

5. Forgiveness and Guilt

Texts: 1 John 1:9; 1 John 3:19, 20; Romans 3:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

Quotes

Guilt is the source of sorrows, the avenging fiend that follows us behind with whips and stings. Nicholas Rowe.

True guilt is guilt at the obligation one owes to oneself to be oneself. False guilt is guilt felt at not being what other people feel one ought to be or assume that one is. R. D. Laing

Shame and guilt are noble emotions essential in the maintenance of civilized society, and vital for the development of some of the most refined and elegant qualities of human potential. Willard Gaylen

Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind; the thief doth fear each bush an officer. Shakespeare.

So full of artless jealousy is guilt, It spills itself in fearing to be spilt. Shakespeare.

Introductory questions

What happens if we focus intensively on guilt? What about the question of “false guilt”? Where did Jesus place his emphasis in dealing with the human condition? Can guilt even prevent the healing that God wants to give?

Discussion ideas

The lesson begins with Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, and the guilt experienced by Lady Macbeth as an accomplice to murder. If you read the play, you’ll discover that as she tries to wash away the stain of her sin, she cries: “Out, out, damn spot.”

One of Woody Allen’s characters is amazed at the amoral activity of his female partner. He shakes his head and asks her: “Don’t you feel guilty about doing that?” “No,” she says. “That’s terrible,” he replies. “It’s important to feel guilty!”

True enough. It is important to feel guilty. Otherwise our conscience can’t be of any help in our decision-making. Much of our living will be desperately wrong. But if we simply accept our guilt and try to live with it, then like some hidden cancer it will eat us away from the inside. Guilt is important. But it’s what we do with it that matters. So what is sin? Consider the meaning of sin as lawlessness (1 John 3:4); attitude of rebellion, distrustful spirit (as per Garden of Eden). All have sinned (Romans 3:23). Heart deceitful, desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

We all experience guilt. First we need to determine whether that guilt is justified. We must also recognize the issue of false guilt. As Morton Irving Seiden wrote, “It is only too easy to compel a sensitive human being to feel guilty about anything.” For some guilt is “imaginary”—in that it is not an appropriate response to what has happened. For example, survivors of some terrible catastrophe may feel guilty that they survived when others did not. “Get rid of imagined guilt. You did the best you could at the time, all things considered. If you made mistakes, learn to accept that we are all imperfect. Only hindsight is 20-20.” Amy Hillyard Jensen

Assuming guilt is appropriate, what happens when it becomes the main focus of attention? Most of all, what does our sense of guilt do to our relationship with God (remember Adam in the garden?). Consider this statement: “We have no choice but to be guilty. God is unthinkable if we are innocent.” Archibald MacLeish. What does this mean? What are the implications for the nature and character of God?

EGW comments

(On Jesus with the woman taken in adultery): “In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting.” *Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part--the brain, the heart, the nerves--it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are aroused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. *Ministry of Healing*, p. 115.

Extra material

“The following boys will remain behind after the school is dismissed.” My teacher friend had been talking to the whole assembled school, and wanted some help in rearranging the chairs. So he’d called on a few of the more troublesome types to stay back.

The little group shuffled to the front as the others left. The teacher watched them as they came forward, heads held low. Before he could say anything, one of the youngest burst out:

“I didn’t mean to throw stones at the cars. I’m sorry, I won’t do it again!”

Like a dam breaking, confessions poured out from each boy standing before the teacher they were sure had found them out.

“I know I shouldn’t have been reading those magazines last week. But I did toss them.”

“I don’t know what made me steal from the store. I do promise not to do it again, really I do. Please don’t punish me.”

My teacher friend hadn’t known anything. He just took out his notebook, wrote down their confessions, and looked at them. They were in such a blind panic they didn’t notice him smiling to himself. They were more than ready to agree to his “request” that they shift chairs for the rest of the month!

Guilt. That terrible knowledge of our own sin-sick state, and its results. Think of the last time a friendly law-enforcement officer pulled in behind you. As you watched him in your rear-view mirror, what was in your mind? How you speeded through the last town you went through? How you pulled out without looking after filling up with gas? How you’d meant to fix that tail light?

Now if you were to see God as latching onto your tail, what would you be worrying about? That you were living a life full of guilt, concerned about how we stand before God, terrified of the coming punishment? What kind of God would you be envisaging?

God’s message is not that there is no guilt. That would be just as ridiculous as a doctor refusing to accept there’s a cause for illness is the modern idea that the best way to deal with guilt is to deny it exists.

