away when God came calling. Those feelings are unfortunately quite familiar to us now.

What is it that causes a separation between us and God?

“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”—

Isaiah 59:2. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

Sin throws up barriers; it separates us from God. But this great gulf that isolates sinful human beings from a holy God is not His doing. God didn’t run away from Adam and Eve—they ran away from Him.

1. SATISFYING OUR HIDDEN HUNGER

Before sin spoiled the picture, Adam and Eve enjoyed intimacy with their Creator in a beautiful Garden of Eden. Tragically, they bought into Satan’s lie about becoming as wise as God and broke the bond of trust with their Maker. Their sin resulted in alienation, an alienation which quickly extended to the

4. UNFAILING LOVE

The story is told of an arranged marriage in Taiwan between U Long and a young woman named “Golden Flower.” When U Long lifted the veil from his bride after the ceremony, he was shocked and disgusted. The woman’s face had been scarred by smallpox.

After that, U Long had as little to do with his wife as possible. She tried her best to make him happy; she worked hard at home, hoping her husband would eventually accept her. But he remained coldly indifferent to all her expressions of affection. Golden Flower lived almost like a widow.

After twelve years of this sham marriage, U Long began to lose vision in both eyes. A doctor told him he would go completely blind if he didn’t have a cornea transplant. But the operation was expensive and there was a long waiting list.

Golden Flower began to work long hours in the evening making straw hats for extra money. One day, U Long was informed that someone’s cornea had been made available after an accident. He rushed to the hospital to have the operation.

After he had recovered, he grudgingly decided to see his wife so he could thank her for raising the money. When he turned her bowed head so she could look at him, U Long gasped. She stared at him with sightless, blank eyes, the cornea gone. Overcome with emotion, he sank at her feet and sobbed. And then for the first time in their marriage he whispered her name: Golden Flower.

Jesus longs for a relationship with those who’ve been indifferent to Him for so long. He longs for us to finally whisper His name as our Saviour. He was willing to sacrifice not only His eyes but His whole

on our behalf. The same Jesus who blessed the children, rehabilitated the woman caught in adultery, and forgave the dying thief is working in heaven right now to minister to our needs. “He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

7. JESUS WILL RETURN

Before returning to heaven, what promise did Jesus make?

“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.”—John 14:3.

When Jesus returns, He will deliver us once-and-for-all from the sin, sickness, tragedy and death that plague this planet. He will welcome us into a new world of eternal happiness and eternal life—in the presence of God. DISCOVER guides 7 to 10 will explore what will happen when Jesus comes back.

JESUS...

***CAME as God in human flesh.
LIVED a sinless life in our place.
DIED for our sins.
AROSE to deliver us from death.
ASCENDED to prepare a home
for us in heaven.
MINISTERS each day as our
high priest.
IS COMING SOON to take us to
be with Him forever.***

first family, tearing it apart (Genesis 3:15 to 4:8). Separation from God did indeed result in death, “for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve found life a lot tougher on the outside. Childbearing and tilling the soil now came with blood, sweat, and tears. But much harder to endure was the emptiness of heart that began to plague them. Their intimate bond with God broken, they found themselves vulnerable to all kinds of hidden longings, unsatisfied desires, painful yearnings. They were not unlike that seaman abandoned on an island, surrounded by the greatest tragedy of all: the loneliness of sin.

What condition now exists for all humanity?

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way DEATH CAME TO ALL MEN, because ALL SINNED.”—Romans 5:12.

Since Adam and Eve’s first act of rebellion, “all,” (the entire human race) have fallen into the same sin pattern and are subject to death, sin’s ultimate penalty.

Since we have lost our connection with God through sin, we all experience a great hunger of the heart for that which we’ve lost, a longing for a kind of security which only God can give. We often try to satisfy that hunger in temporary ways: a shop-till-you-drop binge at the mall, a mad race for promotion at the office, a cruise to the Caribbean. Sometimes we try to simply drown out the hunger with alcohol, drugs, or promiscuity.

Our nameless yearnings and unfulfilled drives are basically symptoms of a loneliness for God. And there is no cure except experiencing His love in our life.

What is the only way to satisfy the hunger of the human heart?

“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”—Psalm 16:11.

