

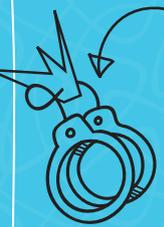
CHAMP THORNTON

DESIGNED & ILLUSTRATED
BY SCOT McDONALD



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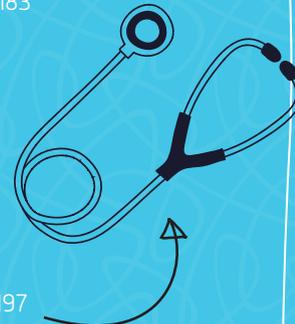
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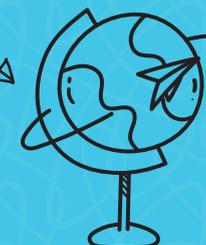
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How to Find Anything in This Book
Acknowledgments



WARNING: HIGH VOLTAGE!



We've all seen ragged bolts of electricity blaze out from storm clouds. In a flash, they zigzag across the sky and crash down with a bang! But what do you really know about lightning? Which of the following is not true?

- 1. Lightning is hotter than the surface of our sun.**
- 2. Lightning can strike the same place twice.**
- 3. Lightning can make glass.**

It may be shocking to hear, but they're all true.

(1) Lightning, at 53,540 degrees Fahrenheit, is five times hotter than the sun's surface (that's 153 times hotter than the oven temperature needed for baking cookies).

(2) Lightning has no problem striking the same place more than once. (On the evening of June 30, 2014, lightning struck the Sears Tower in Chicago ten times in a single storm!)

(3) If lightning strikes sand, the heat can transform the sand into a fulgarite, a sand-coated tube lined with glass. (And humans have learned to do the same thing. Four thousand years before Jesus, ancient people discovered that amazing things happen when you heat sand to crazy hot temperatures. The result: all different kinds of glass.)

So I hope the book you're holding becomes like lightning in your hands.

As a sequel to *The Radical Book for Kids*, I hope it strikes you in the same way as the first book. (Like the subtitle says: "More Truth, More Fun"!)

I also want to help change the way you see God's Word. Like super-hot lightning can turn sand into glass, I hope that God will transform what may seem like dusty statements in Scripture into crystal clear windows. And that what you'll see through those panes of glass will change your life.

When the fire falls—

*When the Lord helps you see what's truly there and
electrifyingly beautiful—*

*When words become windows—
You will be changed—radically!*



BUILDING A BIBLE TELESCOPE

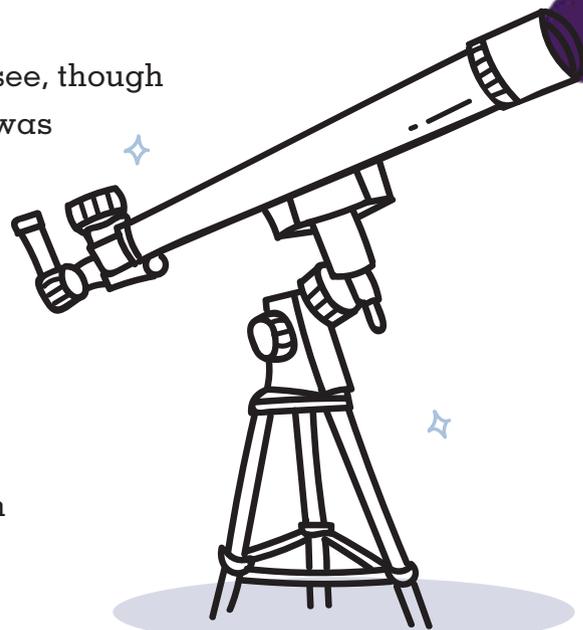
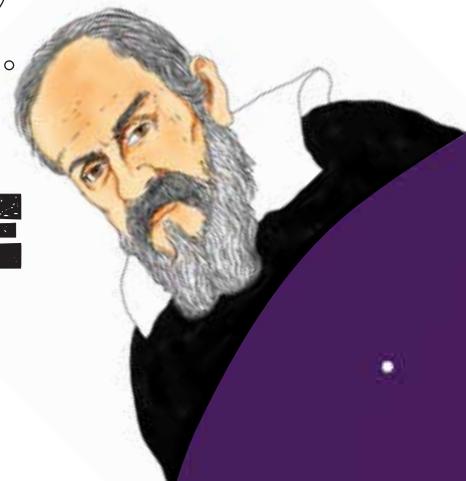
In the year 1610, stargazing scientist Galileo had a problem.

