

*“Here I Stand”
Lutherans Finding
Their Voice in
Christian Apologetics*

*18th Annual Men’s Retreat
September, 2026*





Opening Remarks

A story



Lutherans Finding Their Voice

“The weakness and foolishness of God...”

Session 1 On Christian Apologetics

Session 2 Talking to People

Session 3 Positive Apologetics

Session 4 Handling Objections

Session 5 Witnessing in Story / Q&A / Cushion Time

“From the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks...”

Session One

The Big Picture



Some Lutheran Distinctives

The nature of unbelief

The causes of faith

The role of reason

The 3rd Article



Christian Apologetics:

Defending Christian truth at
“sites of struggle”

This can mean...

Christian Apologetics:

1) The Academic Discipline

How the Christian worldview functions among others in the scholarly arena. What can a Christian thinker who is a historian contribute, or a philosopher, or a psychologist, or a scientists...?

There is in this realm a powerful Lutheran distinctive.

“Flee the hidden God and
run to Christ.”

“Flee the hidden God and
run to Christ.”

“Flee the hidden God and
run to Christ.”

“Flee the hidden God and
run to Christ.”

Christian Apologetics:

2)

tics

Evil and suffering
prove that God does
not exist.

our

man

ages to

ms.

“How much sense can they make to say...”

Christian Apologetics:

3) New Testament *apologia*

The apostle Paul “reasoned from Scripture” in the Jewish synagogue. The apostle Peter was “prepared to answer” in the face of hostile question; his answer was a testimony to his hope in Christ on the basis of what he had personally witnessed.

One Approach

It is not that the atheist or secular materialist has pure reason while believers have faith. Atheism is another set of beliefs, for examples, about matter. Nor is it the case that only believers have emotional reasons for wanting their beliefs to be true.

One Approach

In addition to some incredibly robust arguments we can make for Christian truth, we can compare these sets of beliefs:

Which is consistent with the things we experience, which are consistent within itself, which can be lived?

One Approach

We can demonstrate quite convincingly that universal experiences such as moral feelings and obligations or the human search for meaning make perfect sense within the Christian set of beliefs – they are just what you would expect – but sit uncomfortably in secular materialism.

One Approach

You can only
need to
worldview
identity
on.

On Example

Social justice is a
product of evolution or
a societal consensus.

people
Christian
gation,
and so

These are the **problems** that
come with
profound
Christian

The longer and more
deeply you think through
and think about the
implications of your
worldview...

Things that don't interest us

Raising up “Apologetic Geniuses”

The “second Judas’ kiss”

Theodicy & Fideism

Supplanting the Word of God

Reading God's Hidden Mind

Avoiding being fools in this world

Softening the scandal of the cross

Where our interest lies

Apologetics as
“Another Form of Bringing Good News”

Speaking like the apostles

An “Apologetic of the Word”

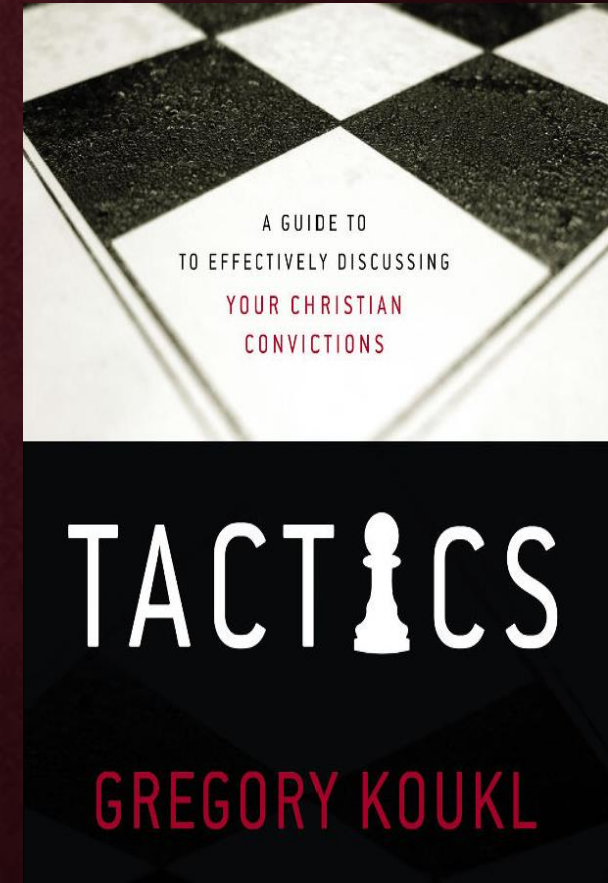
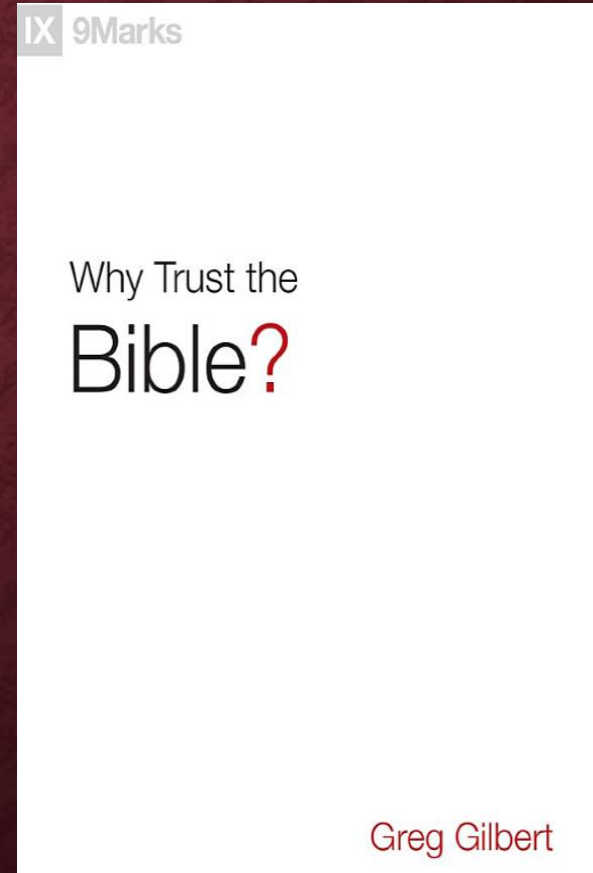
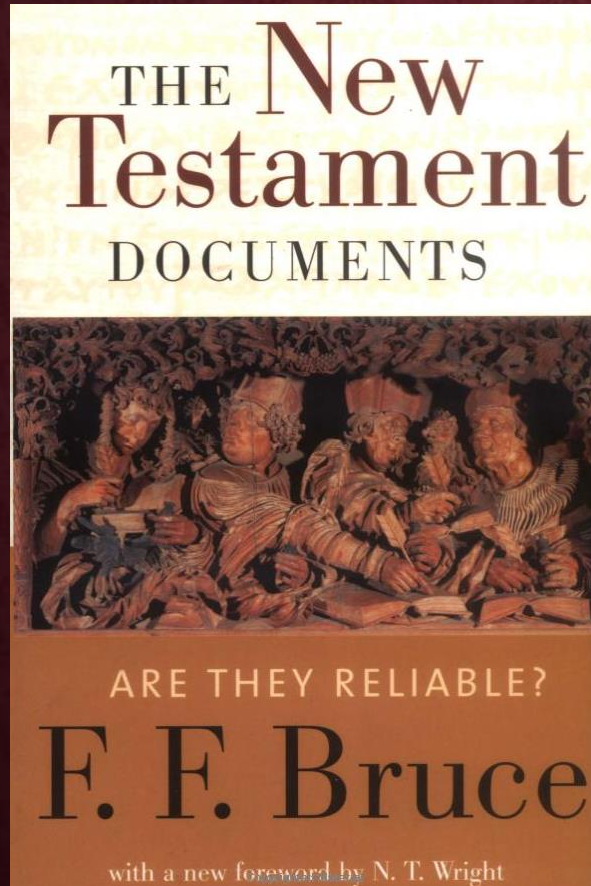
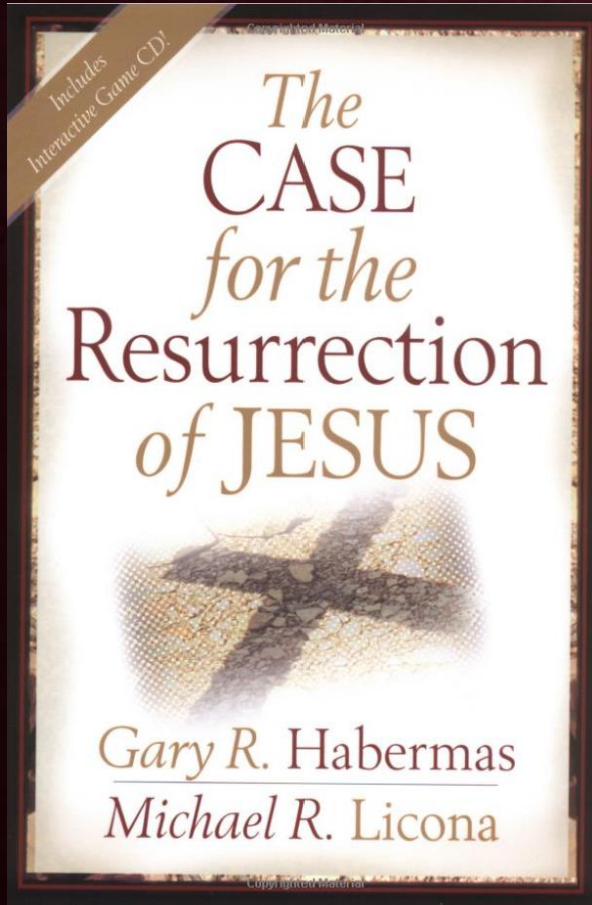
“Faith seeking understanding”

Loving God with all our Minds

How the vulnerable among us survive

Falling back into “the thing itself”

With any random extra minutes near the end of any session, I'll just recommend books...



GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND

Thinking as a Christian in
the Postmodern World

TIMOTHY KELLER

The REASON *for* GOD

Conversations on Faith and Life

LOVE THY BODY



Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality

NANCY R. PEARCEY

Bestselling Author of *Total Truth*

JOHN C. LENNOX

NEW
UPDATED
EDITION

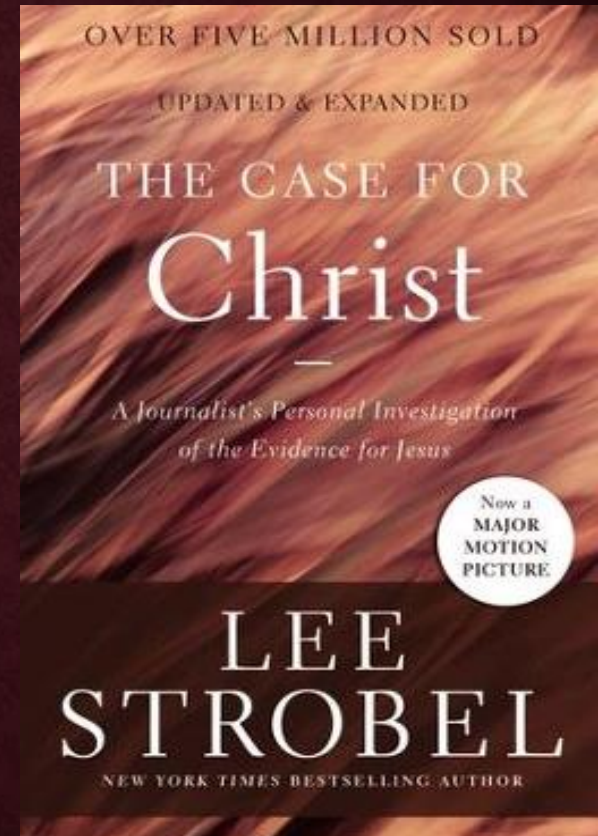
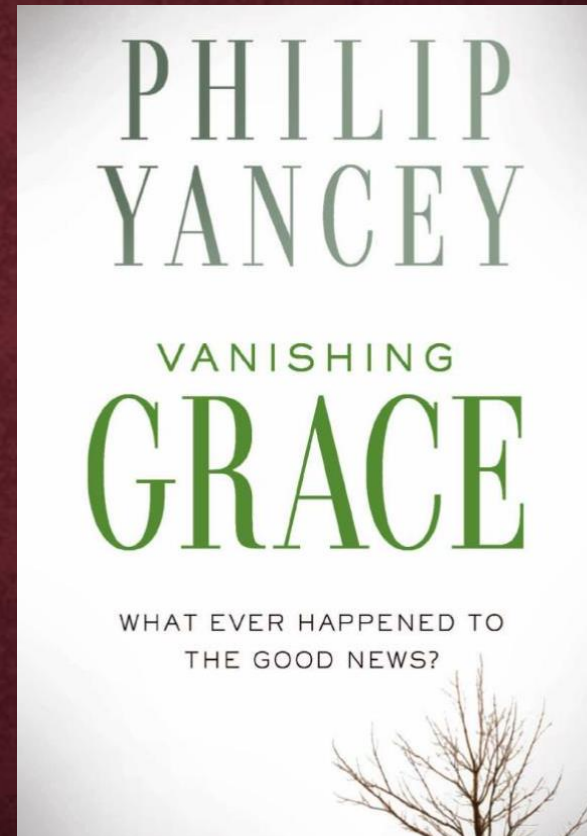
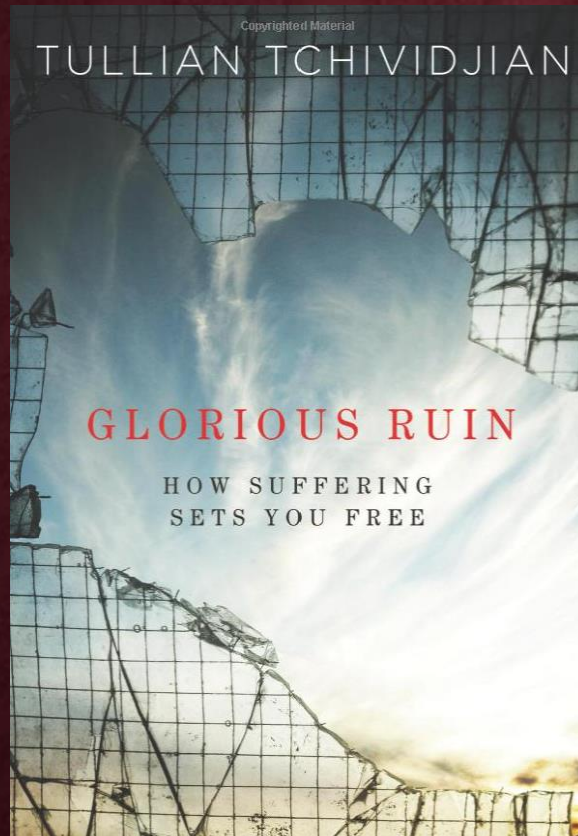
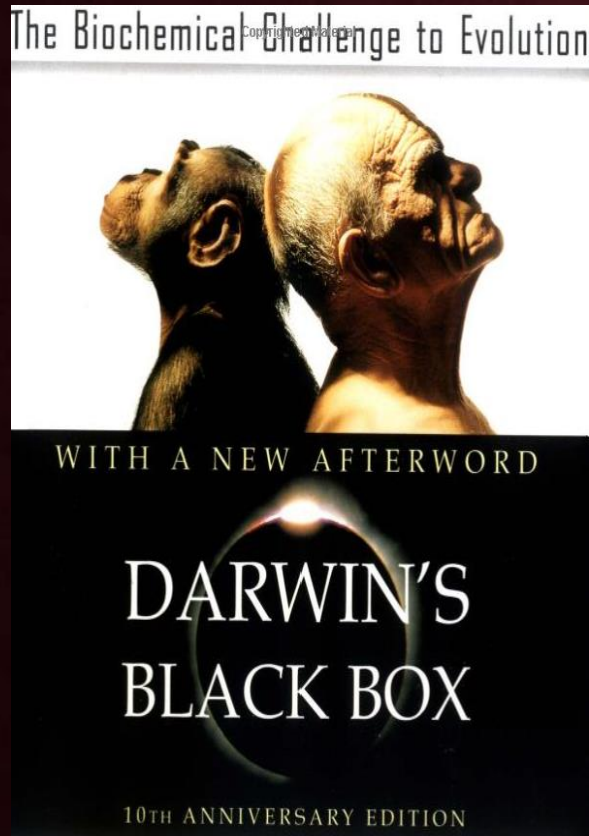
GOD'S UNDERTAKER HAS SCIENCE BURIED GOD?

There is no more important debate than this – science versus religion. But it needs to begin again, with clear understanding of what science and religion actually are. Lennox has done this wonderfully.

Colin Tudge, The Guardian

An exciting demolition of Dawkins' overreach from biology into religion.

Melanie Phillips, The Spectator



Session Two

Talking to People



How to talk to people about Jesus

Openin

Ask

The

Previe

The soft apology

**In this
session**

The underlying goal:

**To be the kindest person
in the room (Romans 12)**

How to talk to people...

Curiosity – “Let each one not look to her own interests...”

High Regard – “Consider others better than yourselves...”

Sharing – “We were pleased to share our very lives...”

Investing – “Carry each other’s burdens..”

...about Jesus

Be transparently
Christian

Ask good questions

Really see and really
hear them

Bring Christ in



Where to start? How to find
ourselves?

All these are real.

“Do you mind if I ask you
something? Do you believe
in God?”

Because we prepare
these in advance of any conversation.

...about Jesus

Be transparently
Christian

Ask good questions

Really see and really
hear them

Bring Christ in



IVA

Identify

What feelings are present?

Validate

It's only human to feel these things

Align

Now, What's True?

...about Jesus

Be transparently
Christian

Ask good questions

Really see and really
hear them

Bring Christ in



“Professor Paustian I remember one
thing from
comm

Consider the huge degree to
which *the pressure is off!*

und

“Religion is a crutch for the weak”

Active listening

Brief context

Reflection

Open question

“The church is full of
hypocrites.”

And you say?

What do you think?

How have you experienced this to be true?

Have you considered...

...about Jesus

Be transparently
Christian

Ask good questions

Really see and really
hear them

Bring Christ in



The beauty
and reality
of Christ
transparently
communicated

You speak in such a way that although the skeptic may not believe a word of it, they will understand why a person could at least begin to want it to be true.

Expose and
gently
deconstruct
their particular
Defeater

The point is not to win arguments
or prove Christian truth, only to
once shake their confidence in
their patterns of resistance...

Open the
Word of
God
to articulate
Christian truth.

...that the Word of God and the story of Christ should gain entrance in a person's mind so that the Spirit might do what only he can.

The beauty
and reality
of Christ
transparently
communicated



Expose and
gently
deconstruct
their particular
Defeater



Open the
Word of
God
to articulate
Christian truth.

Let's unpack that middle piece
some more.

What is a “Defeat”?

A defeat is a belief that, if true, often has a taken for granted truth. And it is often true.

If it were not for the fact that, if true, often has a taken for granted truth. And it is often true.

Note how these v

If Belief A is true, then Belief B does not need to be considered.

If a loving God could never allow evil and suffering, then one need not give Jesus another thought.

and times.

2 Corinthians 10

¹By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you....

³ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Greg Koukl's, *Tactics*

How the ambassador for Christ can remain non-adversarial

How any Christian can begin to do apologetics today

How to drain most of the anxiety out of the situation

Greg Koukl's, "Columbo" Approach

You might remember the rumpled detective from the old television show. He asks questions, typically, "There's something I still don't understand. Help me?"

Here's the big question: Can we live in a pluralistic society as long as we like, regardless of the consequences? Or do we have to buy time by buying time?

If the skeptic
knows more than
we do?

(There are millions of
"shallow post-moderns"
out there.)

1) *"What do you need to understand this?"*

2) *"How have you come to this conclusion? Why do you think that's true?"*

When we're ready we can ask a third kind of question that draws on our growing body of knowledge and the experiences we're gaining.

Christian: "Well, may I ask if you've thought about _____?
Were you aware that _____?"

Role Play

Person A: “The church is full of hypocrites.”

Person B: “What do you mean by that?”

Person A: make something up

Person B: “What makes you think that’s true?”

Person A: make something up

Person B: “Well, have you thought about...?”

Or

“I can tell you’ve thought about this more than I have.

Let’s talk about this again soon.”

Evaluate Greg Koukl's, *Tactics*

It may not be as easy as he makes it sound?

Or it may be that we are just “trying on a suit coat three sizes too big.”

Would this make a difference among us if we gave ourselves every chance to grow into these methods?

The beauty
and reality
of Christ
transparently
communicated



Expose and
gently
deconstruct
their particular
Defeater



Open the
Word of
God
to articulate
Christian truth.

An Apologetic of the Word

The beauty
and reality
of Christ
transparently
communicated



Expose and
gently
deconstruct
their particular
Defeater



Open the
Word of
God
to articulate
Christian truth.

There's also a "Soft Apologetic"

And art, invitation, hospitality, and caring
about what happens to people in this world
– "as unanswerable as a sunrise."

The beauty
and reality
of Christ
transparently
communicated



Expose and
gently
deconstruct
their particular
Defeater



Open the
Word of
God
to articulate
Christian truth.

There's also a "Soft Apologetic"

"I know that God exists because JS Bach's
"St. Matthew Passion" exists.

The beauty
and reality
of Christ
transparently
communicated



Expose and
gently
deconstruct
their particular
Defeater



Open the
Word of
God
to articulate
Christian truth.

There's also a "Soft Apologetic"

The apologetic of community, beauty,
mystery...

How to talk to people...*about Jesus*

Opening up spiritual conversations

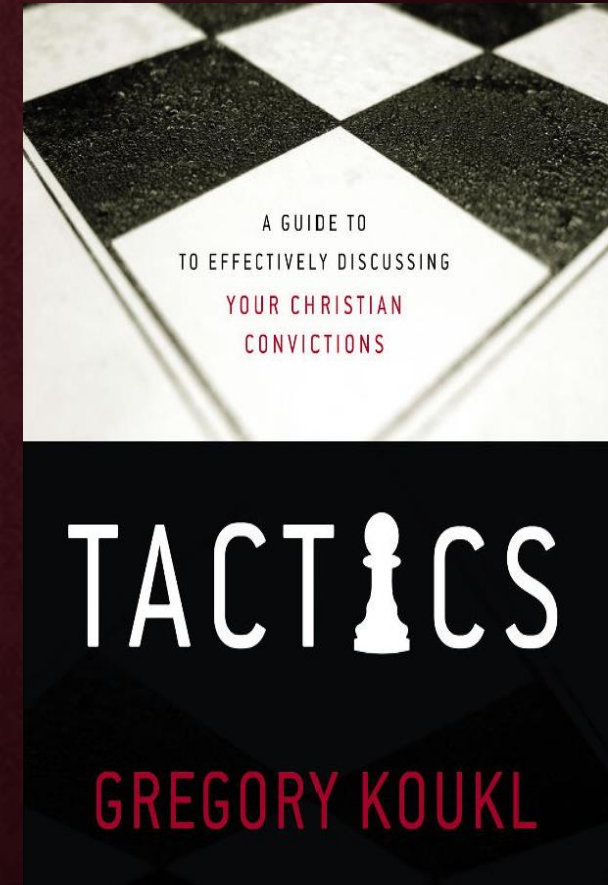
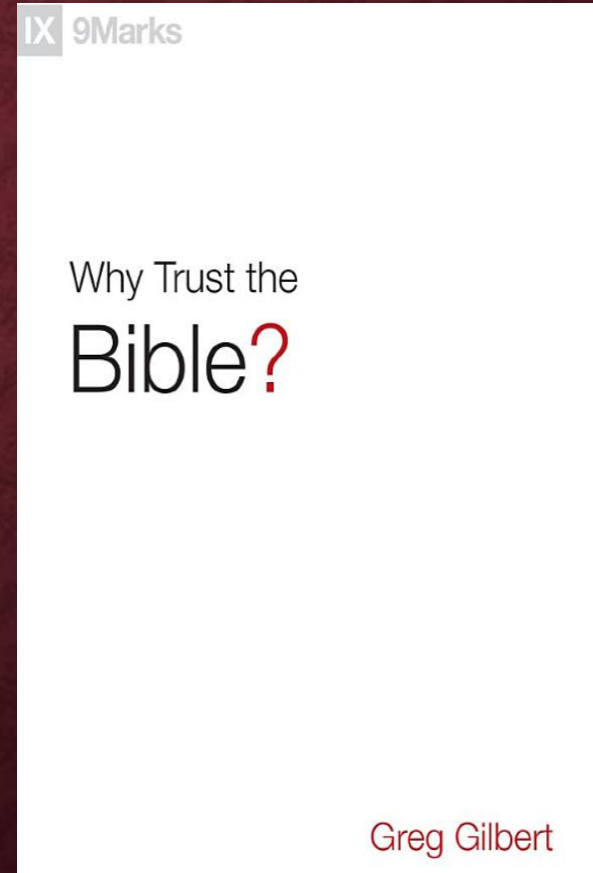
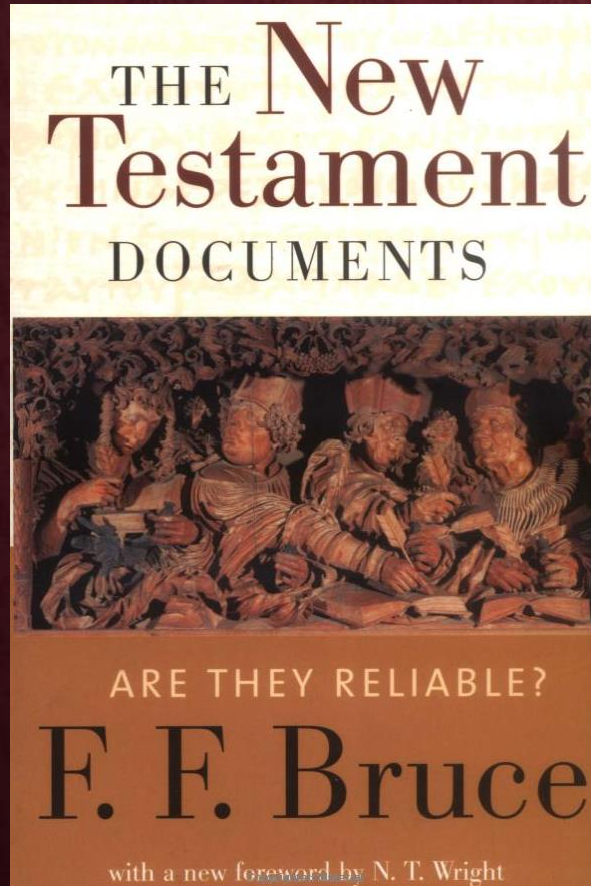
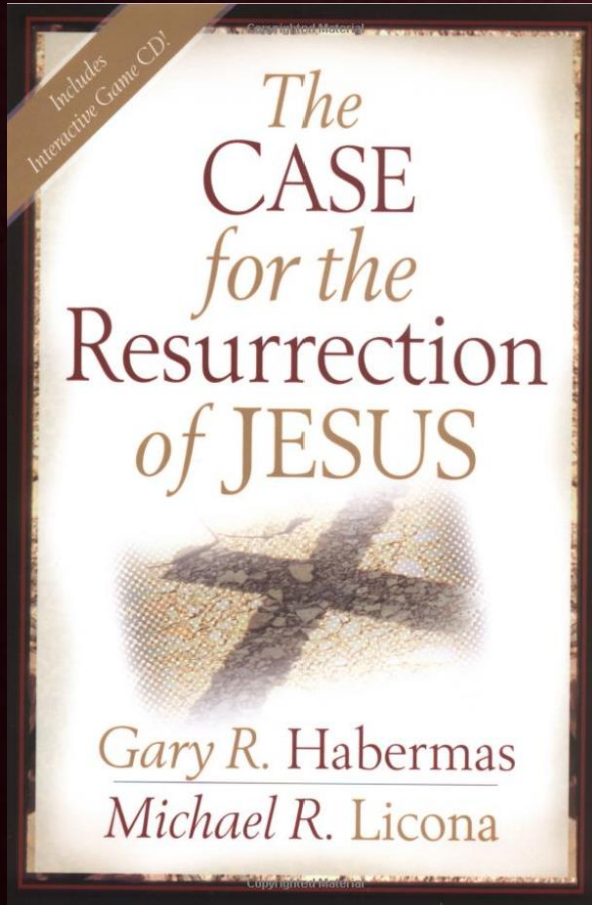
Asking good questions

The flow of the apologetic conversation

On “defeaters” and what they mean

An apologetic of The Word & the Soft Apologetic

With any random extra minutes near the end of any session, I'll just recommend books...



GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND

Thinking as a Christian in
the Postmodern World

TIMOTHY KELLER

The REASON *for* GOD

Conversations on Faith and Life

LOVE THY BODY



Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality

NANCY R. PEARCEY

Bestselling Author of *Total Truth*

JOHN C. LENNOX

NEW
UPDATED
EDITION

GOD'S UNDERTAKER HAS SCIENCE BURIED GOD?

There is no more important debate than this – science versus religion. But it needs to begin again, with clear understanding of what science and religion actually are. Lennox has done this wonderfully.

Colin Tudge, The Guardian

An exciting demolition of Dawkins' overreach from biology into religion.

Melanie Phillips, The Spectator

The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution

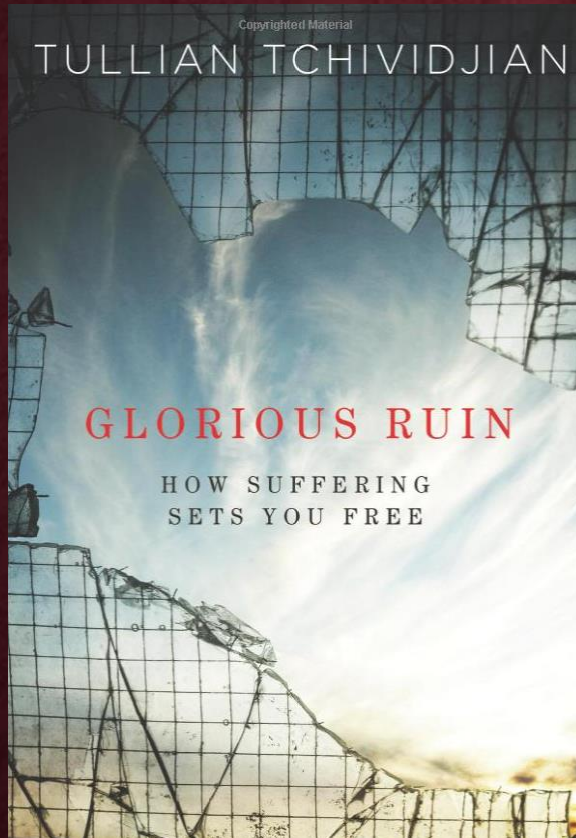


WITH A NEW AFTERWORD

DARWIN'S BLACK BOX

10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN



GLORIOUS RUIN

HOW SUFFERING
SETS YOU FREE

PHILIP
YANCEY

VANISHING GRACE

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO
THE GOOD NEWS?



OVER FIVE MILLION SOLD

UPDATED & EXPANDED

THE CASE FOR Christ

*A Journalist's Personal Investigation
of the Evidence for Jesus*

Now a
MAJOR
MOTION
PICTURE

LEE
STROBEL

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Session Three

Positive Apologetic Arguments



Three CORE Issues

The Phenomenal Reliability of the New Testament

The Historical Fact of Christ's Resurrection

The Necessity of God

These are not ultimately meaningful unless...

Three CORE Issues

The Phenomenal Reliability of the New Testament

We are living devotionally and growing in our sacred texts

The Historical Fact of Christ's Resurrection

We are vitally connect to Jesus by the Means of Grace

The Necessity of God

In the life that revolves around Christian worship.

These are not ultimately meaningful unless...

3 In the fifth year of the reign of
Tiberius, about the year 14
Pilate, Pontius, was
Herod, Antipas, the
Philip, tetrarch of
and Lycaonia,
2 during the
and Caiaphas, high priest,
God came...

Luke is a world-class
historian charged with
“habitual accuracy” and is
credited with the profound
falsifiability he brings to
the question of New
Testament reliability.

Acts 26

25 “I am not in
“What I am
familiar with
convinced
was not do
prophets? I

“Blessed are those who
have not seen, but yet
have believed.”

This is NOT belief without
evidence.

I replied.
king is
to him. I am
, because it
believe the



~ CHARLES COLSON



“I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren’t true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn’t keep a lie for three weeks. You’re telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.”

~ CHARLES COLSON



“I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends, and myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know none of them are like this. Of this text, there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage...or else, some unknown writer...without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern novelistic, realistic narrative.... The reader who doesn't see this has simply not learned how to read,”

– C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*

Let's take a
document
Reliability

Jump in any time.

Or we can pause
at the end.

bulleted
nt (p. 18)

“The Minimal Facts” Approach

For the sake of argument, we can limit ourselves to conclusions that have almost total consensus among historians regardless of their presuppositions.

3400 scholarly publications were analyzed and over 500 prominent historians (of all points of view) were examined or interrogated to reveal the historical issues that are conceded by nearly all of them.

“The Minimal Facts” Approach

We can limit ourselves for the time being to New Testament texts whose veracity is not in doubt (e.g., about half of the epistles of Paul).
This is only for the time being.

“Doggone it! It seems like he did it.”

“The Minimal Facts” Approach

A man known as Jesus Christ was executed by the Romans through crucifixion

Later, the disciples believed he appeared to them physically

The Conversion of the Persecutor Saul

The Conversion of the Skeptic James

The Empty Tomb

The authenticity of 1 Corinthians and Galatians is unquestioned.

If a foot represents a year...

The earliest evidence for the existence of Alexander the Great is a football field removed from his life.

We have the unimpeached testimony of Paul, a man known to history, from five or six feet (years) from Ground Zero. This is when he “historied” with Peter in Jerusalem (Galatians 1).

If a foot represents a year...

Skeptical New Testament scholars, including none other than Bart Ehrman himself, publicly acknowledge that the testimony of Christians in Jerusalem can be dated to *two or three* years after the resurrection of Jesus. Why?

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul appears to be quoting a credal statement already in circulation by the time he was converted two or perhaps three years after Jesus rose.

So began the about-face of a brilliant man who retained his brilliance and mental clarity and maintained his confession at great personal cost to the end of his life.

1 Corinthians 15

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15

For what I received **I passed on** to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15

For **what I received** I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1 Corinthians 15

For what purpose do we baptize you, if the
important thing is that you have the
Scripture? If you are baptized, it is to the
third person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ,
appearing in the flesh. That is, the
he appeared to the apostles and
sisters at the same time. That is, the
though some have said that he appeared to
James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared
to me also, as to one abnormally born.

There is only one
crucified man
whose name you know. Why?

(Well, there's Peter, too, but that
doesn't weaken the point.)

Let's take a quick look at the bulleted document on the section

Apologetic some of the minimal historical elements

Jump in any time.

