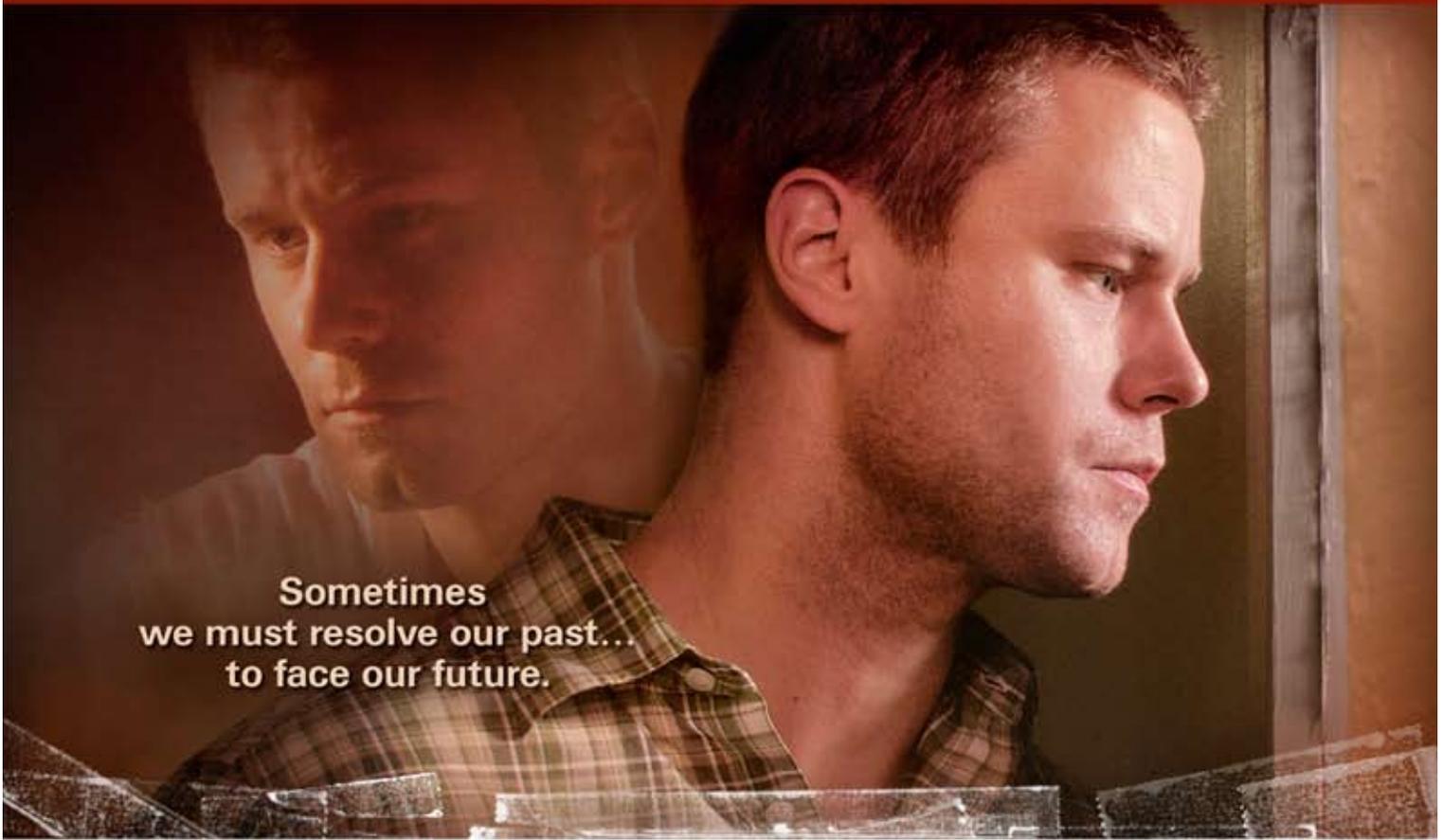


DISCUSSION GUIDE



Sometimes
we must resolve our past...
to face our future.

RECONCILIATION

ERIC NENNINGER

JACK MAXWELL

CHELSEY CRISP



"Must see movie about love and forgiveness. A rare find among films!"

-THE DOVE FOUNDATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[03] Foreword by Nancy Heche

[05] How to Use This Guide

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

[06] Before You Watch the Movie

[10] Act 1 SPOILER ALERT: Please watch chapters 1-7 (0-33:38)
before reading the questions

[13] Act 2 SPOILER ALERT: Please watch chapters 7-12 (33:39-1:05:43)
before reading the questions

[19] Act 3 SPOILER ALERT: Please watch chapters 13-19 (1:05:44-1:41:17)
before reading the questions

[28] After You Watch the Movie

ANSWER KEY

Suggested answers and scripture references have been provided for questions denoted with * throughout the Guide

[30] Before You Watch the Movie

[35] Act 1

[39] Act 2

[40] Act 3

APPENDIX

[41] Salvation: Choosing to Trust God's Free Gift of Eternal Life

For more information please visit www.reconciliationmovie.com
and click on "Resources."



FOREWORD BY NANCY HECHE

To understand why I'm writing the foreword to this movie and my reactions to it, you should know a few things about me.

I married my high school sweetheart, Don, hoping to live happily ever after. Five children and 25 years of marriage later, it seemed from the outside as if we were the perfect family. Then Don died of AIDS in 1983—the shocking discovery of his secret homosexual affairs. This was only the beginning of my loss and heartache. Just three months after Don's death, our 18-year-old son, Nathan, died in a car crash and I fell into years of personal darkness. Eventually, as I was drawn into a long journey of growth and healing, my youngest daughter, actress Anne Heche, began a highly publicized lesbian affair with Ellen DeGeneres. I couldn't believe that my daughter could walk into the same lifestyle Anne's father had lived, that had ended our seemingly fairy tale life.

Through those and other trials, I rely on God's grace, strength, and promises from Scripture to help me persevere. I slip from time to time, and make mistakes, but I always come back to Jesus...and I'm discovering daily how to look at people and the world with God's perspective through eyes full of love and blessing. I have learned along the way that the only person you can change is yourself.

When I watched RECONCILIATION:

I received the movie several months before I finally watched it. I couldn't imagine that it could be anything but trite and compromising. Now that I reflect on my hesitation, I think I might have had some nagging notion that it would touch some emotions I was avoiding.

I started watching with some curiosity and satisfaction—I agree that homosexuality is a sin. I believe that hypocrisy and hatred are sins. I agree that the double standards need to end. I understood Grant's fears and confusion about his own sexuality. I've heard the same concern from family members whose loved ones are living homosexually. Ok, so far I'm comfortable and beginning to relax. This is pretty good. I liked the actors.

I get the "love" part of the interaction between Grant and Sara. I teach about "love and respect, grace and truth" when I speak at various conferences. I say we must do what Jesus does. I say that we, by our love and respect, may be the only way that Jesus becomes a viable option for unbelievers.

But when Sara begins to urge Grant to see his father because "this is about love," I get uncomfortable. Oh yes, I think. It's always the one sinned against who has to make the gesture of love. I wonder where this is going and I'm not sure I like it. I have never personally seen this kind of forgiveness and love demonstrated. Now I'm feeling very anxious. My hurt and betrayal around this issue are so real.

What can possibly heal this pain? Can Grant really forgive his father? Can I really forgive my husband? Really forgive? I weep at what it takes to do it. And I get a glimpse of what it takes the Father to do it for me, to forgive me—every bitter thought, every evil deed. But this sin has crushed me, my family, my marriage, my home, my innocence. I know it's not fair to try to make even the slightest comparison to what Jesus suffered for my sin, but I can feel my pain and I can only try to imagine the pain and agony of the



(continued)

crucifixion. My pain is so real. I realize in a moment that I really don't want Grant to forgive his father.