On the one hand, he had done something amazing. Using two glass lenses, he had constructed a telescope that enabled him to see craters on the surface of our moon and also four of the moons orbiting Jupiter. Yet, there was a big downside.

What Galileo could see, though magnified thirty times, was blurred and rimmed with a rainbow effect of colors. Today astronomers call this distortion a chromatic aberration.

Fast forward 150 years and enter the man

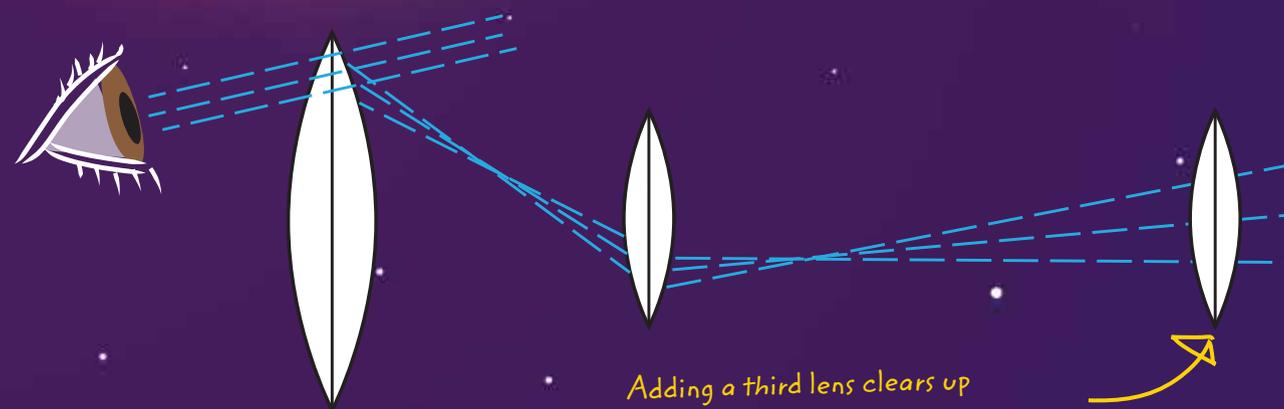
Huh?



chromatic aberration

who solved Galileo's problem: English optician, John Dolland. With his discovery, even distant images snapped into focus, and the color halo vanished. Dolland's solution? If you want to clearly see what's going on among the stars, add a third lens.

Want to see what's going on in the history written about in the Bible? Want the stories in Genesis or the Gospels to pop into focus? Then you also need three lenses. Three kinds of glass can help you understand the Bible: a window, a stained-glass window, and a mirror.



Adding a third lens clears up the chromatic aberration!

1 WINDOW

God made the stories in the Bible like a window. You look through a window to see what's going on outside—you see people, activities, stuff happening. In the same way, you can look through the Gospels to understand what really happened in the life of Jesus.

For example, in Mark 4:35–41, Jesus calms a storm that's about to sink his disciples' boat. When we look at what happened through the window of this story, we see Jesus's amazing power over the forces of nature.



2 STAINED GLASS

God made the stories in the Bible like stained glass. You don't look through a stained-glass window. You look at it—like you look at a painting. In a stained-glass window, each carefully crafted piece of glass is arranged to tell a story. For example, the author of each Gospel weaves together the true events of Jesus's life in a way that makes a point.