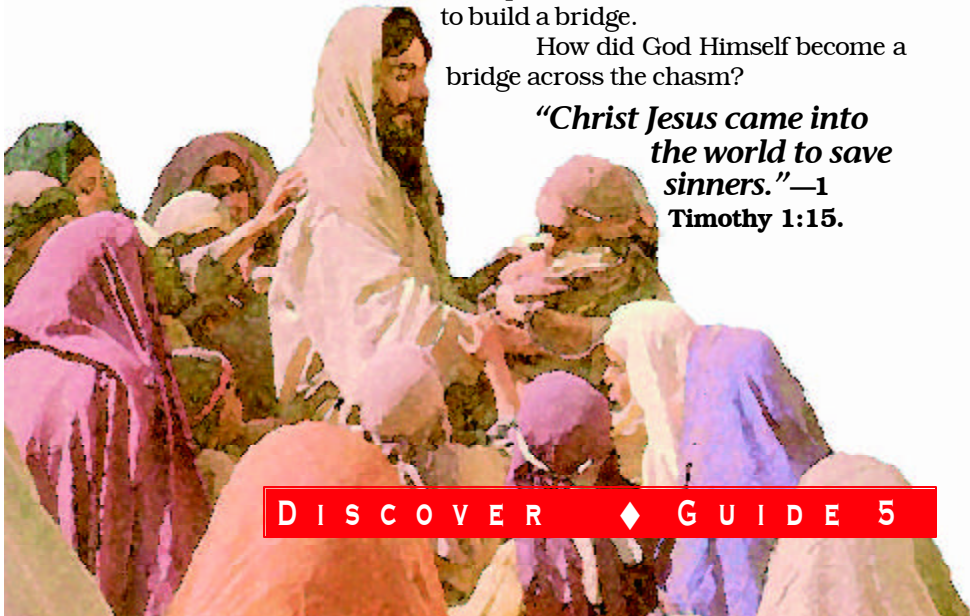
Real satisfaction will only come when we get off the island, when that gap between us and God is bridged and we’re able to walk over into His presence.

2. BRIDGING THE CHASM OF SIN AND DEATH

God’s heart ached on the day Adam and Eve turned their backs on Him. And He still grieves over human sorrows and tragedies. God is eager to satisfy our hidden longings and to heal our emotional wounds. He wasn’t content just to look sympathetically across the chasm of sin and death that separates us from Him. He decided to build a bridge.

How did God Himself become a bridge across the chasm?

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”—1 Timothy 1:15.



holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.... For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”—Hebrews 2:14-18.

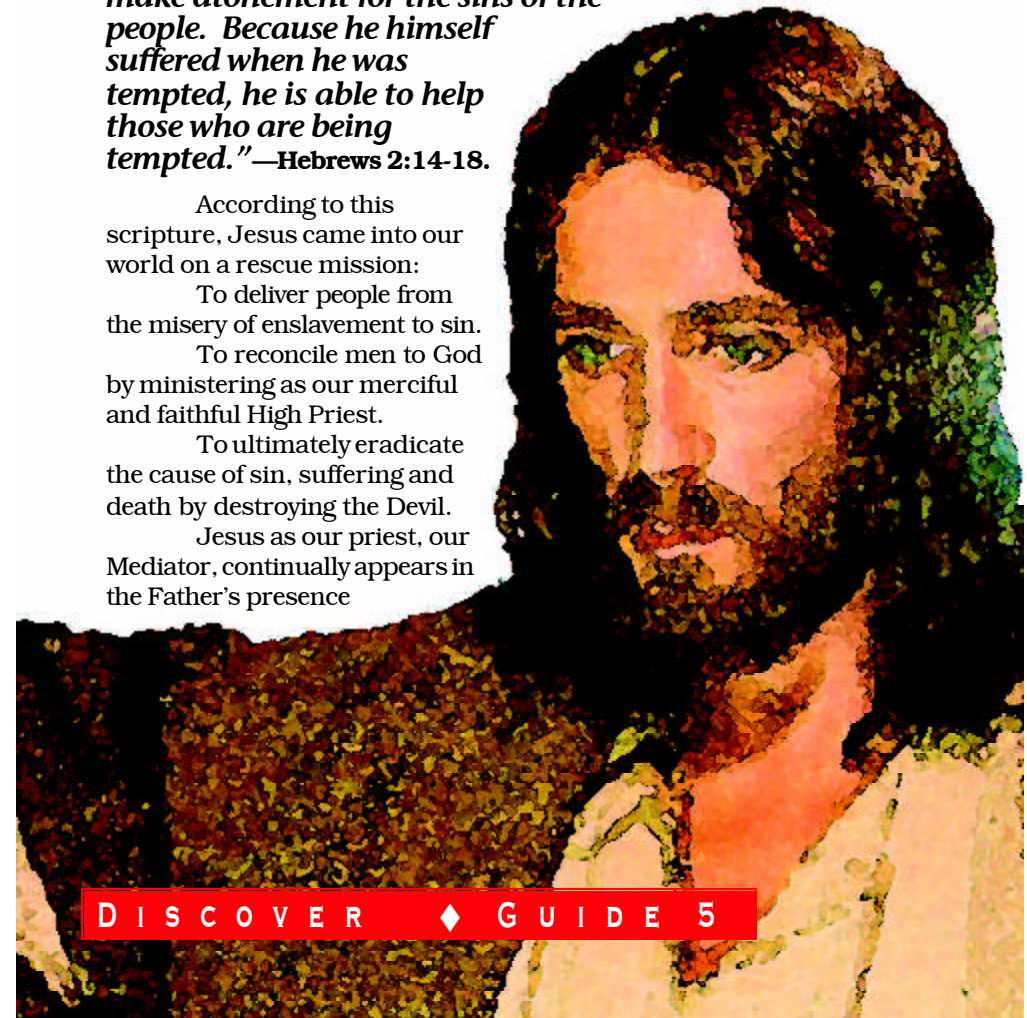
According to this scripture, Jesus came into our world on a rescue mission:

To deliver people from the misery of enslavement to sin.

To reconcile men to God by ministering as our merciful and faithful High Priest.

To ultimately eradicate the cause of sin, suffering and death by destroying the Devil.

Jesus as our priest, our Mediator, continually appears in the Father’s presence



taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”—Acts 1:9.

Just before His ascension, what promise did Jesus make to His followers?

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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.”—John 14:1-3.

6. JESUS MINISTERS AS HEAVENLY PRIEST

Jesus constantly seeks to prepare you for a place in heaven. His whole purpose in coming, living, dying, rising from the dead, and ascending is to make salvation available to people everywhere. The following words of Scripture clearly portray His goals for us:

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who



Jesus put His body on the line, so to speak. He laid Himself down as a sacrifice for sin, paying the death penalty Himself. And He made His life of perfect righteousness freely available to all who seek forgiveness at the cross. The cross of Christ bridges the gap between our restless yearning and the peace and joy God can give. It connects the land of sin and wasted living with the country of inexhaustible life.

Why was Jesus willing to come?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”—John 3:16, 17.

By coming to our world, Jesus made the contrast between God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom dramatically clear. His life, death, and resurrection made it possible to forgive and save sinners without trivializing sin, and gave the universe a demonstration of the true character of both Christ and Satan. The bridge of Christ’s broken, bleeding body draws men and women back from the trap of sin. Love spans the chasm, enabling all who place their faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord to walk over into eternal life.

3. SEVEN ESSENTIAL FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JESUS

These seven facts about Jesus are not true of any other man who has ever lived.

1. JESUS CAME FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH

How is Jesus identified?

“And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”—Isaiah 9:6.

Though Jesus was born of a human mother (Matthew 1:22, 23), He is God—God in human flesh. How long did Jesus claim to have existed?

“Before Abraham was born, I am!”—John 8:58.

Jesus notified the world: “I am” the self-existing One, I have always existed and always will.

Dwight L. Moody, the Billy Graham of the 19th century, once said of the incarnation of Jesus, “It would have been a great sacrifice for Jesus to come and be rocked in a silver cradle, be nursed by an angel, and be fed with a golden spoon. But the Creator of heaven and earth came and took man’s flesh, and was born in a stable of poor parents in the worst possible environment.”

Why did Jesus come to our world?

An angel told Joseph at the time of Jesus’ birth:

“She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.”—Matthew 1:21.

Jesus, the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3, 14), was willing to come to our world to rescue us from sin and death. His very name is a promise that enables weak human beings to find true happiness and eternal life.

2. JESUS LIVED A SINLESS LIFE

“Jesus the Son of God, . . . has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.”—Hebrews 4:14, 15.

What additional promise did the resurrected Christ make to us?

“Because I live, you also will live.”—John 14:19.

Jesus is alive! The One who appeared after death and announced, “I am the Living One,” can now offer us life that is both abundant and eternal. He will live in our hearts if we invite Him in (Revelation 3:20).

Is the risen Christ present to meet our needs today?

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”—Matthew 28:20.