Then when Grant arrives and his father seems to be happy in his homosexual relationship and others are there to celebrate him, I was disappointed. I expected the story to be different—Grant would find his father surrounded by wonderful Christians, praying and reading scripture. So I was annoyed. I stood back, like Grant. I was confused. What was Chad, the writer/director, doing here in the story line? Could I trust him?!

When Patrick starts in on "poor Jeff," I was furious. I felt myself resist, get tense, angry. I don't have one ounce of pity for Jeff or Patrick. And when Patrick says, "You have no idea who this man really is" I wanted to jump up and scream! Who this man "is," is a betrayer, a deserter, a cheater, and so much more. I have no defense for him and no remorse.

I actually love the way Chad has written this story. He takes Grant all the way through his self-reflection, his brokenness, his forgiveness before he realizes who his father has become. That's the way it has to be. That's the real way, the honest way, the only way, the way of the most holy Cross. That's the way Jesus does it—he loves us while we're still sinners.

But it's only after the fact that I buy into it. It took Tim, the chaplain, to reach my heart with his words, The Word. His words were so well scripted, so believable, so calmly stated, so reasonable. I exhaled.

It's still hard for me to validate the love that Jeff expresses to his son. I am left with the retort, "If you loved him so much, why didn't you get help! Why didn't you figure it out! Why was it all about you? You had a responsibility to me, to your family. I don't 'get' that kind of love." Forgiveness, my willingness to forgive, is still begging at my heart. It's so unreasonable! So out of reach so many times.

So I'm left with the mystery of human "love," and astounded at Supernatural Love. How does God do it! This film will show you.

The movie and the aftermath of it still stir me. It's still doing its work in me. It's so real. So hard. Let it challenge and touch your heart.

-Nancy Heche

To learn more about Nancy's inspiring story of faith and courage please read her recent books *The Truth Comes Out* and *Understanding Homosexuality*, written with Joe Dallas. These books will offer hope to anyone who has ever been on the brink of despair, or wondered how to respond with love to someone in a same-sex relationship.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This movie is about reconciliation, love, and forgiveness. Although homosexuality is the particular issue raised, we encourage you not to focus just on homosexuality and all its particulars. Most likely, your thinking about it will be challenged and we hope you're open to that. Watch and listen with broader eyes and ears. How would you be reacting if other sins that can cause brokenness and separation had been used (e.g., abuse, addiction, adultery)? Through the leading of God's word and the Holy Spirit we encourage you to respond in ways that are edifying to the body of Christ.

We've designed this Guide to help you think more deeply about issues raised in the movie. We hope it helps you process feelings, thoughts and opinions, either in a group setting or quietly by yourself. There are a number of ways to use the Guide and watch the movie. Here are a few suggestions:

- Make a day of it. On a Saturday watch the movie and then break into groups spending several hours afterwards discussing the questions.
- Take a month and treat it like a TV show. Have people answer the "Before You Watch" questions, discuss the answers and then watch the movie. The following week, watch Act One and answer the questions. Then do the same for Act Two and Three. This will allow people more time to think and process their feelings and thoughts.

Your group might choose a different strategy and may not use all of the questions, but whatever you do, we encourage you to go through the "After You Watch" section and perhaps make a follow-up meeting a month later to see how people are doing.

If you're using this Guide in a group setting, it will be essential to establish an emotionally safe environment. Here are some ways you can do this:

- Be welcoming to everyone as you create a safe community for learning and sharing.
- Allow some time before starting the study for people to get to know each other. Watch the movie and have a meal together, or do some other 'icebreaker.' This will help people who are not familiar with each other to share more freely later on.
- If appropriate, ask participants to share if they are currently experiencing a broken relationship they hope the movie gives them insight into. You may also ask them to share if homosexuality has personally affected them and their family.
- Treat everyone with respect. Although you'll want them all to feel comfortable sharing, you'll also need to respect their privacy and right to remain quiet. When they do share, their comments will need to be heard, even when you don't want to or can't agree with them.
- Be receptive to all questions, even if they can't be answered when they're asked.
- Allow feelings to be expressed. Ideally they'll be shared in appropriate ways—as people cry when others cry, laugh when others laugh, sympathize when others share frustrations.
- Pray with diligence. Pray in the days that lead up to each group meeting. Ask friends to pray with and/or for you as you go through the study. And of course, pray at the beginning and end of each meeting. It will be God who moves among and in His people so they'll learn what He has for them.



QUESTIONS TO PONDER BEFORE YOU START THE MOVIE

[LOVE]

1. How do you define love? Please share any life experiences that have influenced your views.
2. How is love defined and described in God's Word?* If you painted a picture to help someone understand it, what might you paint? Here are some verses to consider: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and 13, John 3:16-17, John 15:12-13, Romans 5:8, John 14:21, Galatians 5:14, Luke 10:25-37, and 1 John 4:7-21.
3. How willing are you to live by God's definition of love and the importance He places on it? Are any changes necessary in your life?
4. Is loving people easy or hard for you? Does it sometimes depend on their behavior?
5. Do you ever believe people can't love you because of choices you've made? How does that make you feel about yourself? Them?
6. How do you respond to people you love who don't love you back? How would you like to respond? What might it take?

[FAITH]

7. How do you define faith? How is it different from hope? Please share any life experiences that have influenced your views.

8. How is faith defined and described in God's Word?* How important is this kind of faith to you? Here are some verses to consider: 2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 5:1-2, Romans 10:17, James 2:26, Galatians 3:21-27, and Matthew 9:2.

9. What does genuine faith produce?*

10. What things positively or negatively affect your faith in God?

11. Is faith that a pilot will fly you safely to your destination easier or harder for you than having faith in God and His Word? Why?

[SIN]

12. How do you define sin? Please share any life experiences that have influenced your views.

13. How is sin defined and described in God's Word?* If you painted a picture to help someone understand it, what might you paint? Here are some verses to consider: Romans 8:5-8, Romans 5:20-6:2, Romans 6:20-23, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Colossians 2:13, Proverbs 28:13, James 4:17, 1 John 1:8, Romans 7:17-20, and Romans 3:19-24.

14. How willing are you to live by God's definition of sin and the importance He places on it? Any changes necessary?

15. Why can God not be in the presence of sin? What are some other consequences of sin? Do these motivate you to not sin? Is there anything else that would motivate you? Please explain.

[FORGIVENESS]

16. How do you define forgiveness? Please share any life experiences that have influenced your views.

17. How is forgiveness defined and described in God's Word?* What pictures come to mind? Here are some verses to consider: Colossians 3:13, 1 John 1:8-10, Matthew 18:21-22, Luke 17:3-4, Ephesians 1:7-8, and Matthew 6:9-13.

18. How willing are you to live by God's definition of forgiveness and the importance He places on it? Any changes necessary?

19. Do you believe that some things are unforgiveable? And that some things are so minor you don't need to ask for forgiveness? How has this affected you? Any changes you want to make?

20. How can we forgive others? Ourselves? How does prayer help?

[RECONCILIATION]

21. How do you define reconciliation? Please share any life experiences that have influenced your views.

22. How is reconciliation defined and described in God's Word?* Here are some verses to consider: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Romans 5:11, Romans 12:18-19, Colossians 1:19-22, 1 Corinthians 1:10, and Proverbs 28:14.

23. How willing are you to live by God's definition of reconciliation and the importance He places on it? Any changes necessary?