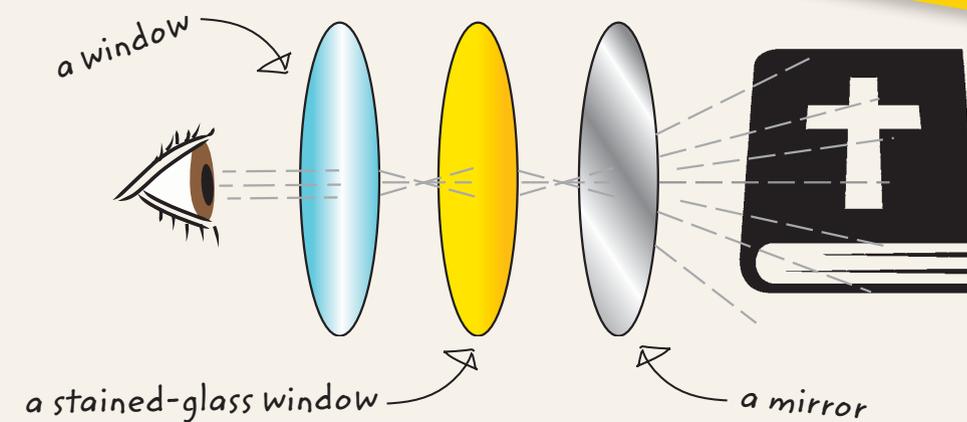
If you read the same story from Mark 4—about Jesus calming the storm—through the stained glass of Mark's storytelling, you can see more. Mark places four stories back-to-back that show Jesus helping people that no one else can help:

- Not one of the disciples could escape the storm (Mark 4:35–41)
- No one could restrain the demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1–20)
- No doctor could help the bleeding woman (Mark 5:25–34)
- No one could bring someone back from death (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43)

3 MIRROR

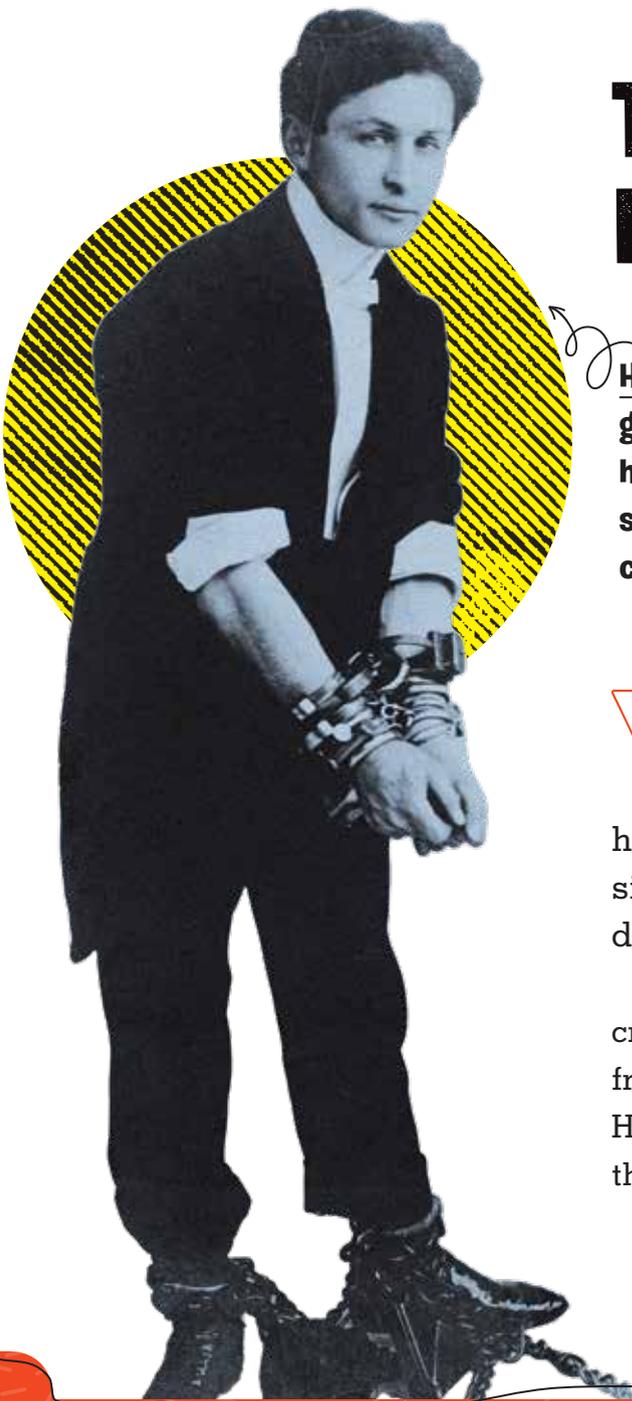
God also gave us Bible stories to be like mirrors, to help us see ourselves as we really are. For example, when we read the Gospels, we see ourselves in the stories—and it isn't always pretty. Like when Jesus quiets the storm in Mark 4:35–41, he also gets to the heart of the real problem with his disciples' fear.