Men and women all over the world are sharing stories of how Christ has delivered them from the worst addictions and the deepest emotional traumas. A chorus of testimonies point to the power of the risen Christ.

One of our former students wrote these words of gratitude on one of his answer sheets, “I was an alcoholic. One day after leaving the bar, I saw a card in the gutter advertising your Bible course. I picked it up, filled it out, and received my first true knowledge of Christ. Shortly after taking the Bible course, I offered my heart to God and lost the taste for whiskey.”

Jesus took possession of this man’s life and gave him the ability to overcome addiction. A new power had entered his life, one that proved stronger than his old compulsions. Because Christ is the risen Saviour, He can save all who will come to Him for help.

5. JESUS ASCENDED TO HEAVEN

Some time after His resurrection, Jesus returned to the Father:

“After he [Jesus] said this, he was

days, the men could hear prayers and songs of praise coming from Kolbe's cell. Finally he was killed by injection with carbolic acid.

Father Kolbe had lived a life of heroic virtue in the most trying circumstances. But he was willing to lay it down freely for a stranger in need. Love like that is almost beyond human comprehension. But Jesus laid down His perfect, righteous life as a gift—for the most unworthy. Because of His death “we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

4. JESUS AROSE FROM THE DEAD

Jesus' death on the cross wasn't the end of His remarkable story. He couldn't very well remain dead and be our Saviour. He is still very much at work in our world.

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”—1 Corinthians 15:17, 18.

Mohammed and Buddha have presented to the world some great philosophical truths. They have inspired the lives of millions of people, but they have no supernatural power to give life since they still remain in their graves.

Because Jesus rose from the tomb the third day after His death (Luke 23 and 24), what promise is He able to make to us?

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I HOLD THE KEYS OF DEATH and Hades.”—Revelation 1:18.

Only Jesus has demonstrated, by coming out of the tomb, that He can overcome the grim specter of death.

Jesus lived a real, flesh-and-blood life of moral perfection. God did more than try to talk us out of a life of sin and into a more satisfying one. He laid out His best argument in the life of Christ. By going through all the trials of human existence, Christ made a life free from sin far more attractive than any sermon ever could.

Satan, Christ's great adversary, plotted throughout Jesus' earthly life to seduce Him into sin. When Christ fasted in the Judean wilderness after His baptism and before He began His public ministry, the devil unleashed his fiercest assault against the Messiah's integrity (Matthew 4:1-11). And during the long night in the Garden of Gethsemane before Christ's crucifixion, the pressure of temptation reached such intensity that Jesus sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

No one else has had to face such an intense and protracted demonic assault. But Christ stood firm against everything the devil could throw at Him—“yet without sin.” Jesus experienced the full range of human problems and temptations. He understands our struggles and needs. He is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15).

Why was it necessary for Jesus to live a sinless life?

“God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”—2 Corinthians 5:21.

We might paraphrase this passage, “God made Jesus, who was sinless, to be sin for us; and in place of our sinful life Jesus gives us His sinless life, that we might be made sinless in Him.” Jesus overcame temptation and lived a sinless life with the express objective of passing it on to us in exchange for our old

life of sin. That is how sinners are justified—declared righteous before a holy God solely on the merits of Christ.

3. JESUS DIED TO TAKE AWAY SIN

How many people have sinned?

“For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”—Romans 3:23.

What is the penalty for sin?

“The wages of sin is DEATH, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Romans 6:23.

Why did Jesus die?

“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, CHRIST DIED FOR US” (Romans 5:7, 8).

“Look, the Lamb of God, who

TAKES AWAY THE SIN of the world!” (John 1:29).

All of us have sinned and are subject to eternal death—the ultimate penalty for sin. But Jesus “became sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21), He died in our place, thus paying the death penalty for us. His act in dying is a gift, therefore “the GIFT of God is ETERNAL LIFE in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

One day in the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz, the commandant announced that ten prisoners must die because a man had just escaped. Ten names were read on the parade grounds. When the last one heard his name called, he sobbed in agony: “My wife and my children!”

Suddenly an older prisoner pushed his way toward the front. It was Father Maximillian Kolbe, a saintly man who managed to share the love of God even amid the horrors of Auschwitz. “Herr Kommandant,” Kolbe said, “please, sir, may I take his place?”

The dumbfounded SS officer ordered Kolbe to join the other nine on their way to Block 13. In its dark, fetid basement they were to be starved to death. During the next several