We are guilty because we know what is right, we know we are wrong, and we’re scared. We condemn ourselves: “Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back, / Guilty of dust and sin,” writes poet George Herbert.

But God’s invitation is for healing from such condemnation, to accept the reassurance that whatever we have done, he still accepts us:

“This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” 1 John 3:19, 20 NIV.

6. Forgiveness and the Church

Texts: Galatians 6:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11.

Quotes

1. God may forgive your sins. But your nervous system won't. Alfred Korzybski
2. Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it foregoes revenge, and dares forgive an injury. E. H. Chapin
3. Forgiveness is me giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me. Anonymous
4. Forgiveness is not an emotion, it's a decision. Randall Worley

Introductory questions

What is the point of the church—what is it for? How do we deal with situations when the church (its members) seem to operate very differently from the principles and practices of Jesus? While it is surely important to forgive one another in the church, what more is needed? How can we model God to the world through the church? When the question of church discipline arises, how can this be redemptive?

Discussion ideas

“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men.” (*Acts of the Apostles* p.9). Consequently when the need for forgiveness, healing and restoration is required in the church, it’s vital to keep in mind the need for a redemptive approach—to lead back to salvation.

So what is the church’s role as God’s appointed agency for salvation? What is salvation anyway?

The word salvation has a Latin root which can be seen in other words—such as salve. Salve as a noun is an ointment used for healing, and as a verb, salve means healing. So at its root, salvation is healing, and this English use parallels the Greek in which the word to save also means to heal. So when we talk about salvation, we are primarily talking about the way God heals the damage sin has caused—in our lives, and in our sin-damaged world.

The extreme examples of sinfulness in the lesson may lead to the impression that what we have to deal with is not as serious. But recognizing that we are not operating as servants, but as God’s understanding friends, how should we view sin and error?

In dealing with each other, how do you “confirm your love”? What does this mean? Is it enough to say certain things, to make sure that names are re-written on the church roll? Or is there more involved?

Recognizing that God’s plan is to restore trust throughout his universe, and to heal the rebellion of sin, what kind of model is the church to be to all the participants and spectators, including the unfallen beings?

EGW comments

But it is to the wrongdoer himself that we are to present the wrong. We are not to make it a matter of comment and criticism among ourselves; nor even after it is told to the church, are we at liberty to repeat it to others... We ourselves are erring, and need Christ’s pity and forgiveness, and just as we wish Him to deal with us, He bids us deal with one another. *Desire of Ages* p. 441.

The existence of sin is unexplainable; therefore not a soul knows what God is until he sees himself in the light reflected from the cross of Calvary, and detests himself as a sinner in the

bitterness of his soul. When his soul cries out in great need for a sin-pardoning Saviour, then God is revealed as gracious, full of compassion and forgiveness and love, long-suffering and patience. Individually, as church members, we are, if faithful servants of Jesus Christ, laborers together with God. When one is bruised by the enemy and wounded and commits error, as faithful and true to the Master, as workers together with God, we must take up the missionary work next to us, we must work to heal, not to ruin and to destroy. *Testimonies to Ministers* pp. 264-5.

Extra material (see also paper “*Salvation as Healing*”)

“I am the Lord who heals you.” Exodus 15:26. What does this mean? Surely more than physical healing. In Jesus’ life, what did he spend most of his ministry doing? Not preaching. Not even teaching. Not even performing amazing signs like the feeding of the 5,000. But those truly meaningful miracles of healing.

That’s what Jesus in his active ministry here spent his time doing. What does that say to us? What did Jesus say he came for? To show us the Father. By performing so many miracles of healing, what does that say about our loving heavenly Father? That he wants to heal. He wants to cure us. He wants to restore us to perfect health.

What does salvation mean? To saved from something. Like people rescued from a sinking ship. But there’s more to God’s salvation than that. We have an old English word that is rather similar: salve. As Jesus in Revelation says we’re meant to put on eye salve. What for? To cure our spiritual blindness, to heal our eyes so that we may see. What is salvation? It’s healing.

Not just being counted legally right before God. Christ’s salvation is the healing process. What does it say in Luke 7:50? Your faith has *saved* you. Then what does it say in Luke 8:48? Your faith has *healed* you.

Interesting. It’s even more interesting when you discover that the actual words in the original are exactly the same—what Jesus told Mary was the same as what he said to the syrophoenician woman! The word translated *healed* in one case and *saved* in the other is identical! Salvation means healing. Not so much about wiping recorded sins off the slate so that you can start with a clean slate, but healing the disease—the disease of sin.