So when we look at our own fearful hearts in the mirror of Scripture, we are able to reflect on Jesus's question: "Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40). We look at this story, and we see ourselves.



When all three lenses are in place, you'll see God's Word with clarity.





THE GREAT ESCAPE

Harry Houdini (1874-1926) may have been the greatest escape artist of all time. He could free himself from practically anything: handcuffs, chains, straightjackets, and even a locked and weighted crate dropped into a river.

You should definitely leave all escape artist tricks to the experts. They're specially trained to break free from high-risk entrapments. But there's not a single person who can escape the most dangerous trap that's ever existed: sin.

But God sent a Rescuer. By his death on the cross, Jesus Christ freed his people from sin—from failures, from guilt, and from punishment. He did this by allowing himself to be trapped in the place of sinners. And he did not escape.

This single sacrifice was all it took. By one

death on one day, Jesus completely freed all who call out to him for rescue from sin (Hebrews 7:27). But it will take you a lifetime to experience your freedom from all the traps of sin. This Great Escape unfolds in four stages.



1 ESCAPE FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN

This is the first stage of the Great Escape. Every person is a sinner. And because God is holy, he cannot just ignore sin. He cannot make an exception, letting off the hook sinners who try to be good. All sin must be punished. Not only that, but God also requires perfection from you. That means that even your best behavior will never be good enough for him (Isaiah 64:6).

So, you face a punishment you cannot avoid and need a perfection you cannot achieve. But when Jesus died, an incredible exchange happened.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21



BIBLE

BREAKOUTS

Did you know that God's Word describes many amazing escapes?

- *By drooling and acting like a crazy man, David barely escapes from being trapped in an enemy city (1 Samuel 21:10–22:1).*
- *After a secret attack, Ehud, a ruler in Israel, escapes from the enemy king's throne room (Judges 3:15–26).*
- *When a mob tries to throw him off a cliff, Jesus "walked right through the crowd and went on his way" (Luke 4:30 NIV).*
- *The apostle Paul escapes from Damascus by being lowered down the city wall in a basket (Acts 9:23–25).*
- *An angel helps the apostle Peter break out of prison in the middle of the night (Acts 12:6–11). (See Chapter 19 for more on this story.)*

This first stage of the Great Escape is known as “justification.” God treats you as if you had fully met all your obligations before him—not because of you and your good works, but because you are united to Jesus and his good works (Romans 3:22–26).



2 ESCAPE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Jesus’s rescue changes something inside you. This change is called “regeneration” or the “new birth” (John 3:3). The result of this new life is that Jesus has delivered you from sin’s dominion or power. This is the second part of the Great Escape.

Before you were a Christian, you were trapped by your love of sinning. We all loved sinning! Sadly, even as a Christian you still sin, but now you’re also starting to hate it. And you’re able to say No to sin. God has provided an escape.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13



3 ESCAPE FROM THE PRACTICE OF SIN

You will find the third stage of Christ’s rescue operation to be the most difficult. During your lifetime,

Christ will be working together with you to help you sin less and become more like Jesus in your thoughts, words, and actions (Philippians 2:13). This process of becoming like Jesus is called “sanctification.”

But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

1 PETER 1:15



4 ESCAPE FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN

One day you will finish your life and go to be with Jesus. At that time, you will be completely rescued from every last trap of sin. This is the final stage of the Great Escape. Because it occurs when you see God in all his glory and are made like him, it is called “glorification” (Romans 8:30). In the Lord’s presence, you’ll never sin again. You will be free from the presence and even the possibility of sinning.

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 JOHN 3:2

We have a great escape—from the penalty, power, practice, and presence of sin—because we have a great Rescuer—Jesus Christ, Son of God.

EXPLORING PROVERBS

When my oldest son was six years old, we bought a video gaming system for our family to play. We also bought a few simple games. Nothing too hard, some Lego games, but I soon discovered a problem.

For the first few months, my son needed help playing the games. And I quickly figured out that I did too. *How do I jump from rock to rock without falling in the lava?!* I tried and tried to beat this level. It was really hard.

