



PURSUED  
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First Edition

# PURSUED

T Y L E R   P H E L P S  
WITH RICK TERLETZKY





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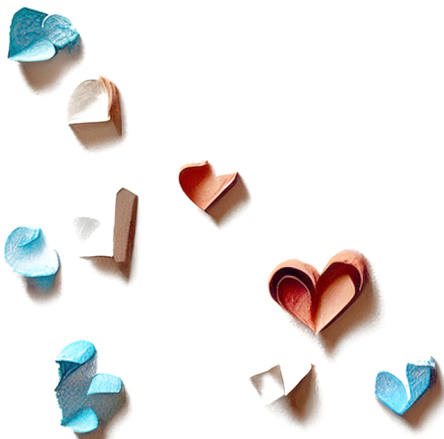
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# CHAPTER ONE

## GOD IS PURSUING YOU

You were created by God and God is pursuing you.

The underlying theme across Christianity is love. In fact, the whole story simplifies to this: that God, who created you, desires a personal relationship with you, and he has done extraordinary things to make that happen. Perhaps you've read, or heard John 3:16, one of the most well known bible verses:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"*

*John 3:16*

This verse is the perfect summary of the gospel message. It highlights some of the most comforting things we want to believe in; the promise of heaven, a belief in goodness, and a God who loves us. But the most crucial piece easily falls into the cracks of these points: it is God who gave the most. And in all of this; God initiated his love in pursuit of us.



How would God's love be described? Well in part, it's like the love a parent has for their kids. It is an unexplainable love in which no word salad could attest; the parent just knows. We were formed by God who knows us completely. He has seen us struggle, grow, laugh, cry, and experience life in all its ups and downs. Yet, there's so much more breadth to God's love than the most-loving parent on Earth.

What if I told you that the God who created the universe had you in mind when He formed its foundations? He knew you wholly (not just about you) before you were ever born. He thought to create each of us with intent before we ever were. And more than that, God created us with the knowledge that,



in order to be in relationship with Him, it required His death.

This is not insignificant. This is radical. Read stories of different religions and you'll note that other gods don't die for humans. It's not something they're supposed to do! Yet Jesus *always* intended His own death for your sake.

This isn't a story of a distant or tyrannical ruler in the sky, too prideful to get his hands dirty. No, the story of Jesus is relational, personal, and filled with love for His creation. And his story includes you.

**YOUR EYES SAW MY UNFORMED SUBSTANCE;  
IN YOUR BOOK WERE WRITTEN, EVERY ONE OF THEM,  
THE DAYS THAT WERE FORMED FOR ME,  
WHEN AS YET THERE WAS NONE OF THEM.**

Psalm 139:16

**THE LORD YOUR GOD IS IN YOUR MIDST,  
A MIGHTY ONE WHO WILL SAVE;  
HE WILL REJOICE OVER YOU WITH GLADNESS;  
HE WILL QUIET YOU BY HIS LOVE;  
HE WILL EXULT OVER YOU WITH LOUD SINGING.**

Zephaniah 3:17

**FOR I AM SURE THAT NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE,  
NOR ANGELS NOR RULERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT  
NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT  
NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION,  
WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US  
FROM THE LOVE OF GOD  
IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

Romans 8:38-39

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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**1]** Can you think of any examples in your life when God has pursued you?

**2]** How can the imperfect parenting we receive distort the view of a perfect Father in Heaven?

**3]** Do you ever feel like things in your life keep you from experiencing God's love?



## CHAPTER TWO **WHAT WAS DONE FOR YOU**

It is worth repeating: God is pursuing you.

His radical love knows no equal, and His love is so grand that He extends mercy to us — an undeserving merit.

Mercy is the one of the most revealing character traits of God's tenderness towards us. The word "mercy" in the bible is comparable to how a mother's womb shelters a child from an environment they cannot withstand.

The fact of the matter is that mankind stands in rebellion of God. This is the tension of our story. This is not some ancient or outdated issue, but it's

personal and impacts every piece of you today. In our rejection, turning away from the God who intentionally created us, we have also rejected the image He intended for us to bear.