24. What about your relationship with God? Any reconciliation necessary? What has God done to reconcile us to Him? Considering this, what should be our response to Him?

25. Are you aware if you need to reconcile differences with anyone? What has stopped you? Would you be surprised if God opened the door to reconcile a relationship you once thought to be irreconcilable? How might you respond?

26. How can we respond when we want to reconcile with someone and that person isn't interested? Any advice for others?

* Suggested answers are available in the Answer Key on page 30.

**SPOILER
ALERT!**
Please watch
ch. 1-7 before
reading the
questions

QUESTIONS FOR ACT 1



Grant and Sara go to church on their anniversary and the pastor declares, "The Bible says homosexuality is a sin, but Jesus doesn't show favoritism. Jesus hates all sin, including hypocrisy, pride, and hatred."

1. How did you react internally when he proclaimed that homosexuality is a sin?
2. How did you react internally when he proclaimed that hypocrisy, pride, and hatred are sins?
3. What exactly is it about homosexuality that God hates? The person or the behavior? What does He hate about other sin?*
4. What, if anything, do you hate about sin? Does your answer depend on which sin it is? If so, why?
5. Is there a difference between temptation and sin? If so, why?*

The pastor further declares that "sin separates us from God and all sins are forgivable if we repent."

6. Does the thought of being separated from God keep you from sinning? Does anything else motivate you? When will you stop sinning? Please explain.
7. Were you surprised to learn that ALL sin is forgivable? Did hearing this in the context of homosexuality influence your reaction?

8. What do you think it means to repent? What does God's Word say?* You may want to check these verses: Mark 1:15, Luke 5:32, Luke 15:10, Luke 17:3, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, Acts 3:19, Ezekiel 14:6, Ezekiel 18:32, and Isaiah 30:15.

9. Why might some people who recognize they've sinned choose not to repent?

10. What did you think of the Pastor's statement, "The time of double standards needs to end. As God has loved us, so we must love everyone."? Do you think there's a double standard? What effect might a double standard have on someone outside the church?

Later that night, Grant tells his wife, Sara, that he felt that everything the pastor said in church was directed at him.

11. Reflect on your times in church. Have you experienced the same thing? Why do you think that sometimes happens? If it rarely occurs, why do you think that is? Do you sometimes avoid church for fear that this may happen? Please explain.

On the same night, after learning about the phone call from the medical center, Grant proclaims to Sara, "I don't even know what the truth is anymore."

12. Have you ever felt like that? How do you work through these times? Where do you find truth? Has turning to God's Word worked for you? Is it important to find truth and understand it? Please explain.*

When Grant first talks with Sara about his dad's homosexuality, he says that when he thought it was "genetic," he was scared he might also be perceived as being gay. When he then learned it was a "choice," his fear turned to anger and his anger to hatred because his father abandoned his family.

13. What are your reactions to this? Can you relate?

14. How did you react emotionally to Grant's anger and hate? Is that level of anger ever justified? When?

15. Have you forgiven those who have been very angry with you and/or who have hated you? If you have hated anyone or any people group, have you forgiven yourself? Asked to be forgiven? Anything you need to do in the future? Will you?

16. How do your beliefs about the sin of homosexuality influence your reactions to homosexuals? How about towards those who used to be gay-identified, but have walked away from this sin?

17. If research someday causes scientists to conclude that homosexuality is genetic (much like we know there may be a genetic link for our emotions, coping skills, alcoholism, and obesity), would that change your attitude? Why or why not? If you believe the Bible is true, would it still be sin? We are all born into sin, but beyond that, does it matter what causes or contributes to the sin? Please elaborate.

When Grant is deciding whether to go see his dad, Sara explains that he's "been given an incredible opportunity that most people don't get. You get to say goodbye and you get to make peace with him and yourself. This isn't about tolerance or acceptance. This is about love."

18. Did you want to cheer at this point in the movie or shout, "No it's not!" What has influenced your beliefs?

19. Can we love people while not tolerating or even accepting their behavior? Should we? Does it depend upon which sin it is? Should it? What does this type of love look like and feel like? What if they misinterpret our love as acceptance for their sin choice? Have you found yourself thinking you are compromising if you love someone still involved in sin? What about Romans 5:8—"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

* Suggested answers are available in the Answer Key on page 35.

**SPOILER
ALERT!**
Please watch
ch. 7-12 before
reading the
questions

QUESTIONS FOR ACT 2

Grant's dad's partner, Patrick, clearly demonstrates a deep love for Grant's dad, Jeff.

1. How did that make you feel? Have you thought that homosexuality is just about sex? Does seeing the depth of Patrick's love cause you to see same-sex relationships differently? Are you tempted to just dismiss Patrick's love as "not really love"? If so, how do you justify that?



After watching a slide show in Jeff's hospice room, Grant talks with Patrick, as they both leave for the night. Patrick is blunt when explaining how mad he is at Grant for ignoring his dad. Grant is equally blunt when talking about his feelings and the pain of growing up without his father.

2. What were some of your reactions during this scene? Did you feel yourself siding with Patrick or Grant? Why?

3. Patrick and Grant ask each other to "put yourself in my shoes." What difference might this have made through the years? What difference can it still make? Is this easy or hard for you to do? Why?

4. Grant states, "I'll admit I've done some things I'm not proud of and my choices have hurt people, but you have no idea what I've been through..." In your opinion, are there times when "what we've been through" can excuse our choices and the hurt we cause people? Please elaborate.

5. Patrick declares, "You have no idea the discrimination we've been through and deal with on a daily basis." Is discrimination ever right? Ever understandable? What causes it? What can it cause? Read and discuss Colossians 3:11-17 and James 2:1-13.

6. Patrick continues, "So please get off your self-righteous soapbox." How did you react to this? Is self-righteousness a sin? What causes it? What does it result in?

7. After Patrick accuses Grant of still having an issue with “our lifestyle,” Grant responds, “It doesn’t bother me like it used to, but yes, I think that it’s wrong.” How important is it that we know what we believe about right and wrong? That we share with others what we believe? Can you think of a better way Grant could have responded instead of just throwing out a blanket statement?

8. Patrick states, “If you think for a second that your father devised a plan that after your birth, he would hurt and traumatize you by choosing to be gay, then you obviously have no idea who this man really is.” Your thoughts? Your feelings? Relevant personal experiences?

9. When talking about Jeff, Patrick passionately informs Grant, “All I know is that he has always loved you even when you denied his existence.” Does Patrick’s statement remind you of anyone? What does this tell us about Jeff’s character? Does this help you see him as multi-dimensional if you’re tempted to see him only as a sinner?

In one of the scenes between Grant and Patrick, they discuss Grant’s rejection of his dad. Patrick tells Grant, “It’s too late to clear your conscience. The damage can’t be undone.”

10. What do you believe? Is it important to have a clear conscience? Clear before whom? Why? Read and discuss Lamentations 3:22-23 and 1 Timothy 1:18-19. What pictures come to mind when you read these verses?

11. Have you had experiences clearing your conscience? How? Reversing damage? How? How’s it feel?

12. “Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23) In what ways are these verses relevant to your discussion? What pictures come to mind when you read them?

13. In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes that love “comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” What do you believe a good conscience has to do with love?

14. In 1 Timothy 1: 18-19, Paul writes that those who reject “faith and a good conscience” have “shipwrecked their faith.” What do you believe a good conscience has to do with faith?

Grant makes an insightful comment about his dad’s choice. He confidently states, “I can’t change him or anyone else. I can only work on myself.”

15. How did you react when you heard this? Are there times when you’d rather get others to change than to change yourself? Does it work? What might it look like to relinquish demands that another person change?