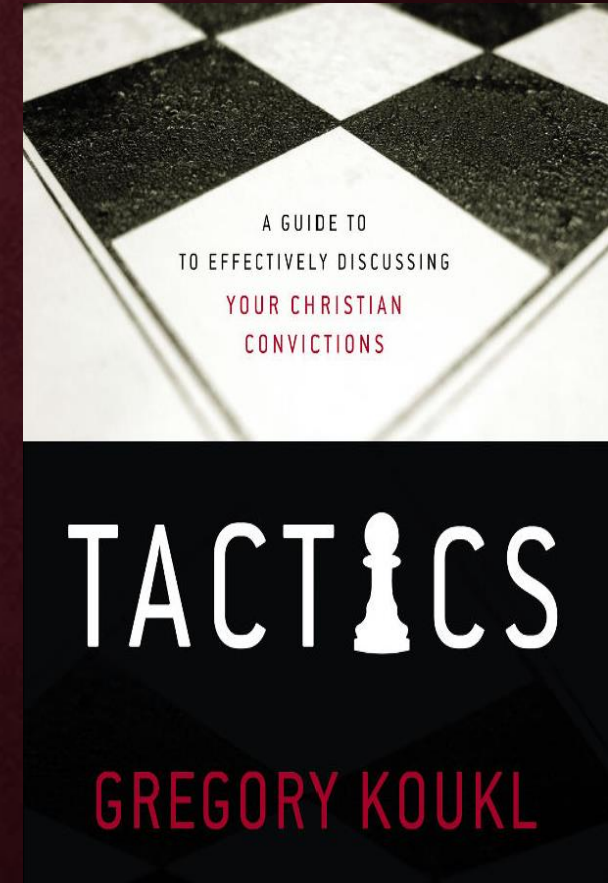
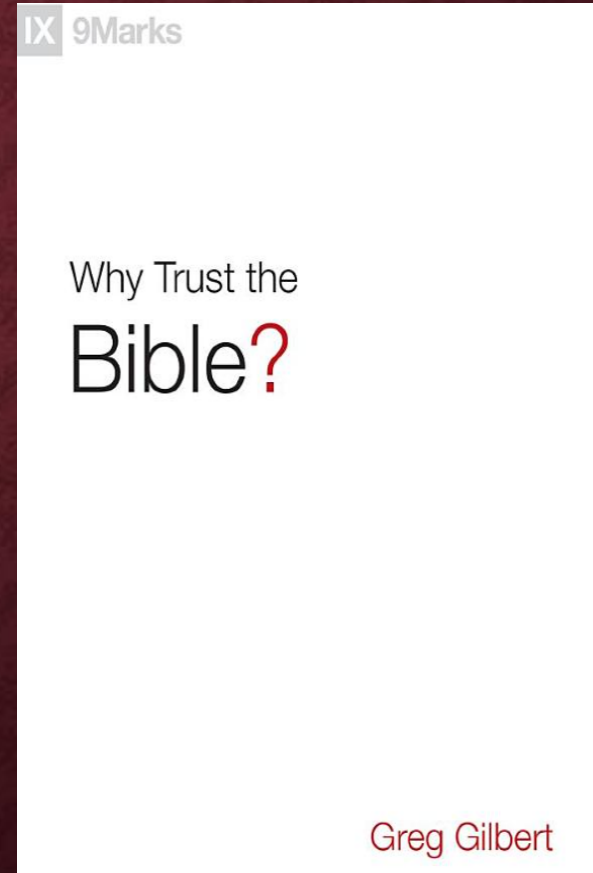
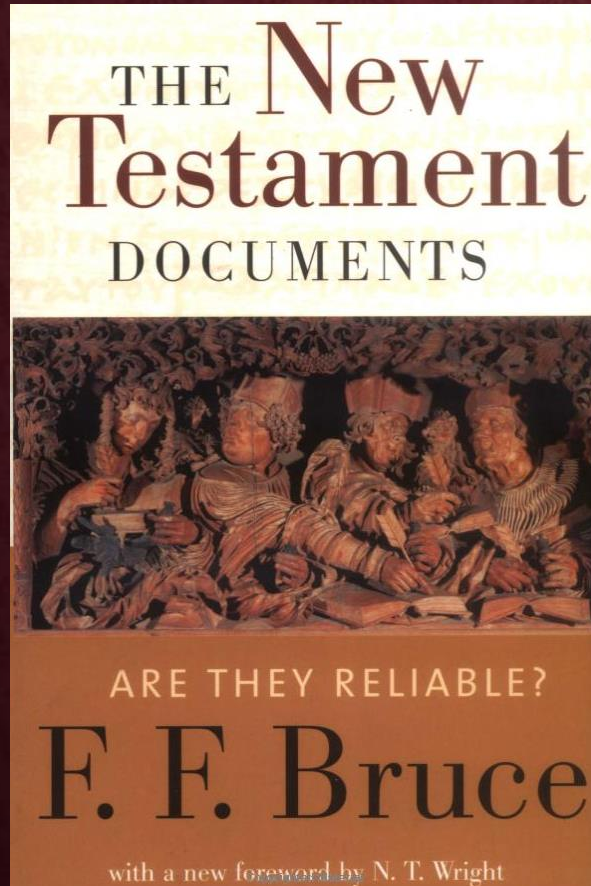
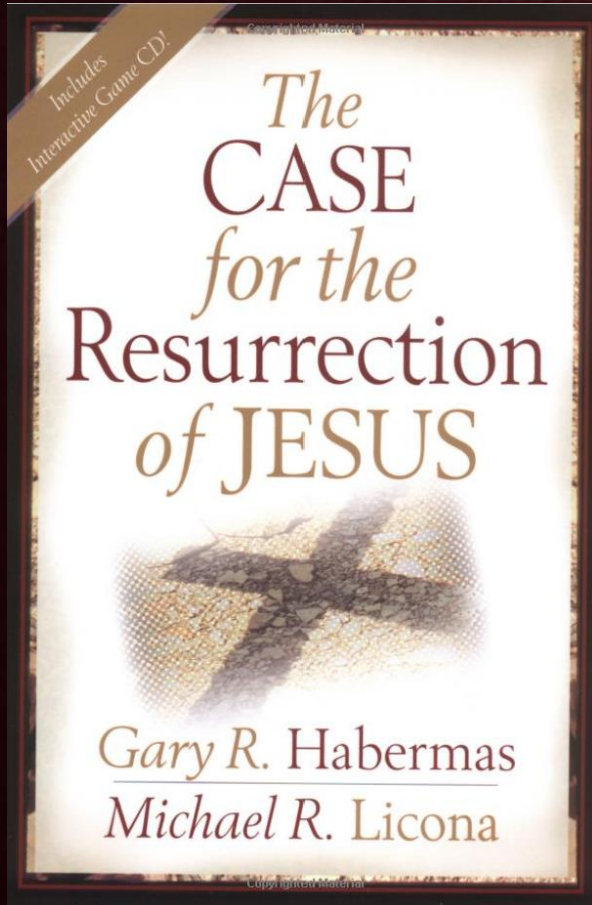
Or we can open it up at the end.

You can see a list of twenty additional
positive arguments for the reality of
Christ (p. 100).

The phenomenon of the Resurrection, the
historic act of the Lord, and so on, the
anatic,

Let's talk about the
usefulness and
limitations of the
content, in
general, from this
session

With any random extra minutes near the end of any session, I'll just recommend books...



GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND

Thinking as a Christian in
the Postmodern World

TIMOTHY KELLER

The REASON *for* GOD

Conversations on Faith and Life

LOVE THY BODY



Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality

NANCY R. PEARCEY

Bestselling Author of *Total Truth*

JOHN C. LENNOX

NEW
UPDATED
EDITION

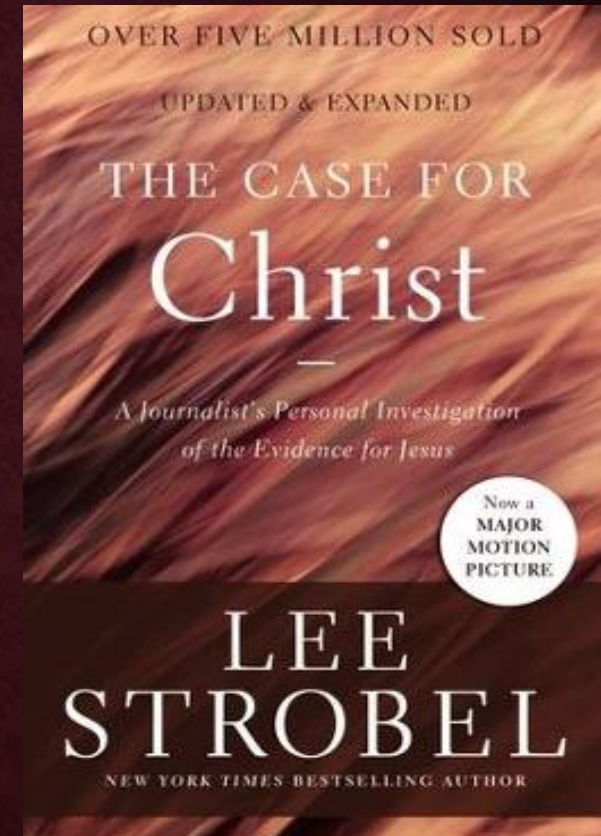
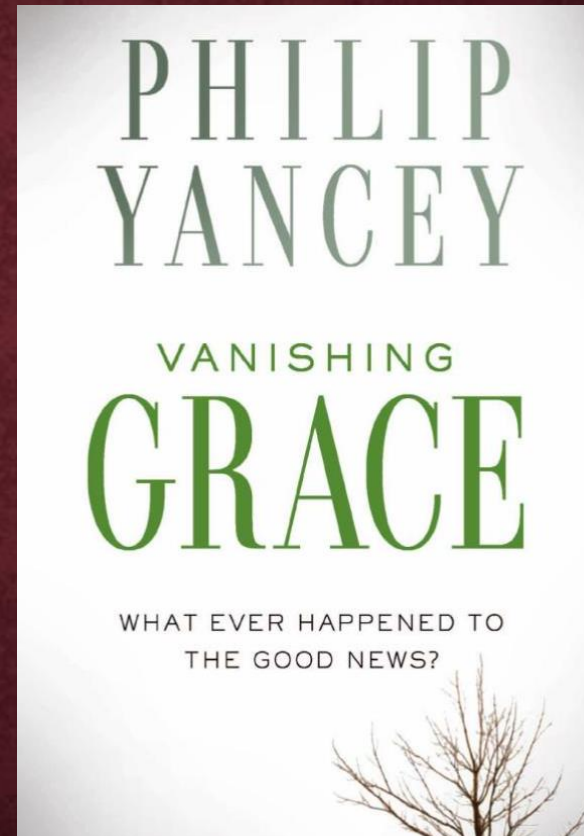
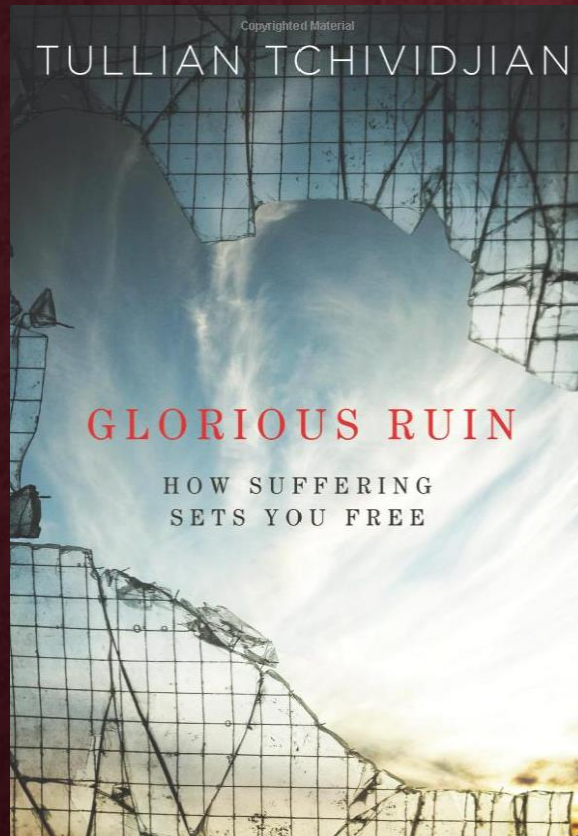
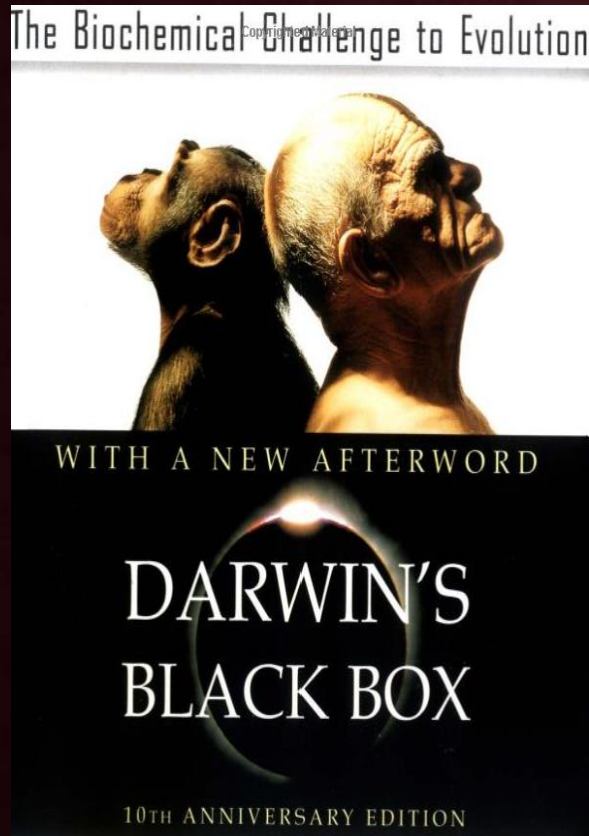
GOD'S UNDERTAKER HAS SCIENCE BURIED GOD?