We have fallen short of holiness. We've disrobed the most precious pieces of what makes us special in exchange for rags and claimed them to be made of gold. We traded God's goodness and peace for short term pleasures with long term effects of brokenness, anxiety, discontentment and suffering. And worst of all, we've traded God for emptiness as we attempt to be god for ourselves.

We delight in shame, and ignore the guilt. We have built our empire without realizing the chasm it created between us and the God who loves us more than dearly.

*"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*

*Romans 3:23*

This is a heavy message. I know its weight personally. But this is not said out of judgment. It serves as a flare — a warning — shot out into the darkness.

Our nature to stray from God, to sin, leaves us in spiritual death. We are absent of real life because we

have turned from the One who gives life. In short, we do not experience the fullness of life because we are distant from He who created and sustains it. We are distant from the source of life, like a flower in a desert void of water: dead.

But God, in his rich mercy and great love, does something about our rebellion in order to restore the fullness of life and reconcile our relationship with Him, because one cannot have a full relationship with something that is dead — you cannot play fetch with a dead dog.

While it is in our nature to rebel, it is in God's nature to redeem and restore.

Psalm 68:20 describes God as a God of deliverance, salvation, and saving:

*"Our God is a God of salvation, and to God,  
the Lord, belong deliverances from death."*

*Psalm 68:20*

So what does God do? How does he save and deliver us? He gives of Himself. He gives Jesus.

It is through Jesus, and Jesus alone, that there is salvation. And it is through Jesus that our relationship with God is restored. His death, His blood, and His

resurrection makes the difference because it is His righteousness covering our unrighteousness. He doesn't just wave away our sin like it doesn't matter (it matters a lot). Instead, He bears our sin on the cross. This is the good news:

*"God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved"*

*Ephesians 2:4-5*

So if salvation comes only through Jesus, who gave all of Himself, what is required of us? Are there any works required of us in order to become saved? Gifts of this magnitude aren't usually free, right? What three-step program do we need to sign up for to pay back our debt (i.e. Serve more, give to charity, be a better person)?

The religious leaders of the day asked Jesus the same question:

*Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

*John 6:29*



Because of this, our salvation rests on trusting Jesus.  
It is through faith.

This is His promise:

*"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus  
is Lord and believe in your heart that God  
raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

*Romans 10:9*

**FOR IT WAS FITTING THAT HE,  
FOR WHOM AND BY WHOM ALL THINGS EXIST,  
IN BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY, SHOULD MAKE  
THE FOUNDER OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT  
THROUGH SUFFERING.**

Hebrews 12:2

**BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN MERCY, BECAUSE OF THE  
GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE LOVED US,  
EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR TRESPASSES,  
MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST—  
BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED**

Ephesians 2:4-5

**THOUGH HE WAS IN THE FORM OF GOD,  
[JESUS] DID NOT COUNT EQUALITY WITH GOD  
A THING TO BE GRASPED, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF,  
BY TAKING THE FORM OF A SERVANT,  
BEING BORN IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN.  
AND BEING FOUND IN HUMAN FORM, HE HUMBLING  
HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT  
TO THE POINT OF DEATH,  
EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS.**

Philippians 2:6-8

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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**1]** What things in the world promise to make us whole and give us life? How do they fall short?

**2]** Have you had or do you still have difficulty trusting in who Jesus is and what He has done? Why or why not?

**3]** What changes when we accept the fact that our salvation is a gift that we cannot be good enough to earn or bad enough to lose?



## CHAPTER THREE

# WHAT DID IT COST?

Jesus on the cross was not done quietly.

It was both spectated and historical. Large crowds had gathered demanding Jesus to be crucified. Rushed trials were conducted improperly to ensure Jesus' demise; only to permanently cement his execution in history.