This is so important to realize. God is not checking off sins, forgiven or not. Like a loving doctor, he is trying to heal us from a deadly disease.

Over and over again Jesus re-emphasizes this point. How did Jesus announce his ministry? Luke 4:18 (a quote from Is. 61:1, 2—showing that the God of the OT is just as keen on healing): “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted.” God has always been like that. He has always been “the Lord who heals you.” He promises in Jer. 3:22 and Hosea 14:4: “I will heal their backslidings.” He says in Ps. 147:3 that “he heals the broken in heart. “ David cried out to God in Psalm 41:4: “Lord be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.” “For the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings”. Malachi 4:2. Note: “Every miracle (that Jesus performed) was of a character to lead the people to the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of nations”. *Desire of Ages* p. 366.

Take the advice of James 5:16 seriously: “pray for one another—that ye may be healed.” For this is the true meaning of salvation. We are to follow the Lord’s example in never hurting or spreading sin’s disease, but in loving and caring for each other. These are not pious words, they are the absolute truth. We too are to heal the brokenhearted and the backslidden, the blind in spirit and the lame on the Christian way. Remember the God we serve, the Lord that heals us. May there be true spiritual healing in the church, in our lives, and in our sin-sick hearts.

7. For the Love of God

Texts: Colossians 2:6; 1 John 4; 1 John 5; Romans 13:8-10.

Quotes

1. He who forgiveth, and is reconciled unto his enemy, shall receive his reward from God; for he loveth not the unjust doers. Koran.
2. Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else forgiving another. Jean Paul Richter
3. We are told that people stay in love because of chemistry, or because they remain intrigued with each other, because of many kindnesses, because of luck . . . But part of it has got to be forgiveness and gratefulness. Ellen Goodman

Introductory questions

“He first loved us.” What does that tell us about the nature and character of God? The lesson says that “We love God because of the Cross.” Is that the only reason? What does the Cross reveal about God. What has love got to do with forgiveness? What Bible examples can be given? How is divine love related to what we call love? How is love the fulfilling of the law?

Discussion ideas

“Love is all you need” goes the pop song. Is it true? How is love related to the whole subject of this quarter—“the forgiven.” One church member once said that it doesn’t matter whether God loves him or he loves God—he (the man) had done what was necessary to gain entrance into heaven and God would have to let him in. How do you react to such an argument based on contract and having a “title to heaven”?

When Jesus came, what were the unfallen worlds waiting for? (see EGW quote below). Satan stressed that forgiveness was impossible—referencing God’s law as the basis for his argument. But God poured out “a flood of healing grace” on the world—and God was made manifest in Christ. Those who fail to recognize the impact of such a gracious demonstration of God by dismissing this as “moral influence” miss the whole great controversy perspective that is based on the trust-healing nature of God himself.

The teacher’s lesson (p. 55) comments “Thank God for Jesus.” In this common phrase is expressed our great appreciation for what God has done. But this also raises a question—is not Jesus also God? It’s important to remember that it was not a question of Jesus being sent by God as simply a means to gain our salvation, but the demonstration of God by God himself.

The lesson (Thurs) mentions (p.86) that “keeping the law is a specific manifestation of love,” adding that we may forget this. Indeed legalism has been a persistent problem for Adventists. Legalism can be defined as relying on a legal relationship for salvation. How could the cross be similarly misunderstood and be used as a basis for legalism?

EGW comments

With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. And if God should do this, Satan was ready to carry out his plan for securing to himself the allegiance of heavenly beings. He had declared that the principles of God's government make forgiveness impossible. Had the world been destroyed, he would have claimed that his accusations were proved true. He was ready to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the worlds above. But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. Though corruption and defiance might be seen in every part of the alien province, a way for its recovery was provided. At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the Son of God came with the embassy of divine grace. Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race. Notwithstanding the perversity of men, the signals of mercy had been continually exhibited. And when the fullness of the time had come, the Deity was glorified by pouring upon the world a flood of healing grace that was never to be obstructed or withdrawn till the plan of salvation should be fulfilled. *Desire of Ages*, p.37.

O how many souls are starving for words of tenderness, for words of brotherly kindness, for words of hope, of faith, of forgiveness, of Christlike love, that will not quench the last spark of hope. *Review and Herald*, January 22, 1895.

The atonement of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom He otherwise hated; and it was not made to produce a love that was not in existence; but it was made as a manifestation of the love that was already in God's heart, an exponent of the divine favor in the sight of heavenly intelligences, in the sight of worlds unfallen, and in the sight of a fallen race. . . We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us, but that He so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us. *Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1893.