16. What might “work on myself” look like?



After the challenging discussion in the stairway, Grant accepted Patrick’s invitation and went to the house he and his dad shared. He stayed for dinner and asked for forgiveness.

17. Do you believe Grant compromised his standard or faith when having dinner with Patrick and asking for forgiveness since he is a non-repentant, gay-identified man? Why or why not?

18. If you answered, “yes,” are you consistent in applying that same standard to other sins? For example, what about coveting? Should you avoid people who want a car or house like a friend has? Should we ask to be forgiven for our sin even if others don’t acknowledge theirs? Your thoughts? Feelings?

19. What character qualities did Grant and Patrick exhibit that made this night work? Think back to the discussion in the stairway. What happened there that allowed Grant to accept the invitation and the two men to have civil and even warm conversations at the house? Would you agree they recognized honesty in the midst of strong emotion? They authentically engaged each other? What might have happened during that discussion that could have caused Grant to not accept Patrick’s invitation? Would that have been a big deal or not?

20. What are your thoughts about how you might have behaved toward Patrick? When we know someone is sinning, but we also know they don't believe in God, how might God want us to respond? Is there a difference if they do believe in God?*

21. Does the person's sin influence your response? Should it? In other words, are you aware if you're believing in a hierarchy of sin and letting that influence you?



At Grant's 10th birthday party, after his dad's partner gets back at Jeff by telling everyone Jeff is gay, Grant runs from the table after shouting at his dad, "I never want to see you again. I hate you!" Then, staring at him through a car window, he announces, "My birthday wish was that you would just die. I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!"

22. How did you react to that scene? Empathy for Jeff or Grant? Anger at Jeff or Grant? Jeff's partner, Billy? Jeff's ex-wife? What do your reactions teach you about yourself?

23. Do you think Grant, as a 10- year-old, had justified anger? Please explain.

24. Have you ever felt abandoned/rejected? Where do you go physically and/or emotionally when you have been abandoned? What helps you move through and beyond your feelings?

25. If you have flashbacks to your abandonment/rejection memories, how do you successfully cope with them? What advice do you have for others? What questions do you have?



When talking about his same-sex attraction, Jeff states, "I tried everything in my power to make my attraction for men go away."

26. Have you tried to make your temptations and/or sin go away? Maybe you try that only with certain ones. Results? What might be more effective?

27. Do you know people who have tried to make sin go away and when it didn't, just chose to believe they were born that way or it was okay? Maybe they say something like, "If God didn't want me to do this, He would have stopped me." How might you respond to these people? If you asked them how they involved God in their attempts to stop sinning, what do you think they might say? How might you talk with them about why and how to rely on God when we want to change? Do you ever struggle with the same kind of thinking? Are you ever guilty of excusing your sin for similar reasons? Please elaborate.

28. How do you react to what Paul wrote in Romans 7:18, 24? "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Is it easy for you to agree with this? Hard? Do pictures come to mind? Feelings?

29. What do we learn about Paul's view of God in the very next verse, Romans 7:25? "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"



Jeff admits to Grant, "I made so many mistakes in my life. Can you forgive me?"

30. How did you react to this? Were you surprised Jeff asked for forgiveness? Why or why not? Were you surprised he didn't ask to be forgiven just from acting on his same-sex attraction? Please explain.

31. What sins do you think Jeff was referring to? Make a list of what you've noticed. Conclusions?
32. Is asking for forgiveness easy or hard for you? Does it depend on the sin? Who you've sinned against?
33. How is approaching God different from approaching the person you've sinned against? What about forgiving yourself? Important? Easy? Hard?
34. What kind of character does it take to ask for forgiveness? What beliefs? Are you thinking of making any changes?
35. Is it difficult for you to forgive others? Does it depend on the sin? Who has sinned against you?
36. What kind of character does it take to forgive someone when they ask? When they don't ask? What beliefs? Are you thinking of making any changes?
37. What effect, if any, does forgiveness have on consequences? Please explain your views.
38. When you think about forgiveness, do pictures and/or songs come to mind? Please share.

You might want to review your thoughts about forgiveness from the first section of the Guide.

* Suggested answers are available in the Answer Key on page 39.

**SPOILER
ALERT!**
Please watch
ch. 13-19 before
reading the
questions

QUESTIONS FOR ACT 3



Just before the chaplain, Tim, and a doctor arrived in Jeff's room, Grant is seen reading his Bible.

1. What verses might you have been reading in a similar circumstance? Or, if you wouldn't have been, are you interested in learning why and how Scripture can be comforting? What would you like to know?*

Grant sadly admits that he let society dictate his relationship with his dad.

2. Have you sometimes done the same thing even when you recognized you disagreed with or have been hurt by at least a part of society's stand? Please explain.

3. How can we prevent ourselves from being swayed by society?

4. Do you believe that the Bible—God's Word—should dictate how we relate to each other? If you think it should, does it? Why or why not? Does something need to change so it becomes your standard? If you don't believe it should be, what do you use as your guide? Please explain.

5. Do you believe the Bible to be just another "self-help" book? Read Mark 8:34-38. Does it give you a new perspective? Do you find yourself "picking and choosing" from the Bible? If so, how do you decide what to pick and what to ignore? How can you find out if your standard is appropriate? How might "picking and choosing" give reason for non-believers to see the church as a bunch of "judgmental hypocrites" while at the same time allow them to justify their own sinful behaviors?

During a visit with Tim, Jeff angrily proclaimed, "You're all the same—intolerant, self righteous, hypocrites."

6. Was Jeff's claim accurate? Why do you think Jeff felt that way? Have you ever given reasons for same-sex strugglers to draw the same conclusions?

7. Do other non-believers see those attitudes in you? What are appropriate ways to respond to that charge? Inappropriate ways? Any changes you want to make?

Jeff and Tim, the chaplain, both had dads who used the Bible against them when they were growing up. Jeff's dad told him that God hates homosexuals and he stopped believing in God. Tim's father tried "to beat the gay out of him" and used the Bible to justify it. Therefore, Tim chose to read the Bible so he could use it against the hypocrites. Instead, God's Word exposed his own sins and he drew closer to God.

8. What are proper uses of the Bible?*

9. Tim got closer to God, but Jeff didn't. What might have caused the different result?

10. Was Jeff's dad correct? Does God hate homosexuals? Why or why not? What's your proof? Does He hate those who have sex before marriage? Those who cheat on their spouse? Those who are jealous, who lie, or who steal?

11. How do you respond if you read God's Word and it exposes your sins? When's the last time you experienced legalistic shame? Life-giving grace that empowers repentance? What do you think causes us to experience these different reactions? What could we say to those who experience only the shame?

When reading the Bible, Tim also concluded that people who hated his homosexuality were broken just like him.

12. What do you think Tim meant that people are "broken"? What causes it? How does it look and feel? What's the solution?



Jeff wisely asked Tim for help when he was fearful about dying and rather than just helping Jeff from his own experiences, Tim walked him through the Bible.

13. What are the benefits of turning to God's Word when troubled? How has it been used in your life?

14. What was it about Tim that helped him get through to Jeff? Would your attitudes and responses cause someone struggling with sin to respond that way? Why or why not? Any changes you want to make?

15. What are some effective ways of using Scripture to help people even when they are resistant to the Bible? Or, is it impossible?

Tim explains that "all sins are symptoms of the greatest sin—degodding God." He elaborates by stating that if we choose to worship anything outside of God, He will give us up.

16. How do you react to this? Try to remember your first reactions when watching the movie. Heart response? Head response? Do you agree? Disagree? Have questions? Read Romans 1:18-32 for relevant insights.