There is no more important debate than this – science versus religion. But it needs to begin again, with clear understanding of what science and religion actually are. Lennox has done this wonderfully.

Colin Tudge, The Guardian

An exciting demolition of Dawkins' overreach from biology into religion.

Melanie Phillips, The Spectator



Session Four

Handling Objections





Tell me about the God you don't believe in.
Maybe I don't believe in him either.

Christian Apologetics:

We're already dispensed with three special "defeaters" in the last session:

If Christ is dead...

If my Bible cannot be trusted...

If there's no reason to think God even exists...

"How many say..."

Our Approach

We do not approach this as a relationship, as the apostle Paul says in

Let's talk about the "Mother of all Defeaters"

We will then discuss the question of the path forward

We will then discuss any other skeptical challenges that are on your minds (see the handouts)

We will then discuss the topic of the resurrection, (not with pat answers)

We will testify to Christ crucified and raised, as our one true subject.

**Chew on this for five minutes
in groups of at least three
people.**

What might you want to know about the most common defeatist question to meet?

A loving God could
never send someone to
hell.

Who is saying this?

What do they mean?

Is it true?

Where can I find out?

What false promises?

Does it make sense?

How is Christ involved?

What sort of answer is this?

Why does it not get answered?

What is the uniquely Lutheran, saturated, sticky response?

Activity #1 Notecard Exchange

My Takeaway

--

Write a “takeaway” on the Front – something you’d like to make real, reflect on, deepen your understanding of, not forget... **(plus your name)**

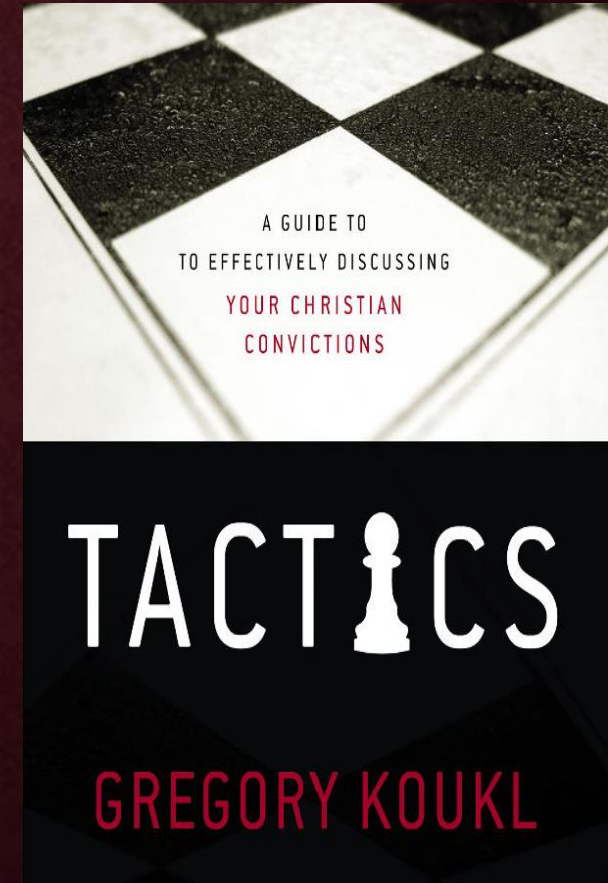
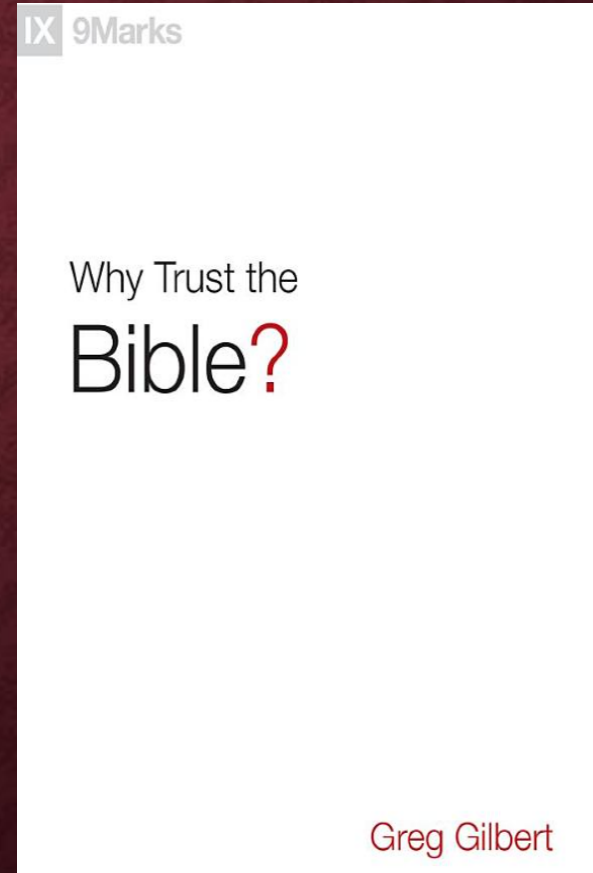
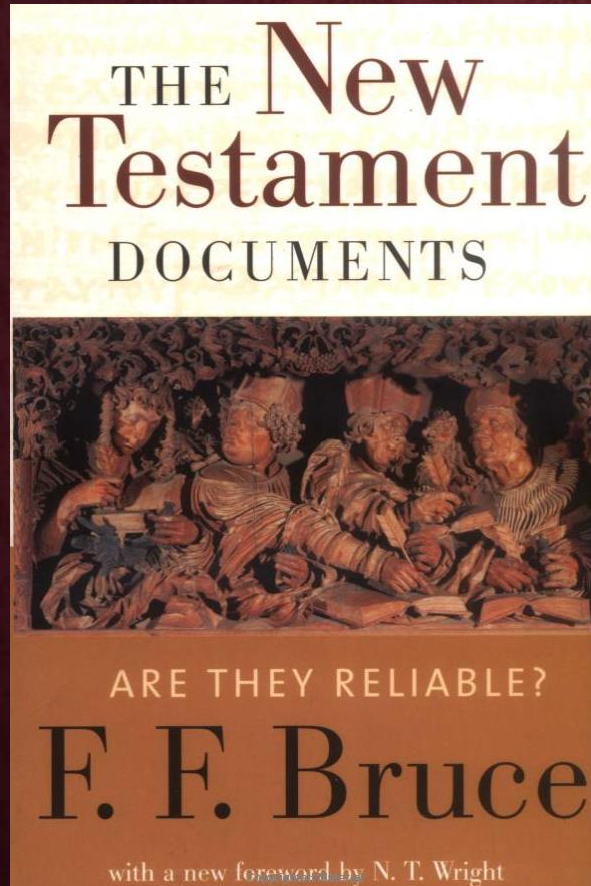
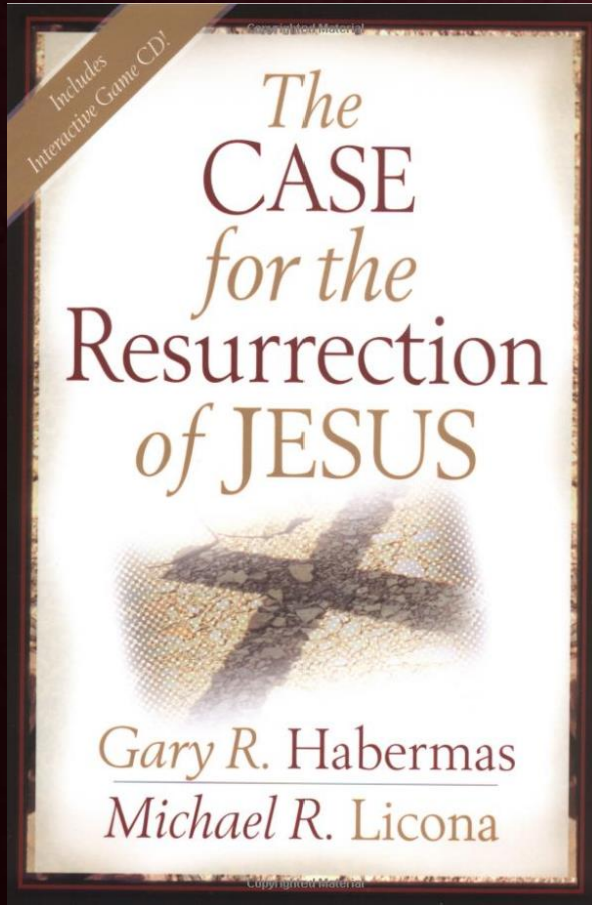
Activity #1 Notecard Exchange

My Takeaway

A Question

Write a genuine question, *if you have one*, on the back. Push back any way you like, or pose something others might be wondering about, too.