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. *Desire of Ages*, 22.

Extra material

A careless word may kindle strife;
A cruel word may wreck a life;
A bitter word may hate instil;
A brutal word may smite and kill;
A gracious word may smooth the way;
A joyous word may light the day;
A timely word may lessen stress;
A loving word may heal and bless. –Anonymous

8. Loyalties

Texts: Matthew 6:24; Exodus 20: 2, 3; Matthew 22:35-39.

Quotes

1. Total loyalty is possible only when fidelity is emptied of all concrete content, from which changes of mind might naturally arise. Hannah Arendt.
2. Histories are more full of examples of the fidelity of dogs than of friends. Alexander Pope.
3. Unless you can find some sort of loyalty, you cannot find unity and peace in your active living. Josiah Royce.
4. Loyalty means nothing unless it has at its heart the absolute principle of self-sacrifice. Woodrow Wilson.
5. Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul. Mark Twain

Introductory questions

Who is being loyal to who—God to us, or us to God? What has loyalty to do with our study topic of forgiveness? If we are to be loyal to God, what does he need to do to convince us? Can you demand loyalty? If so, what are the results? What of the “exclusive” nature of the first commandment? Why does God make such a demand of loyalty?

Discussion ideas

Jesus says, “He who is not with me is against me.” Matthew 12:30 NIV. He also says “whoever is not against us is for us.” Mark 9:39 NIV. So which is it? Inclusive or exclusive loyalty? That there is a division of loyalty is clear; however are those in the middle ground for or against?

When it comes to complete allegiance, Jesus’ answer to the lawyer who asked his legal question, “Which is the greatest commandment?” makes the answer clear. Not a swearing of undying loyalty, but the answer of a friend: Love the Lord. God is not asking for professions of commitment—like Peter who vainly announced he would follow Jesus whatever the consequences. What God seeks is the love and acceptance of his thinking friends who agree with him that his way is the only way that makes sense.

Loyalty can be at the expense of thought: “yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir.” Such a response is the unthinking obedience of a servant, who as Jesus comments in John 15:15 “does not know his master’s business.” But knowing and participating in God’s business—his way of running the universe—God’s friends do not have to profess loyalty but to demonstrate it by speaking and acting in accordance with truth and right.

Satan professed loyalty to God even while undermining God’s authority and government. His “god” was himself—the sin of pride and self-exaltation as is clear in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. So mere claims of loyalty are not enough. In Shakespeare’s words, “One may smile, and smile, and be a villain.” What God seeks is the commitment of those who love him for who he is—fully convinced that truth is truth and right is right.

EGW comments

Professing loyalty is not enough: Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that his agency was not discerned. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not fully in harmony with the government of God. While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government. Thus while working to excite opposition to the law of God and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven. While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 38.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and . . . thy neighbor as thyself.” What a change would be wrought in our world if men would keep the way of the Lord, giving supreme love and loyalty to God, and manifesting love and respect for their neighbors. Those who would do this would manifest the character of Christ, and would continually exercise justice and mercy toward their fellow-men. *Review and Herald*, October 1, 1895.

Extra material

When my son Paul was small, we had one of many conversations about God. I was trying to explain something about God to him (hard, isn't it?). Trying to give him the right picture of God, searching for the best words... Paul listened for a while as I struggled on. Then he turned to me as I mentioned God again and interrupted: “Yes Daddy, but which God?”

Which God? Strange question. After all God is God. There's only one, right?

But then I thought some more. Though there is only one true God, the way he's described means there are a million “kinds” of God.

I smiled at Paul and went back to the beginning. God. A short word. Meaning what? How do you define God? “The omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent deity...” and so on in the jargon beloved by philosophers? Maybe—for God is all of those things and more. But what you and I want to know--more than his all-powerful abilities, more than his perfect knowledge of all things, more than anything else—is “What kind of God is God?”

God has rarely had a good press. The hostile, the doubtful, the misguided—few have anything good to say about this divine person:

“We must be greater than God, for we have to undo his injustice.” Jules Renard.

“I've steered clear of God. He was an incredible sadist.” John Collier.

“God is but a word invented to explain the world.” Lamartine.

“I see little evidence in this world for the so-called goodness of God. On the contrary, it seems to me that, on the strength of His daily acts, He must be set down as a most stupid, cruel and villainous fellow.” H.L. Mencken.

Even those who do assent to God have character-assassinated him. Some descriptions of God given by those who profess to know him would make the most convinced believer into an atheist!

For the question is not so much “Do you believe in God?” but “What kind of God do you believe in?”