17. How might God determine whether we're worshiping someone or something instead of Him? How does it look to put God first in all areas of our lives? Have you done that? How do we know if we have? What are appropriate responses if we think or know we have not?

Tim confidently states that we should find our value and identity in our relationship with God.

18. Do you agree? Please explain. How important do you think this is?

19. How easy or hard is it for you to do? Can you share some examples? Do any pictures come to mind?



Tim admitted that he has had to deal with overcoming fleshly desires. He admits his hard struggle with same-sex attraction and states, “Everyone is constantly tempted in this fallen world...We may or may not be responsible for what tempts us, but God absolutely holds everyone responsible for the choices he or she makes.”

20. Your thoughts and feelings?

21. Is everyone constantly tempted? How might our temptations be different? What must we remember? Think? Do?

22. Think about some sin with which you struggle or have struggled. Did you choose that temptation? Would you rather wrestle with a different temptation? Please elaborate.

23. Does God holding us responsible for our choices mean He doesn't hold us responsible for our feelings? Our thoughts? Are they separate? Consider how Jesus ramps up the dialogue concerning sexual sin in Matthew 5:28: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Do you think it's possible to not follow through on temptations? To make the choice of not sinning even when you want to? How?

24. If you agree that God holds us responsible for our choices when we sin, what are appropriate responses? Inappropriate?



Tim states, “The Bible is clear—everyone has a broken sexual orientation apart from God's original design.”

25. How did you react to that statement. Surprised? Agree? Disagree? What was God's original design for our sexuality? How has it been broken/distorted? Can you give examples?

26. Does this understanding help to put all sexual sin on the same level? Why or why not? What else do you need to know? (You may want to study 1 Corinthians 6 and/or Romans 1 for God's perspective.)

27. Being that God is perfect and Holy, does He wink at certain sins and not others? Are all sins equal? Are all consequences equal? Your conclusions? Do any pictures or songs come to mind?

28. The next time you encounter someone who thinks homosexuality is the worse sin of all, how might you share this perspective (that everyone's sexual orientation is broken) in helpful ways? Will you?

29. The next time you encounter someone who thinks homosexual behavior is not a sin, how might you share this perspective? Will you?

30. Basic theology holds to the belief that God is omniscient, meaning that He knows everything. That being the case, He knows of every single sexual act ever committed, including those done by homosexuals. Why would He love and want to redeem those who have participated in sexually sinful behavior?

When Patrick and Jeff are talking with Tim, Patrick declares, "This conversation is over. I'm not going to debate with some chaplain." Tim confidently asserts, "The debate isn't with me."

31. Have you tried debating with people you disagree with? How does that work for you? How do you feel when you're on the "right" side? The "wrong" side? What can we learn from Tim in the way he talked with Jeff and Patrick? Do you want to speak like him? Listen like him? Can you share examples?

32. Is it more important to you to win an argument or point people to Christ (even if it sometimes means taking it on the chin)? Please explain.

Jeff tells Grant that he can't deny what God did for him, but he still struggles with parts of the Bible about sexual sin. The chaplain told him to seek answers in prayer and the Bible. Jeff did that and, as a result, he accepted Jesus Christ into his life.

33. It's almost always the case that Christians struggle with something they don't understand. Are you a Christian, like Jeff, but struggle with something in the Bible? What might it take to resolve any doubts or confusions? Or, is your struggle not interfering with the quality of your relationship with God? With your behavior? With your faith? Please elaborate.

34. What's your understanding about salvation? ** After we believe Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead and we trust Him alone for our salvation, does it mean we can keep sinning because we're forgiven? How does Romans 6 help you answer this question?

35. Or, if you're not yet a Christian, is it because you don't understand or agree with everything in the Bible? Or, do you think you're not good enough for Jesus Christ to accept you? Are you trying to earn your salvation instead of accepting God's free gift? Have you been hurt by a professing Christian? Something else? Has Jeff's decision motivated you to think more about reconciling to your Creator, God, through faith in the work of Jesus Christ on your behalf? Why or why not? What questions would you like answers to?

Throughout the movie, we discover that Jeff loved Grant even though Grant so clearly and publicly turned his back on his father. Although Jeff chose his gay relationship over his family, he never stopped being interested in Grant's life or loving him even though Grant didn't even know about his love.

36. Did you recognize this as an imperfect example of how a perfect and holy God loves you? How has God's unconditional love blessed you? Do you ever feel free to turn your back on God since He loves you anyway? Do you want to love Him more completely and deeply because of His love?

37. Do you find yourself believing that God loves you unconditionally, but maybe not others? Is it possible you do think that, but have never admitted it to yourself?

38. Do you believe God loves you unconditionally, or do you believe God's love is conditional and it rises and falls based on how you behave? Have you been comfortable with that belief? Why or why not? (You might want to review your thoughts about love from the first section of the Guide.)



Near the end of Jeff's life, Grant apologizes: "Words can't make up for the pain I've caused. I'm so sorry...Please forgive me." Jeff responds, "I'm so sorry. I love you son."

39. How did you react to this scene? Feelings? Thoughts?

40. What do you believe Grant needed forgiveness from? What do you believe Jeff was sorry for? If you don't see all of Grant's and Jeff's faults that others noticed, why didn't you? Do you think you see all of yours?

41. How do we know we've forgiven someone? What does God's forgiveness for each of us look like? (You might want to review your thoughts about forgiveness from the first section of the Guide.)

42. Are there people you haven't asked for forgiveness from because you're waiting for them to admit they were wrong and ask for forgiveness first? Do you think their sins against you are worse than your sins against them so they should go first? Changes?

43. If you are withholding forgiveness from anyone, how do you think 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 applies to you: "If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."? Is it possible that Satan is taking advantage of you?

Jeff and Grant pray together, with Grant beginning, "Thank you, Lord, for your love and your grace."

44. How did you react to this prayer? Is thanking God, even in the midst of difficult times, easy or hard for you? What might make it easier?

45. Is prayer something you naturally do? Please explain. Do you think prayer works? How? Why do we pray? Just because we pray for something does it mean it will be answered exactly the way we want? Why or why not?

46. What do you think inspired Grant to thank God for His grace?



When Jeff dies, Grant breaks down crying.

47. How did you react to this? When others are hurting, do you mourn with them? Do you want to advise them? In what ways might our responses either point them toward a compassionate Christ or away from Him?



After Jeff's death, Grant invites Patrick to meet his son someday and to tell him stories about his grandfather.

48. Your response? Were you glad? Or, is he compromising by accepting Patrick into his family? Is Patrick compromising if he meets Grant's son one day?

49. If Jeff were your father, how would you tell your children about him? About Patrick? How would you balance truth and love?

50. Have you rejected people who God may want you to have in your life? Reasons? Fearful? Pride? Angry? Unforgiveness? Any changes? Would reconciliation be beneficial for you? For them? What action steps might you start with?

When Grant thanks Tim for loving his dad, Tim responds, "God allows all of us to participate in His ministry."

51. What do you think "His ministry" is?

52. What, if anything, in this movie will compel you to more fully enter into this ministry? Is God prompting you to make specific goals? If so, what potential goals come to mind and how can you get started?

53. The movie inspires powerful thoughts about family. For example, Jeff says "If you want to be in your child's memories tomorrow you have to be in his life today." If you are a parent, are you involved in your children's lives? Or are you just involved in their activities? Do you know who their friends are? Their heroes? Their future goals? Their grasp of spiritual issues? Will you make any changes? Please explain.

54. What were Grant's fears about raising a son? How did Jeff help? What's relevant for you?

55. Did you form certain conclusions about the message of the movie before the end? Did these conclusions change? Please share.