And then I learned about walk-throughs, secrets, and cheats. (The Internet is a beautiful thing!) On these web pages, gamers with way too much time on their hands, explain how to defeat each level on every game ever created! Brilliant! (These days, of course, my son can beat me on every game we own.)

But can you imagine how amazing it would be if the game designer had built a site to help you? Who else would be better able to explain each level, warn of any danger, and give tips for total domination!

Now if you think some video games are hard, let me tell you: real life is much harder. It's more complex (because it involves real people). And it's more difficult (because it involves real pain). And then there are times when real people are a real pain.



Wisdom is the knowledge and skill to rightly relate to God, the world he has made, the people in the world, and yourself.



READ PROVERBS



LIKE A PRO

Wisdom is living in harmony with what is real—rightly relating to God, his world, people, and yourself. Proverbs is a starter kit for how to begin doing this.

Proverbs doesn't cover everything you'll face in life, but it gets you started. And it gives you what you need to make good decisions about other areas. If Proverbs is like a map—helping you navigate life as mapped out in its 915 verses—then the more you study the map, the more it actually becomes a compass. Proverbs helps you navigate life off the map.

So while you learn Proverbs, learn life too. Take time to observe life around you. Read your environment. Listen carefully to people. Observe and note. And before long you'll be learning to rightly relate to life—in harmony with God's Word—and that's living in wisdom.

But thankfully in the real world, the real Designer has given us a behind-the-scenes look at how the world really works. In the Bible, the book of Proverbs contains 31 chapters (that's 915 verses!). And each verse gives insight about how best to live in the world God created. The Bible calls this skillful living *wisdom*.

Here's how the book of Proverbs works. The first 9 chapters keep telling you how important it is to be wise. By the time you finish these chapters, you should be thinking, *I really need wisdom!* And this is good, because chapters 10 through 31 tell you what wisdom looks like.

But you don't get wise by simply reading Proverbs. You can have all 31 chapters memorized but still not be a wise person. How? Because rightly relating to life begins by relating to God. In other words, if you don't live in light of the Designer of life, you won't be able to wisely play the "game" of life. Proverbs says it this way:

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. PROVERBS 1:7 NLT

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE CALLS PEOPLE WHO TRY TO LIVE WITHOUT GOD?

Who don't have the Lord as the foundation of all they know about life?

Fools. And Proverbs explains that there are three kinds of fools—three levels, and each one gets worse and worse.

WANT TO AVOID BEING ANY KIND OF FOOL—BEGINNING, COMMON, OR HARDENED?

Spend time drinking in the wisdom of Proverbs. One easy way is to read one chapter each day of the month (on day 1, read Proverbs 1; on day 2, Proverbs 2; etc.).



LEVEL 1 BEGINNING FOOL

(aka the "simple" person)

This person hasn't decided if they are going to follow God and live life according to his wisdom. They are open to lots of options—God's wisdom, their own wisdom, the wisdom of all sorts of people (Proverbs 19:25; 22:3; 27:12). If this person doesn't start living in the "fear of the Lord," and choosing God's wisdom, then they'll slide down to the next level.



LEVEL 2 COMMON FOOL

(also known as just the "fool")

This person knows what God's wisdom says to do, and then does the opposite. They don't obey the Lord and don't care. They live according to their own rules and plans, not God's (Proverbs 1:22; 8:5; 12:15). But if they keep being a common fool, they'll sink to the next level.



LEVEL 3 HARDENED FOOL

(aka the "scoffer")

This person doesn't just ignore God's wisdom, they hate it. They don't just disobey the Lord's rules, they love to disobey. And they refuse to turn back to the Lord. This fool's path doesn't end well. There will be consequences (Proverbs 1:22; 9:7-8; 15:12).

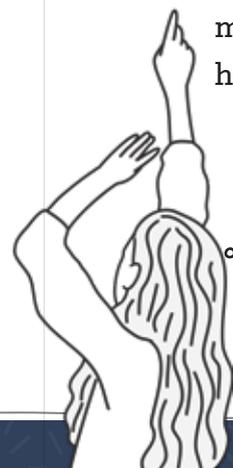
MAKING HARD DECISIONS

Years ago, whenever our family watched a movie, one or more of the kids would ask question after question: “Who is that?” “What are they doing?” “Are they the good guys?” “Is that the bad guy?”