9. Reverence

Texts: Psalm 111:9; John 15:15; Revelation 14:7; Deut. 13:4; Eccl. 12:13.

Quotes

1. No soul is desolate as long as there is a human being for whom it can feel trust and reverence. What loneliness is more lonely than distrust? George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)
2. It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot, irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it. Jacob Bronowski
3. Reverence the highest, have patience with the lowest. Let this day's performance of the meanest duty be thy religion. Are the stars too distant, pick up the pebble that lies at thy feet, and from it learn the all. Margaret Fuller
4. Irreverence is the champion of liberty and its one sure defense. Mark Twain

Introductory questions

Is reverence important? On what is it based? What does reverence have to do with the lesson subject of forgiveness? When it comes to God, how can our view of reverence be both positive and negative? Does reverence mean we cannot ask any questions? How should we “fear” God?

Discussion ideas

Reverence—a considered and wholesome respect for God and his character—is surely important. However, reverence may be misused and utilized for other purposes. “Reverence my sanctuary” may even be used by some to suggest that conversation, even about spiritual things, is out of place in church. If God is seen as demanding reverence, what does that say about his nature and attitude towards us? Is it a requirement, or is it a natural consequence of our appreciation for who God is and how he acts?

Reverence in human terms can be seen as obeisance to a distant yet powerful being. Our understanding of God is continually under attack by the Devil, whose main argument in the great controversy is over the kind of person God truly is. So it should not be surprising that even the “command” to revere God can be misinterpreted as the demand of a tyrant. “Why have we had so hard a judgment on our Heavenly Father?... Satan has misrepresented our God in every possible way. He has cast his hellish shadow athwart our pathway, that we might not discern our God as a God of mercy, compassion, and truth... We...put our kind Heavenly Father in a false light.” Review and Herald, February 26, 1889.

Reverence is also linked to the idea of fearing God. However, as the lesson makes clear, this is not to be afraid of God. For “Perfect love drives out fear.” Why? “Because fear has to do with punishment.” 1 John 4:18 NIV. If we fear punishment we cannot love God—for you cannot love someone you fear. Remember it was fear that was the first recorded consequence of human sin—Adam and Eve hid from God because they were afraid of him.

For use to revere God does not mean that we lose our creativity, individuality, and uniqueness that God created. Rather it reveals the nature of our healing God. As the lesson states, “The revelation of God’s holiness never devastates. It brings healing.” (p. 102).

EGW comments

Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion. They can never, with their uncultivated ideas, appreciate a pure and holy heaven, and be prepared to join with the worshipers in the heavenly courts above, where all is purity and perfection, where every being has perfect reverence for God and His holiness. *Testimonies to the Church* Vol.5, p. 500.

Those who love and fear God with all their hearts are the only men that God can trust. *Pamphlet 149*, May, 1896.

Ministers of Christ, your experience must be of a higher type, or you can never be co-laborers with the Master. Learned or great men have not been chosen, but those who fear God and reverence spiritual and eternal things. Such will have the mind of Christ. His Spirit, shining through humanity, lights up the face, and finds expression in the tones of the voice. It is something that cannot be defined, and yet is plainly felt. *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1884.

Extra material

I grew up in a Christian home, for which I am profoundly grateful. Yet I must admit that I was often confused in my beliefs. In the Sunday sermons I heard, the religious books I read, the Christian ideas I received, there was little consistency. The “God-ideas” frequently did not seem to make sense.

And when I raised that objection, my confusion was increased by the response that “Religion doesn’t have to make sense.” Far from helping, that position made my situation much worse. For if my ideas about God didn’t have to make sense, then how could I ever know what was true and what was not?

When it came to science, I discovered that things are supposed to make sense! While there may be different interpretations of the evidence, the data, at least there is evidence on which to base your understanding. In the end I developed the rule: test every claim, examine the evidence, form your own conclusions. That, in truth, is the heart of the scientific method.

The same applies in the area faith. God Himself invites the same process. Come let us reason together, he says. He asks us to test Him, to try Him out. The Bible is a record of that process—it is the evidence on which we can decide for ourselves what is true and right. Otherwise God could have far more simply demanded belief and obedience based on His command, saying that His methods and teachings did not have to make sense.

I started over in my study of the Bible. With all due respect and reverence, I tested every claim, examined all the evidence, formed my own conclusions. And to my great delight, I came to know and trust the God who makes sense.

For that is the God worth knowing, worth admiring, worth all our reverence—because he encourages our questions and reasons together with us as we come to discover he is completely trustworthy.