* Suggested answers are available in the Answer Key on page 40.

** Please see page 41 to learn about salvation, God's free gift of eternal life.

AFTER YOU WATCH THE MOVIE QUESTIONS TO PONDER/DISCUSS

In the days and weeks to come:

1. How are you living life before your Creator, God?
2. When you realize you could be loving someone better, do you immediately make changes? Why or why not? In the movie trailer, the statement is made "Sometimes it takes more time to heal all wounds. But what happens when we're out of time?" How does that make you feel? Is it possible that you or someone you know should evaluate a relationship? Seek reconciliation? Now?
3. Did you make any forgiveness and reconciliation goals when watching the movie? Have you followed through? Why or why not? What will it take for you to do what you want and need to do?
4. How has the movie influenced you regarding homosexuality in general, those who are gay-identified outside the church, those who struggle with homosexuality in the church, and those within the church who don't think there's anything wrong with it?
5. How satisfied are you with how your church is relating to the homosexual community? Too harsh with judgment, condemnation, and hatred? Too "loving," saying homosexuality isn't a sin? Just right? Not at all involved? Not sure? Anyone you want to talk with about your church's approach?
6. If you were going to put a memory box together for your children or someone else, what would you include? Why?

7. Do you have any unresolved painful childhood memories that you'd like help with? What will you do? Who do you know who could help you?

8. If you recognize God has been loving and forgiving toward you even when you haven't deserved it, perhaps you could spend some time praying or journaling "thank you." If art is a better medium than writing for you, try drawing something that shows your feelings and desires about God's love and forgiveness.

9. If you want God to reveal more of His love to you, ask Him. If you feel separated from Him by sin, ask to be forgiven, believe you have been, and learn to walk in that freedom. Search for additional reasons to not sin again. Who can help you?

10. Would meeting with a professional be helpful? Your Pastor or other spiritual leader? Talking with friends and members of small groups can be important, but sometimes involving counselors and therapists is wise. See suggestions at the movie's website, www.reconciliationmovie.com.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

This Discussion Guide was written by imperfect people who love the Lord and pray that God uses the truths in this movie and guide to appropriately encourage and challenge you. We want churches to be healthy—where leaders teach accurate Biblical messages and congregations demonstrate Christ's love. If you've struggled to find such a church, we hope you won't give up.

~ Chad Ahrendt, Stephen Black, Thomas Corman, Chris Jones, Bob Stith, and Randy Thomas

ANSWER KEY: BEFORE YOU WATCH THE MOVIE

[LOVE]

Q2: How is love defined and described in God's Word?

Love is defined in 1 John 4:8—"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

Other verses with important insights include these:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails...And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13)

"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)

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12-13)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21)

"The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:14)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan "On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher, he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?' He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.' But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' In reply Jesus said: 'A [Jewish] man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite [a fellow Jew], when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan [an enemy of the Jews, who would have been traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho], as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' 'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:25-37)

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

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This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." (1 John 4:7-21)

[FAITH]

Q8: How is faith defined and described in God's Word?

Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 (NASB): "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Other verses with important insights include these:

"We live by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7)

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

"Therefore, since we have been justified through

faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26)

"Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:21-26)

"Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.'" (Matthew 9:2)

Q9: What does genuine faith produce?

Genuine faith should lead to repentance and repentance should lead to a transformation in one's life. Part of the change should be increased gratitude, as we live to respond to the sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus Christ, on our behalf. When we are born again, the old has gone and the new has come:

"Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'" (John 3:3)

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“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, *ESV*).

Here’s what Jesus says to those who profess faith, but their actions paint a different picture: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

[SIN]

Q13: How is sin defined and described in God’s Word?

Sin is first and foremost an offense against God. It’s missing the mark of His perfection by feeling/thinking/doing something that is against God or NOT feeling/thinking/doing something that is for God when we had the chance to do it. In Romans 6:23, we learn that “the wages of sin is death.” Without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, by faith, it’s our sin that causes us to be separated from God now and into eternity.

Verses with important insights include these:

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” (Romans 8:5-8)

“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring

eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Romans 5:20-6:2)

“When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:20-23)

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

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.” (Colossians 2:13)

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” (James 4:17)

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8)

“As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” (Romans 7:17-20)

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“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:19-24)

[FORGIVENESS]

Q17: How is forgiveness defined and described in God’s Word?

Ultimate or divine forgiveness is God, in His mercy, sending Jesus to die in our place and suffer the penalty for our sins so we could live forever with Him. No other action or death would pay the penalty and cleanse us. We can define it this way: Divine forgiveness is the shedding of blood of the innocent on behalf of the guilty.

Forgiveness is not letting the guilty off the hook, excusing unjust behavior, explaining away the hurt, denying the hurt, forgetting, or a feeling. It is an obedient response to God’s goodness in our lives. Forgiveness is possible in God’s strength, with His love, and by remembering how much Jesus forgave us and continues to forgive us.

Even when we don’t want to forgive, we must. As Wess Stafford writes to those who have never been able to forgive: “You are allowing the person who hurt you to live rent-free in your heart. It’s costing him nothing and costing you everything. Perhaps it’s time for you to evict him through forgiveness.”

Forgiving and forgetting are not the same. Forgiving someone means we will not bring up the sin again.

Therefore, in time, we will actually forget it. But, it’s more of a “not remembering” issue than a “forgetting” issue. We don’t waste our energy trying to forget. Rather, we intentionally choose to not remember. When we’re frustrated, we celebrate the reality that God does both—He totally and unconditionally forgives His children and doesn’t remember our sins if we put our faith in the atoning work of Christ:

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:12)

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” (Hebrews 10:17)

Verses with important insights include these:

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:13)

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” (1 John 1:8-10)

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” (Matthew 18:21-22)

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” (Luke 17:3-4)

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” (Ephesians 1:7-8)

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“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’” (Matthew 6: 9-13)

[RECONCILIATION]

Q22: How is reconciliation defined and described in God’s Word?

Reconciliation means the restoring of a relationship. It is a settling or resolving of differences between friends. Reconciliation with God has been necessary for all of us ever since Adam and Eve, through sin in the garden, broke fellowship with God by sinning against Him. Jesus Christ made reconciliation to God possible, as explained in Romans 5:10—“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”

Verses with important insights include these:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

“Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:11)

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:18-19)

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” (Colossians 1:19-22)

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” (1 Corinthians 1:10)

“Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.” (Proverbs 28:14)

ANSWER KEY: ACT 1

Q3: What exactly is it about homosexuality that God hates? The person or the behavior? What does He hate about other sin?

While it is impossible for mortal minds to grasp the complexity of God's thoughts and emotions, He makes it very clear in His Word that He is angry over our sin and self sufficiency.

If we can hate it when a loved one makes decisions or acts in ways that are unhealthy, wouldn't it be understandable that God, the Author of Love, would feel the same way toward us? We don't hate the person; we may hate the choices being made. God doesn't hate us, but He does hate what keeps us from knowing Him and His will as the core of our human experience. He wants the very best for us because He loves us far beyond what we could even imagine or think. God hates sin because of His passion and love for people. Sin keeps us from understanding Him, others, and ourselves.

When it comes to matters of the heart like love, sacrifice, and emotional and sexual intimacy, God ramps up the dialog in the scriptures very loudly and very clearly. We bear His image in wanting to know and be known so God is very interested and concerned about how we invest relationally in another person.

Because in sexual sin (of any variety) we are taking and giving a very emotional and intimate part of ourselves in ways God didn't intend, our choice especially grieves Him. God wants us to give it as a sacrificial but pleasurable gift to our spouse of the opposite sex or to give it back to God as we live out the gift of celibacy (for a season or a lifetime). He wants us to treasure and protect it.