Jesus stood before judgment in the high court of the roman empire and no one could find any crime that he had committed; yet they crucified him anyways. Jesus gave no defense or protest. For Pontius Pilate, this angered him, to witness such behavior. Every other criminal that faced his judgment seat did everything possible to avoid punishment.

The cross is historically considered the most horrific and insufferable form of execution. You'd plead your case too. Not Jesus, who seemed willing to die.

*So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.*

*John 19:10-11a*

This may be hard for us to accept. Though it is our actions and rebellious nature that finds Jesus on the cross. We did not put him there. Yes, physical hands pounded in the nails. But the authority for it to be Jesus, dying on the cross for our sins, was not ours.

Jesus had made this clear to his disciples before ever arriving near calvary where he was crucified.

*"17For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."*

*John 10:17-18*

Jesus didn't accidentally stumble upon being our atonement. It wasn't whoever was the most righteous man would wind up being the savior. God became flesh so that He would substitute himself as the payment for our sin. He provided justice for our injustice by undeservingly standing in our place.

It might be easy to say that Jesus died on the cross but the reality of what that means should weigh heavily. Jesus willingly became a sacrifice for us. Its not that He gives grace but became the means of grace.

Jesus doesn't just die. He suffers... both the physical punishment and rejection that our rebellion wishes it could do to God. But he also suffers the loss. The true trajectory of where sin takes us. If sin is the movement away from God, then its natural consequence is the full absence of his presence. Jesus, the son of God, experienced that emptiness in its fullness. Jesus experienced death.

But He doesn't stay dead. Because Jesus is the Son of God, who holds all authority, He has the power to overcome death. Jesus' resurrection is about defeating the very things that keep us from God. He didn't die to see if he could resurrect. He did it for you.

His death and resurrection eternally free us to a relational peace and rest with Him forever. The outcomes of sin, suffering, and brokenness can no longer find their end in death when we are united with Christ.

It's costly to Him and its freedom for us, but above all it's not meaningless. The gift Jesus freely gives us is not simply some gesture of good faith. The cross is not repayable.

We have no means to return the favor. Jesus' actions relationally and judicially uphold every part of our restitution. We can look at it as if it was a courtroom setting. Without Jesus' sacrifice and defeat of death, sin holds us in contempt. It bars us from freedom. Sin accuses us as we stand trial. We are found guilty. Now, we can whallow in bitterness and blame God for the verdict or we can pay attention to what Jesus relationally does in the room.

*"When the sinner is brought to the bench, Jesus himself appears [in our place]. He stands to answer the accusation. He points to his side, his hands, his feet and challenges justice to bring anything against the sinner, who He represents. He pleads his blood. And he pleads in triumph."*

*Charles Spurgeon*



**HE POURED OUT HIS LIFE UNTO DEATH,  
AND WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS.  
FOR HE BORE THE SIN OF MANY, AND MADE  
INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS.**

Isaiah 53:12 [NIV]

**YOU WERE RANSOMED FROM THE FUTILE WAYS  
INHERITED FROM YOUR FOREFATHERS,  
NOT WITH PERISHABLE THINGS  
SUCH AS SILVER OR GOLD,  
BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST,  
LIKE THAT OF A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH OR SPOT.**

1 Peter 1:18-19

**YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN,  
FOR YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.  
SO GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY.**

1 Corinthians 6:20

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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**1]** Why did Jesus have to suffer?  
Why did it have to be the cross?

**2]** What is the significance that Jesus laid down  
His life, rather than it being taken from Him?

**3]** What does it look like to appreciate what  
Jesus has done for you?



## CHAPTER FOUR

# WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?

This story comes down to the question of:

“Who is Jesus?”

And while there is ultimately an objective truth to this question, the question remains deeply personal to every individual, because:

- 1) God is personal,
- 2) a relationship with God is very personal,
- 3) the way you answer the question changes everything.