But as the kids grew up, the questions went away. Why? Because in a lot of movies it’s not too hard to see who’s good and who’s bad. Just watch what the character does. Or listen to how they talk. Even the sound track often tells you something about the character. Especially watch how the movie ends. Most of the time (unless you’re watching *The Empire Strikes Back*) the good guys win and the bad guys lose. Simple, right?



Hey, Roscoe, is this slab-o-marble white with black streaks or black with white streaks?



...and how is it standing up like that?

But life’s not that way, is it? It’s often not so easy to see which option is right and which is wrong. Should I buy these shoes? Tell this joke? Pick this option?

Making decisions would be simple if some video games, music, movies, shows, clothes, activities, and friends were totally good and others were totally bad.

Yet God knows that we live in a world that is both “good” because God made it (Genesis 1:31) and also “bad” because of Adam and Eve’s sin (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:22).

In many, many decisions, the good and the bad are together, side by side. Like dark and light streaks running through the same block of marble. And that complicates decision-making.

So how do you decide on the right thing to do? Start with the Bible. You may not be able to find a Bible verse about the movie that comes out this weekend, but God’s Word will help you see the world in a new way.

The Bible gives you four lenses that you can use to make decisions. They won’t decide for you, but they’ll help you see things more clearly.

See what the four decision-making lenses are on the next page.



LENS 1

GOOD



ASK:

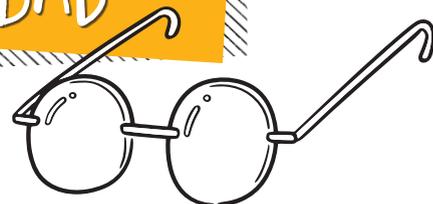
**WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT THIS?
HOW DOES IT DISPLAY GOD'S
GOODNESS BECAUSE HE
CREATED IT?**

Everything in this world has some element of good in it. That's because in the beginning God made everything, and he made it all "very good" (Genesis 1:31). For example, you may hate brussels sprouts, but God made them full of vitamins that are good for you.



LENS 2

BAD



ASK:

**WHERE IS THIS BROKEN?
OR WHAT IS BAD ABOUT THIS?**

Always look at your choices through the lens that shows what's broken or bad about what you're thinking about doing. For example, God never intended people to work seven days a week. So, if your life is already super busy, then participating in a new sport—especially one where you have to travel each weekend—may bring too much *brokenness* into your life. It may

be good, because you get to exercise your body and be with friends, but it may be bad because you're not getting the rest you need. Plus it's keeping you from gathering with God's people on Sunday.

LENS 3

NEW



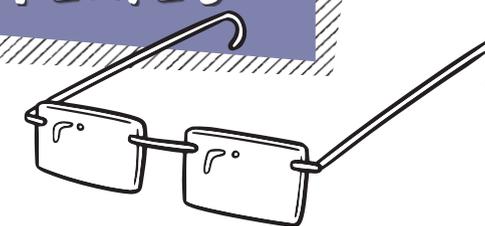
ASK:

**HOW CAN I DO THIS IN A WAY
THAT IS LOVING OR HELPFUL OR
TRUTHFUL OR PURE OR HONEST?**

Look at everything through the lens of redemption. Let me explain: Jesus came to make "all things new" (Revelation 21:5). His life, death, and resurrection restore everything that sin ruined. That means that Christians don't run away from life and hide from the world, just doing church things. Instead, think about how to relate to friends, technology, entertainment, and sports in ways that look like Jesus.

LENS 4

PERFECT



ASK:

**AM I VIEWING THIS CHOICE
IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY?**

Don't forget to look at every choice through this lens: one day God, and no one else, is going to make everything new, everything perfect. All wrongs will be corrected, all that is broken will be fully restored—and even improved! That means that life on this earth isn't all there is. So if your life is full of success, don't let it go to your head. You're not the redeemer. And if you feel like you're failing again and again, remember that God is using your life and will bring it to a successful conclusion! You should be full of hope for tomorrow!

MORE TO EXPLORE



Want to learn more about "good/bad/new/perfect"? Check out my middle-school Bible study about relationships called *Radically Different: A Student's Guide to Community*.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Do you ask lots of questions?