Any sexual behavior outside the covenant of marriage, which is a covenant between a husband and wife and God, is not God's best for either person. It might satiate a desire for a season and might even appear to be good and healthy. In fact common beliefs about sexuality today are that if you are not

participating in sexual activity outside of marriage, you are unhealthy! But the truth is that sex is not simply about our personal needs being met. God wanted and wants sexual activity to be a gift we give to our spouse.

Sexual sin is also dangerous because it confuses and limits our identity. Because sexual activity is the most pleasurable and intimate relational experience we might or will have as humans, it has the power to define how we see ourselves, others, and possibly even God, Himself. It can restructure all our relationships. But, sexuality is not meant to define us. (God should.) Gay and straight are labels that do not appear in the Bible. Because of the unique power of sexual sin, God hates all sexual activity outside of His will. It too often is the very thing that alienates us from Him.

God also hates sexual sin because of how dangerous the relational and sometimes biological consequences can be—everything from a deeply broken heart, STDs, an unwanted pregnancy, and having an understanding of God and self that is not in line with His will or intent.

The ground at the foot of the cross is level, but the consequences of sin in the here and now are different. If someone steals a camera from a local store and she gets caught, she probably won't go to jail, but will have to pay up, go to court, face probation, and deal with the fact that she now has a criminal record. If someone enters into a sinful relationship, that love and/or investment of intimacy has far different consequences. If we have loved and been intimate with someone for years, sinful or not, it is going to be excruciating to turn away from that. God knows this and that is why He is jealous for our affections and clear about appropriate relational boundaries in the scriptures.

Unfortunately many in the church have adopted a stigmatized and cultural view of homosexual behavior

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and sexual behavior in general. Heterosexual sin is winked at or ignored (e.g., how does mainstream media deal with it?) yet the gay community is targeted repeatedly as the most serious threat to the family. The world does play favorites with sins and it's wrong. We need to be consistent in pursuing Christ's view of all relationships and point to God's creative intent, help those who are seeking find Him, and compassionately (sometimes sacrificially) give witness to the Truth that God does want us to turn away from all sin and toward Him.

God knows every single sexual act and thought we have participated in. He knows every single sexual partner we have had. Jesus knows why we turned to those people and gave ourselves to them in that way. And in this age of grace, God did not send hellfire and brimstone. He sent a grieving Savior who wants to love us with a greater love than we could ever hope for. When we turn to Him and give Him all of our hurts, hopes, and fears, He takes them easily and imparts to us Himself. Where our human relationships might satisfy for a moment or season but always fall short, God never will. He's not afraid of our stuff and we don't have to be afraid of trusting Him.

Q5: Is there a difference between temptation and sin? Why do you think so?

As we know, Jesus Himself was tempted by Satan: "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God

to the test.' Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" (Matthew 4:1-10)

Known as "the tempter," Satan did his best to knock Jesus off the throne and did not succeed. Jesus remained pure: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) His purity, His holiness, is what kept the hope for humanity's salvation intact. His ability to resist temptation facilitated the atonement of mankind to God.

There has to be a difference between temptation and sin or the Gospel is irrelevant. When temptation came to Jesus, He responded with Biblical truth, resisted His natural impulses (as a man), and placed His sole dependence in what God the Father was telling Him to do. "Temptation" is simply Satan seeking to exploit our legitimate needs by trying to compel us to meet those needs in illegitimate (sinful) ways.

Looking at temptation objectively, when a Christian is tempted, that is as much an opportunity for righteousness (a positive outcome) as it is for sin. God doesn't force us to do His will because He wants much more than behavior modification. He wants our hearts. Powerful though he is, Satan is just another creature in the vast cosmos and doesn't have the power to make us sin. So when temptations come, it is on us to turn that into an opportunity to model Christlike behavior. We can respond Biblically and resist sinful impulses by abiding in God's love and Spirit while waiting for God's provision.

Over time we will see Romans 5:1-5 become manifest on a very personal level in our lives: "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace

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with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Remember, temptation is as much an opportunity to contend for God and be transformed by His Spirit as it is to give in to sin. The most holy and transformative of moments come in the midst of crying out to God when given every reason not to. Jesus was faithful. His love empowers us to be the same.

Q8: What do you think it means to repent? What does God's Word say?

When we sin, we are contrite—truly sad—because we recognize we offended God. But repentance is more than a change of mind or remorse, it is a turning from sin to God which leads to righteous living: "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

These verses will help you more completely understand repentance and God's heart for it:

"The time has come," he [Jesus] said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Jesus, recorded in Luke 5:32)

"...I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Jesus, recorded in Luke 15:10)

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." (Jesus, recorded in Luke 17:3)

"I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance: for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:9-10, *NASB*)

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19)

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!'" (Ezekiel 14:6)

"For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!" (Ezekiel 18:32)

"This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength...'" (Isaiah 30:15)

On the same night, after learning about the phone call from the medical center, Grant proclaims to Sara, "I don't even know what the truth is anymore."

Q12: Have you ever felt like that? How do you work through these times? Where do you find truth? Has turning to God's Word worked for you? Is it important to find truth and understand it? Please explain.

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"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" (John 8:31-32)

Ask transparent Christians and they will share with you that they, like we all, have tumultuous times and difficult trials that may muddle our thoughts and temporarily confuse our beliefs. Grant had pushed down much of his pain from his dad abandoning him and his anger developed into bitterness. As life was transitioning again, with a baby on the way, his unresolved feelings became more of an issue. Being overwhelmed and emotionally vulnerable added to his confusion.

The scriptures are an anchor for our faith. They are a gift from God so we can hold in our own very hands His will and intent. Clarity also comes from listening to the testimonies of Christians living in difficult times or through similar situations as ours. It is very important to learn what we can and to implement what we learn as best we know how. The great part in that process is that Jesus says He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:14) and He will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

You don't have to understand everything right now. It's okay to say, "I don't know." Be patient and don't panic. Keep searching. Don't quickly make decisions and choices that may yield negative consequences because of your lack of understanding.

Once we do read the Word and we do hear and receive the truth of God (always imparted without shame or condemnation to those who believe) it is important to grow in our obedience and implement the truths in our lives. Wisdom does not come simply from knowledge. We obtain knowledge by humbling ourselves before God, reading His Word, seeking ways to apply that knowledge in our lives, and then learning from the Holy Spirit through the experiences that result. That is the path to Godly wisdom.

Again, take comfort in not having to know it all. At the same time, be intentional to place your faith in God, His Word, and the testimonies of those who have done the same. Choose to study the Word and keep learning. Compare its Truth to what you've learned elsewhere. Decide. Become aware of your growth and praise God for it.

ANSWER KEY: ACT 2

After the challenging discussion in the stairway, Grant accepted Patrick's invitation and went to the house he and his dad shared. He stayed for dinner and asked for forgiveness.

Q20: What are your thoughts about how you might have behaved toward Patrick? When we know someone is sinning, but we also know they don't believe in God, how might God want us to respond? Is there a difference if they do believe in God?

When Jesus met with the woman at the well (see John 4:1-26), He engaged her where she was. He didn't immediately launch into a scary "The end is near!" diatribe. He talked with her and eventually revealed that He knew all about her, especially her sexual history. Without shame or condemnation, but with powerfully compelling insight, He called her to Himself and she went home convinced He was the Messiah.

According to Jewish culture, Jesus shouldn't have even talked to her—she was not Jewish, and she was a woman. Two big taboos for Jewish men. But Jesus reached out because He was more concerned about her salvation than His own reputation.