Whether you know it or not, this is the most important question you can ever consider. C.S. Lewis

reflected on the pertinence of this question during his decision to follow Jesus (note that Jesus is the sum of Christianity). He said:

*"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important."*

C.S. Lewis

Jesus was not subtle about who he claimed to be. He claimed oneness with God. He claimed to be the Son of God. He claimed to be the only way to God. He claimed to be the Christ — anointed by God to deliver mankind.

These are not insignificant claims! These are radical and either come from a madman or they come from God. The argument that "Jesus was just a good teacher" is off the table.

So just as Jesus asked his disciples 2000 years ago, He asks us:

***"Who do you say I am?"***

Is he a madman or is He God?

Jesus' disciples answered that He was God. In fact, they had such confidence and belief that Jesus is

everything He claimed to be, that they suffered and died in defense of Jesus even decades after Jesus' time on earth. This conviction changed not only the course of their lives, but changed human history.



Just take a second to think how crazy it is that over 2000 years later, people are still talking about and being transformed by Jesus! Yeah sure, people still talk about Julius Caesar and Aristotle, but how many billions of people have decided to follow and give their life's work to them? The identity of Jesus is anything but trivial; you cannot brush it off like that.

So what do you believe?

Both camps require belief. To reject Jesus as God requires equal belief (though the opposite conviction) as to believe Jesus is God. "Faith in Nothing" is just the other side of the coin from "Faith in Something." And there is no 21st century special enlightenment that gets us any closer to the answer. Thus the question remains — both very personal and of the most importance.

**NOW WHEN JESUS CAME INTO THE DISTRICT OF  
CAESAREA PHILIPPI, HE ASKED HIS DISCIPLES,  
“WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS?”  
AND THEY SAID, “SOME SAY JOHN THE BAPTIST,  
OTHERS SAY ELIJAH, AND OTHERS JEREMIAH OR ONE  
OF THE PROPHETS.”**

**HE SAID TO THEM,  
“BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”**

**SIMON PETER REPLIED, “YOU ARE THE CHRIST,  
THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.”**

**AND JESUS ANSWERED HIM,  
“BLESSED ARE YOU, SIMON BAR-JONAH! FOR FLESH  
AND BLOOD HAS NOT REVEALED THIS TO YOU,  
BUT MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.**

Matthew 16:13-17



**“LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED.  
BELIEVE IN GOD; BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.  
IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY ROOMS.  
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,  
THAT WHERE I AM YOU MAY BE ALSO. AND YOU KNOW  
THE WAY TO 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.**

John 14:1-6

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1] So... Who do you say Jesus is?

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**2]** Many claim Jesus was just a good teacher.  
What difference does it make if He is the Christ?



## CHAPTER FIVE

# WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Everybody, whether they are aware of it or not, holds a fundamental set of beliefs, or world ideas, from which they operate.

Philosophers have argued for a range of life philosophies like Stoicism, Humanism, Existentialism, and Nihilism, to try to understand life and mankind's place in it all.

These fundamentals influence our life outlook, our decision making, and our subconscious. So shouldn't we be aware of what we believe? As one of those great philosophers (Socrates) said:

"An unexamined life is not worth living."

The Christian life has an answer for these questions. The answers circulate around a God who created you, loves you unconditionally, and predetermined that if a relationship with His creation required His suffering and death, it would be worth it.

The Christian life understands the problem of good and evil; it understands the purpose of life; it understands the human condition; it brings justification and the removal of guilt and shame for what you've done; and it provides a reason for love, hope, joy, and peace.



These things are not revealed by man, but God reveals these treasures. He reveals these truths and promises through His Word: the Bible and Jesus. This only begins to illustrate how important it is to spend time in God's Word, not just for learning, but for strengthening and the reiteration of promises that have been around for years and will persist into eternity.

In fact, God promises to walk with those who believe in Him, reveal truth, and He promises to bring joyful transformation to our lives.

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit*

*1 Peter 3:18*

In a world of suffering, pain, and death, God promises restoration via a relationship with His people. This is nothing we can achieve on our own. I mean, look around.