Why?

What do you ask about?

How do people like your questions?

Are you ready for me to stop asking questions?

Getting hit with a ton of questions can be annoying. But good questions can be amazing! If you think about all the kinds of things you could say—making comments, joking, and shouting in excitement—questions do the most incredible amount of work.

They're like explorers and detectives; they discover new places and seek out truth.

And of course, some questions can also be funny. Other kinds of questions will help you grow up.

Sometimes you find yourself in a *confusing* situation and don't know what to do. When this happens, here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- **Where is God in all this? What is he doing?**
- **What should I pray for?**
- **Who can I ask for advice or help?**

QUESTIONING JESUS

Did you know the first thing Jesus says in the Bible is a question? (Actually, the first two things he says are questions.)

When he is twelve years old, Jesus asks his parents: "But why did you need to search? . . . Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49 NLT).

HOW MANY QUESTIONS DOES JESUS ASK IN THE GOSPELS?

Jesus asks more than 300 questions! (Matthew has 90, Mark 67, Luke 96, and John 51.)

WHO DOES JESUS ASK HIS QUESTIONS TO?

He questions his disciples using 64 different questions. He questions his enemies 50 times, and the crowds 49 times. And he directs 62 questions to various individuals or small groups.

WHAT KINDS OF QUESTIONS DOES JESUS ASK?

Jesus asks questions . . .

- * **To stir the conscience.** For example, Jesus asks some religious leaders, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God?" (Matthew 15:3 NLT).
- * **To search motives.** For example, when the disciples are afraid to ask Jesus to explain something he said, Jesus asks, "What were you discussing out on the road?" (Mark 9:32–33 NLT).
- * **To encourage discussion.** For example, after his resurrection Jesus asks two of his followers, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" (Luke 24:17 NLT).
- * **To make someone think.** For example, Jesus asks the disciples, "And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?" (Matthew 16:26 NLT).
- * **To focus on a topic.** For example, Jesus asks the people, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it?" (Mark 4:30 NLT).
- * **To test belief.** For example, when a crowd comes looking for Jesus, he turns to his disciple Philip and asks, "Where can we buy bread to feed all these people?" (John 6:5 NLT).

FUNNY QUESTIONS

If a cow laughs real hard, does milk come out of its nose?

Why is "abbreviated" such a long word?

Why do people drive on a parkway and park in a driveway?



When people send packages in a car, why is it called a shipment? And when they're sent on a ship, they call it cargo?

Why does your nose run and your feet smell?

There are two sayings:

(1) A cat always lands on its feet. (2) A slice of buttered toast always lands on its buttered side. Now here's the question: What would happen if a slice of buttered toast were tied to the back of a cat jumping off a table?



Other times, you find yourself in a *hard* situation and don't like what's going on. When this happens, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Who or what am I trusting? Am I trusting the Lord or myself?
- How can I show love to the people around me?
- Is there anything I should do differently?

You can also learn to ask questions to *other* people. You'll discover lots you never knew. You could ask:

- How are you doing?
- What did you like about that?
- What's the best thing that happened to you this week?
- What did you like about that?
- What's the worst thing that happened to you this week?
- How did that make you feel?

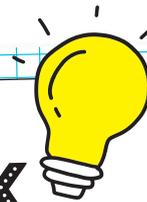
And you can even ask questions of *the Bible*. When you open God's Word, here are a few questions that will help you as you read:

- What does this say about God? What is he like? What is he doing?
- What promises has God given in his Word for me to trust?
- What commands has God given in his Word for me to obey?

But some of the most amazing questions are ones that God's Word asks you!

- "So who will you compare me with? Who is equal to me?" says the Holy One. (Isaiah 40:25 NIRV)
- What good is it if someone gains the whole world but loses their soul? (Mark 8:36 NIRV)
- What should we say then? Since God is on our side, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31 NIRV)
- Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? (2 Peter 3:11 NIRV)

THINK ABOUT IT



He who asks a question remains a fool for five minutes. He who does not ask, remains a fool forever.

—Chinese proverb

You never get the right answer by asking the wrong question.

—Michael P. V. Barrett

A statement hardens the heart, but a question stirs the conscience.

—Unknown