How many times has the church approached gay people with the same care and concern that Jesus showed the woman at the well? Unfortunately, many Christians aren't known for being Christ-like. Cultural stigmatization has blinded us to the need for being amongst those who don't know God, especially the gay community. As a result, they have rejected Christ simply because Christians have rejected them.

Gay people who don't know Christ and were not raised in the church should not be judged or punished by Christians for not knowing and living according to a standard to which they've never ascribed.

According to 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, it is important for us to remember that the Lord is the one who will judge the sins of non-believers: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—

not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked person from among you.'"

Too many times, Christians assume gay people purposefully sin against God and want to offend as many Christians as they possibly can. This might be true for a rare few, but most gay people are simply trying to live their lives as best they can with the worldview they have been given.

God would have us emulate Jesus' care and compassion toward all sinners. We can engage our gay friends, loved ones, and acquaintances in the everyday particulars of life. We can go out into the world where the church may fear to tread. And we will find that Jesus is already there, working in their lives, just like he is in ours.

If people who confess to be Christians are sinning, we should gently and gracefully share scripture that addresses their sins—not in a manner to be prideful, but in a way that is humble and loving because we want them to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel. We can also share stories of our personal struggles and how God helped us overcome them. Always pray with the person and let them know you are available should they need accountability. Most importantly, pray for them—that the Holy Spirit will move so they'll turn from their sins and back to God. We cannot manipulate anyone into the kingdom of God or back to righteousness—only the Lord can transform their lives and draw them to Him.

ANSWER KEY: ACT 3

Just before the chaplain, Tim, and a doctor arrived in Jeff's room, Grant is seen reading his Bible.

Q1: What verses might you have been reading in a similar circumstance? Or, if you wouldn't have been, are you interested in learning why and how Scripture can be comforting? What would you like to know?

We can find scripture that addresses any situation in which we find ourselves and any feeling we're having: hope, eternity, love, compassion, etc.

Sometimes reading through the Psalms and Proverbs will help us find relevant truths to apply to our situation. The same thing can occur with other books of the Bible, too. Using the concordance in the back of a study Bible can lead us to verses we need. This alphabetized list of categories increases our efficiency.

Entire books have been written with a list-by-topic format. Many are available for different groups like women, men, and teens. You might be able to find what you're looking for at a Christian book store, www.christianbook.com, or www.biblegateway.com. In the "Christian Living" section, search for "verses."

Jeff and Tim, the chaplain, both had dads who used the Bible against them when they were growing up. Jeff's dad told him that God hates homosexuals and he stopped believing in God. Tim's father tried "to beat the gay out of him" and used the Bible to justify it. Therefore, Tim chose to read the Bible so he could use it against the hypocrites. Instead, God's Word exposed his own sin and he drew closer to God.

Q8: What are proper uses of the Bible?

To discover God and His love for us:

The first appropriate use of the Bible is to discover God—who He is, His purpose for us, how He relates to us, how He guides us, why He loves us so much, etc. When we approach the scriptures, we need to approach them seeking God first, and not for evidence that backs up our own assumptions. The

scriptures are God-breathed, not simply reference material for citation when convenient.

To seek help with life—discipleship, sanctification, and Godly counsel:

Praise God that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The scriptures are full of life-giving teachings that reveal God's will for our behavior and our relationships. He wants us to examine our own hearts so that we can relate to Him without shame or condemnation, but with love and familiarity. Approaching the scriptures can be a humbling exercise, but as we learn God's will, apply His directives, and hear from His Spirit, we begin to see that the Creator of the universe has good intentions for our lives—and He knows best.

To learn from God how to reach others (saved or not) with love, authenticity, grace, mercy, and truth:

Many people use the scriptures as verbal stones to try and scare people into the kingdom of God, or unfairly hold the unsaved accountable for a standard of righteousness that we ourselves can't even keep (we are saved by Christ's righteousness, not our own). When it comes to homosexuality, the scriptures inform us of God's will, but we must lay down our verbal stones, approach the scriptures humbly, and seek to understand our own sexual brokenness. Then, we can approach our gay loved ones or friends from the very humble perspective of our own desperate need for Jesus as Savior and Lord—simply because we are all sinners.

appendix

SALVATION: CHOOSING TO TRUST GOD'S FREE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE

Jeff, Grant's dad, was wounded by his father's words and the church and he concluded he was condemned and hated by God because he was a homosexual. Jeff stopped seeking God. However, Jesus Christ did not come into the world to condemn, but to redeem, so He didn't stop pursuing Jeff. And, as you know, Jeff calculated the cost of surrendering his life to Christ and decided it was worth doing. What about you?

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." (John 3:17)

God's plan to "save the world" is that His Son, Jesus Christ, would take everyone's sin upon Himself, be crucified, and then resurrected. He took care of His part of the plan. We can choose whether to do our part.

Our part of God's plan is to trust in Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf and to receive His free gift of eternal life. We can't reason our way to this decision. It requires an act of faith. That's why it's hard for some people. It can be easy. We are sinners who fall short of God's perfection and can't earn our way to heaven. We can't be good enough.

This free gift is available to everyone who believes—it doesn't matter the amount or type of sin.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

"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." (John 3:16)

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

The only Biblical requirement for salvation and eternal life, is that we believe Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. That's it. When we understand this, our heart should overflow with thankfulness. Our gratitude should inspire us to want to be changed and transformed by God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we'll want to read the Bible and get involved in a good Bible-teaching church. Our understanding will deepen, our love for God will grow, and we will be more and more empowered to sin less and to be sorry when we do.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Praise God we don't have to be sin-free to accept God's gift. No, that's impossible. It's only in trusting in God's gift of His Son that righteousness (right living) is possible. Our good works are an outward expression of our faith. They don't earn us our salvation because it's a free gift. They provide evidence of our salvation and strengthening faith.

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." (Romans 3:22)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

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Sometimes people, and even churches, get it wrong. They teach or make people feel that they have to be “good enough” to come to Christ. That’s not what the Bible teaches. We must always go to God’s Word as the authority. When you do that, with an open mind, you can discover what Jeff did. By faith, you can see that Jesus died for YOU. By faith you can trust Him and receive His free gift.

Just like Jeff spent time talking, reading, and praying with Tim, you may want to talk with someone. Choose this person carefully so you’ll hear the Truth and be able to respond. He or she could be a professional, someone involved in a good church who knows God’s Word well enough to answer your questions, or a good friend or relative you’ve observed living in the freedom Christ provides. Ideally this person has lived long enough in a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ that he or she can talk with you about the additional benefits of trusting in Christ for your salvation. This will help you see that what you think you need to give up pales in comparison to what you get from God. If you want to, you can look up these verses to get a glimpse of God’s goodness: Galatians 5:22, 1 Timothy 6:7-8, John 14:27, and Proverbs 2:1-22.

It’s customary to pray after receiving the gift of eternal life. But, your faith must not be in your prayer. Your faith is in God and His gift of Jesus. Your prayer is simply a chance to tell God what you’ve done and

to thank Him. Your prayer doesn’t save you. Jesus saves you!

Feel free to just speak to God about what you’ve done. If you need help, start here:

“Dear God, thank you for the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus Christ. I believe He died on the cross for my sins and I put my trust in Him because I know I can’t save myself. Thank you that I can follow You and learn how to be more like Jesus. I want to please You and I need Your help. I want to read and understand Your Word and learn more and more about You, Your love for me, and who You would like me to be. I’m glad You will help me. Thank You for your mercy and for forgiving me of my sins. I know that I am a sinner who doesn’t deserve eternal life, but You have given it to me anyway. Thank You for saving me. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.”

In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus states: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”