With any random extra minutes near the end of any session, I'll just recommend books...



GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND

Thinking as a Christian in
the Postmodern World

TIMOTHY KELLER

The REASON *for* GOD

Conversations on Faith and Life

LOVE THY BODY



Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality

NANCY R. PEARCEY

Bestselling Author of *Total Truth*

JOHN C. LENNOX

NEW
UPDATED
EDITION

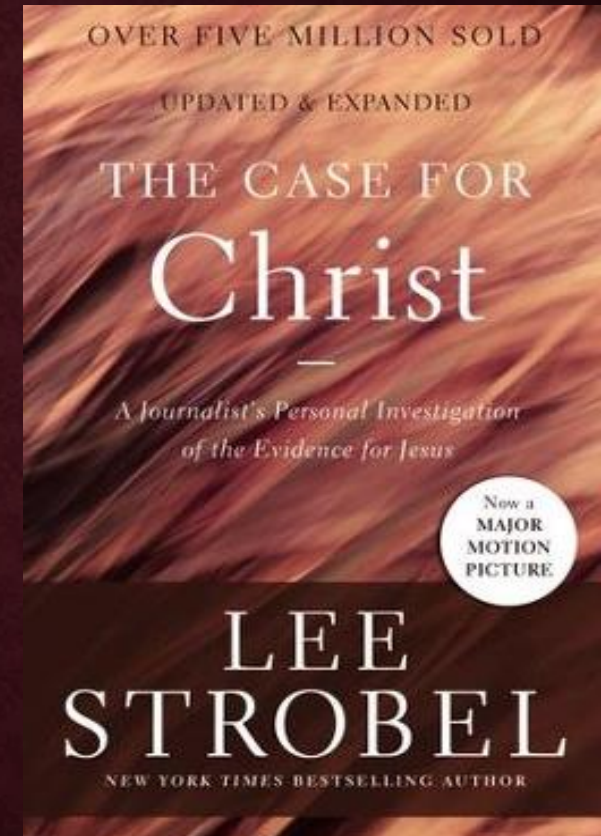
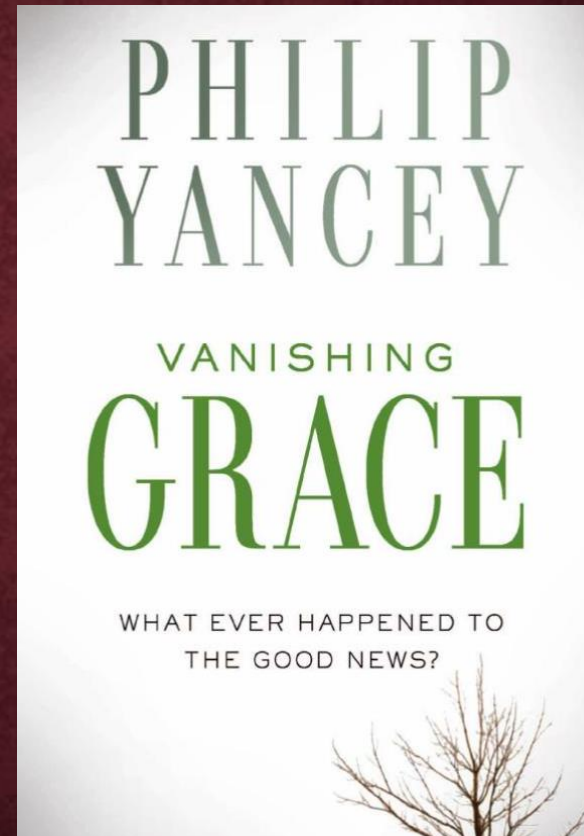
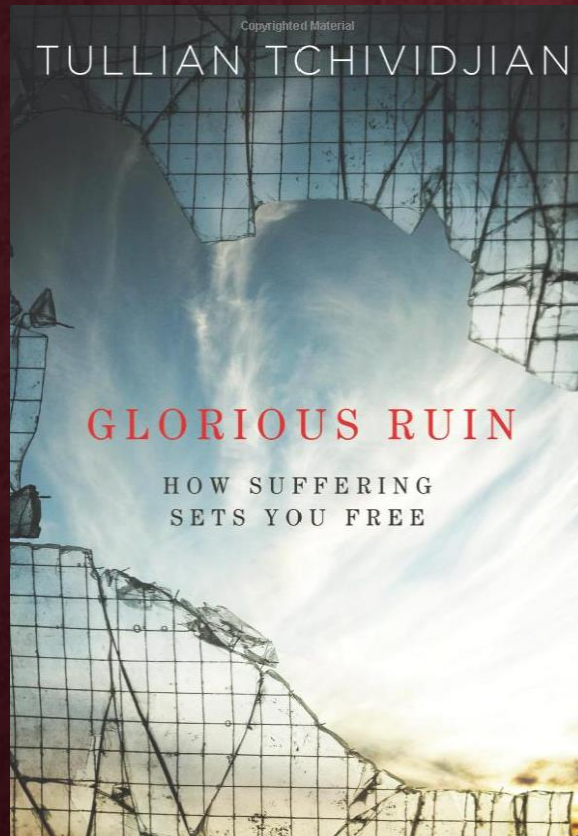
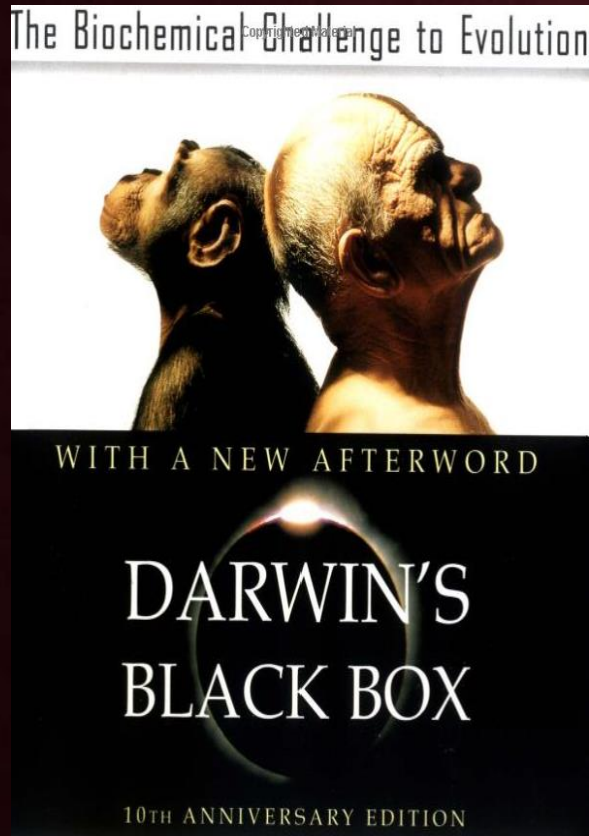
GOD'S UNDERTAKER HAS SCIENCE BURIED GOD?

There is no more important debate than this – science versus religion. But it needs to begin again, with clear understanding of what science and religion actually are. Lennox has done this wonderfully.

Colin Tudge, The Guardian

An exciting demolition of Dawkins' overreach from biology into religion.

Melanie Phillips, The Spectator



Session Five

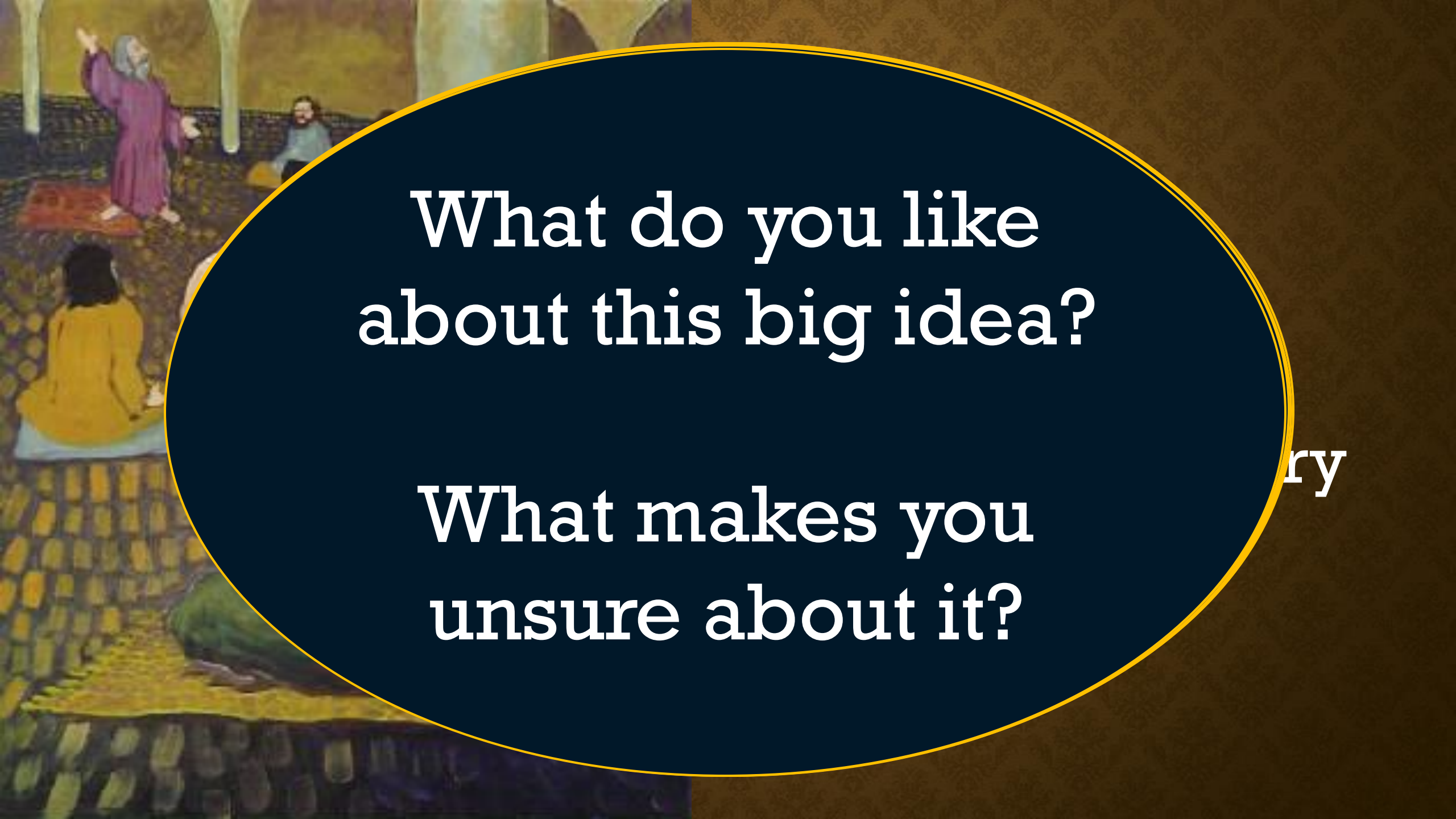
Witnessing in Story

Keenan

Q&A / Open Mic

The Devotional Life





What do you like
about this big idea?