Over 2,500 years ago, God made this promise of transformation:

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

*Ezekiel 36:26*

God is always faithful to his promises. Jesus gives us that new spirit; His spirit lives in us. It is the same promise fulfilled; a new life of everlasting joy and peace.

**YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE YOU THINK  
THAT IN THEM YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE; AND IT IS  
THEY THAT BEAR WITNESS ABOUT ME,**

John 5:39

**SO SHALL MY WORD BE  
THAT GOES OUT FROM MY MOUTH;  
IT SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME EMPTY,  
BUT IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH THAT WHICH I PURPOSE,  
AND SHALL SUCCEED IN THE THING  
FOR WHICH I SENT IT.**

Isaiah 55:11



**BUT THE HELPER, THE HOLY SPIRIT,  
WHOM THE FATHER WILL SEND IN MY NAME,  
HE WILL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS  
AND BRING TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE  
ALL THAT I HAVE SAID TO YOU.**

**PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU;  
MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU.  
NOT AS THE WORLD GIVES DO I GIVE TO YOU.  
LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED,  
NEITHER LET THEM BE AFRAID.**

*John 14:26-27*

**WHEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH COMES,  
HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL THE TRUTH,  
FOR HE WILL NOT SPEAK ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY,  
BUT WHATEVER HE HEARS HE WILL SPEAK,  
AND HE WILL DECLARE TO YOU  
THE THINGS THAT ARE TO COME.**

**HE WILL GLORIFY ME,  
FOR HE WILL TAKE WHAT IS MINE  
AND DECLARE IT TO YOU.**

John 16:13-14

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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**1]** Have you examined your set of beliefs or view of the world?

**2]** Does it answer that age old question, "What is the purpose of life?"

**3]** What is the difference between a worldview that promises happiness versus one that promises joy?



CHAPTER SIX

## WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT THIS NEWS?

How will you respond to this gospel message — this good news?

Will you respond to a conviction of belief and allow Jesus to change you?

Jesus is inviting you to follow Him. He already paid the cost! There's no prerequisites or entry class you need to take. And no, you don't need life all straightened out before you follow Him. That's like saying you need to get clean before you take a bath. This grace that Jesus offers is free. The price of our sin has already been paid. It is finished. Unlike that 2am paid programming, this is actually beyond a "lifetime deal."

For those with doubts that this promise is available to you after what you've done, there is nothing you can bring to Jesus that is too much for Him to handle. In fact, He already knows what is going on in your life and your struggles; there's nothing that will surprise Him. He fully knows you and He loves you - isn't that a terrifying but unbelievably freeing thought!

*"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

*Romans 5:8*

Belief in Jesus, who He is and what He's done and will do, results in the coverage of our unrighteousness. We are clothed in His righteousness. The Bible is very clear, faith alone leads to righteousness and being made right with God.

*because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

*Romans 10:9-10*

Deciding to follow Jesus might feel tough. It can be difficult to own up to our brokenness, put aside pride, accept the grace and gifts and forgiveness

offered, and recognize our need for God. Jesus in fact told people to consider the cost of following Him. Understand the cost, but don't forget to account to the insurmountable joy that comes from a life of following Jesus.

It won't be an easy walk by any means - Jesus doesn't promise "easy," Jesus promises "good." Consider the cost, but will faith consider the promise given to you:

*"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?"*

*Mark 8:36-37*

Regardless of your answer to the question "What will you do about this news?", the fact remains that God still loves you and He is pursuing after you. This is unconditional love and you can't find it anywhere else. Our own restlessness for this kind of love in our life, only shows His love has already impacted us. And it just might be that you're caught up in God's net, of which there is no escaping, and this, my friend, is very good news.

**COME TO ME, ALL WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY  
LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.**

**TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN FROM ME,  
FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART,  
AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.  
FOR MY YOKE IS EASY,  
AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.”**

Matthew 11:28-29



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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**1]** What do you think a life following Jesus could cost you?

**2]** What will you gain from a life following Jesus?

**3]** Is it worth it?