What makes you
unsure about it?

ry





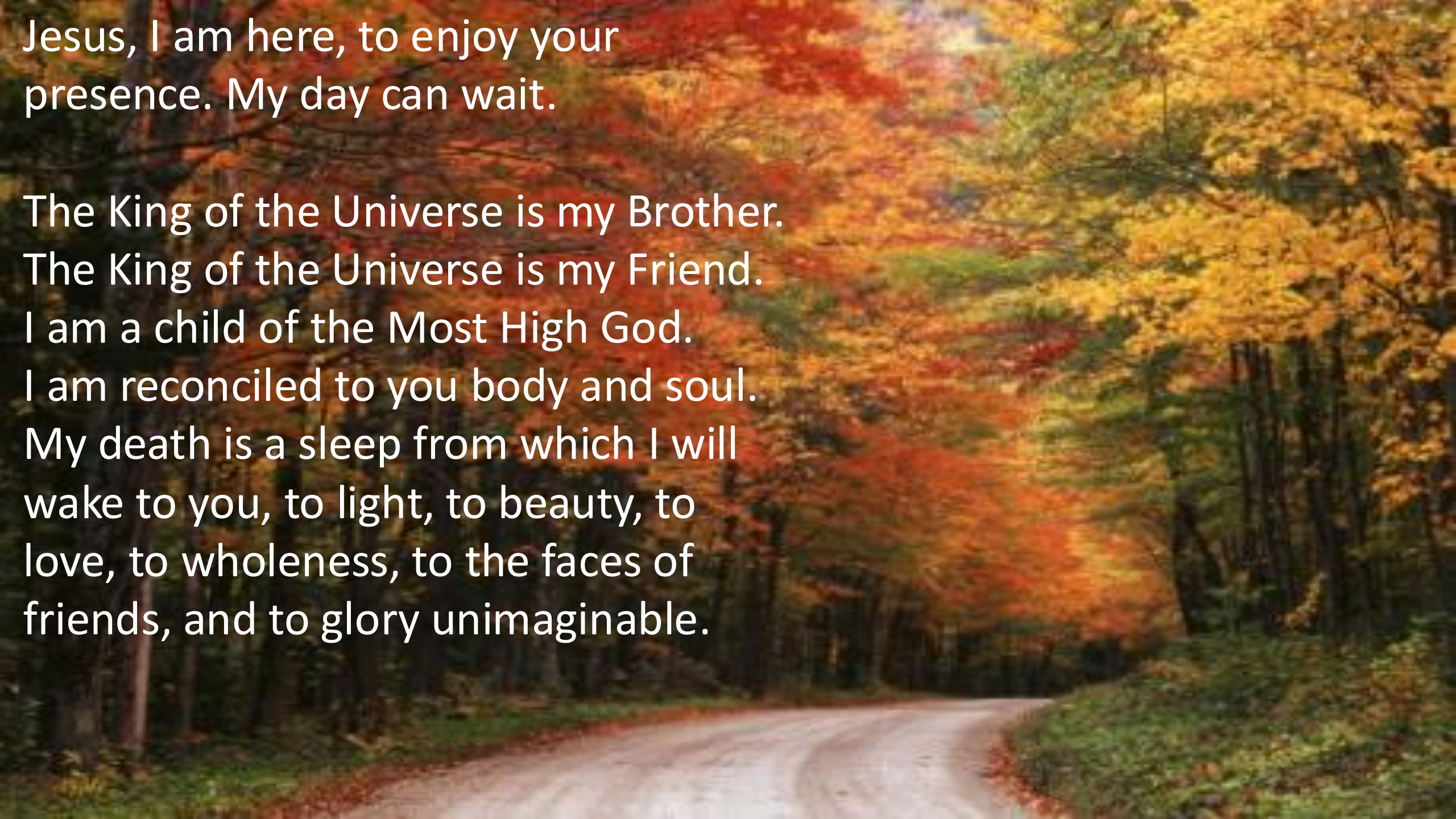
Explore my
story?

Your
encouraging
stories?



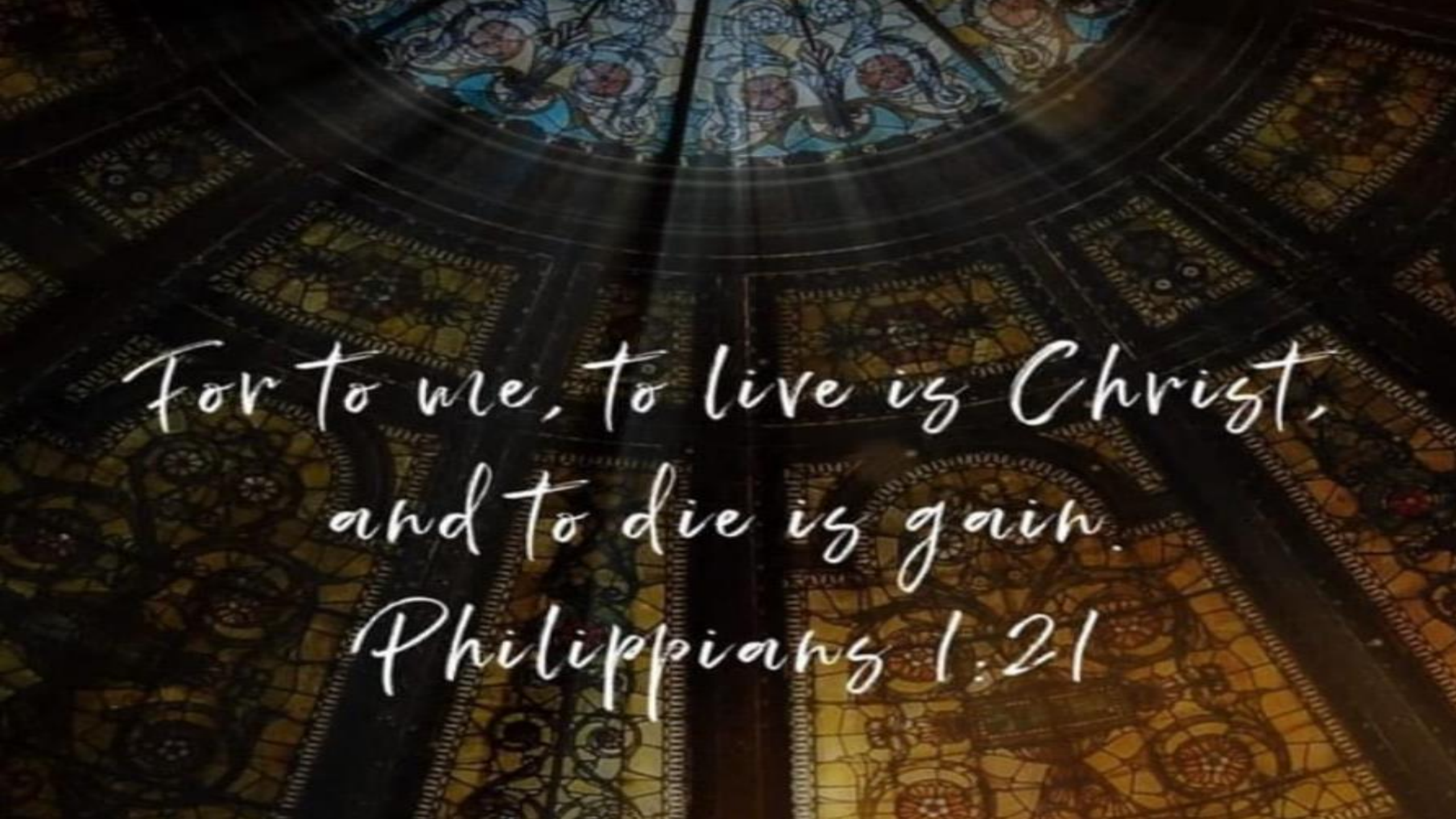
Devotional Living

Layering habits



Jesus, I am here, to enjoy your
presence. My day can wait.

The King of the Universe is my Brother.
The King of the Universe is my Friend.
I am a child of the Most High God.
I am reconciled to you body and soul.
My death is a sleep from which I will
wake to you, to light, to beauty, to
love, to wholeness, to the faces of
friends, and to glory unimaginable.



For to me, to live is Christ,
and to die is gain.
Philippians 1:21

The paraphrased Word

The remembered Word

The poeticized Word

“The Word, the Word,
the Word”

6:25 / 7:11



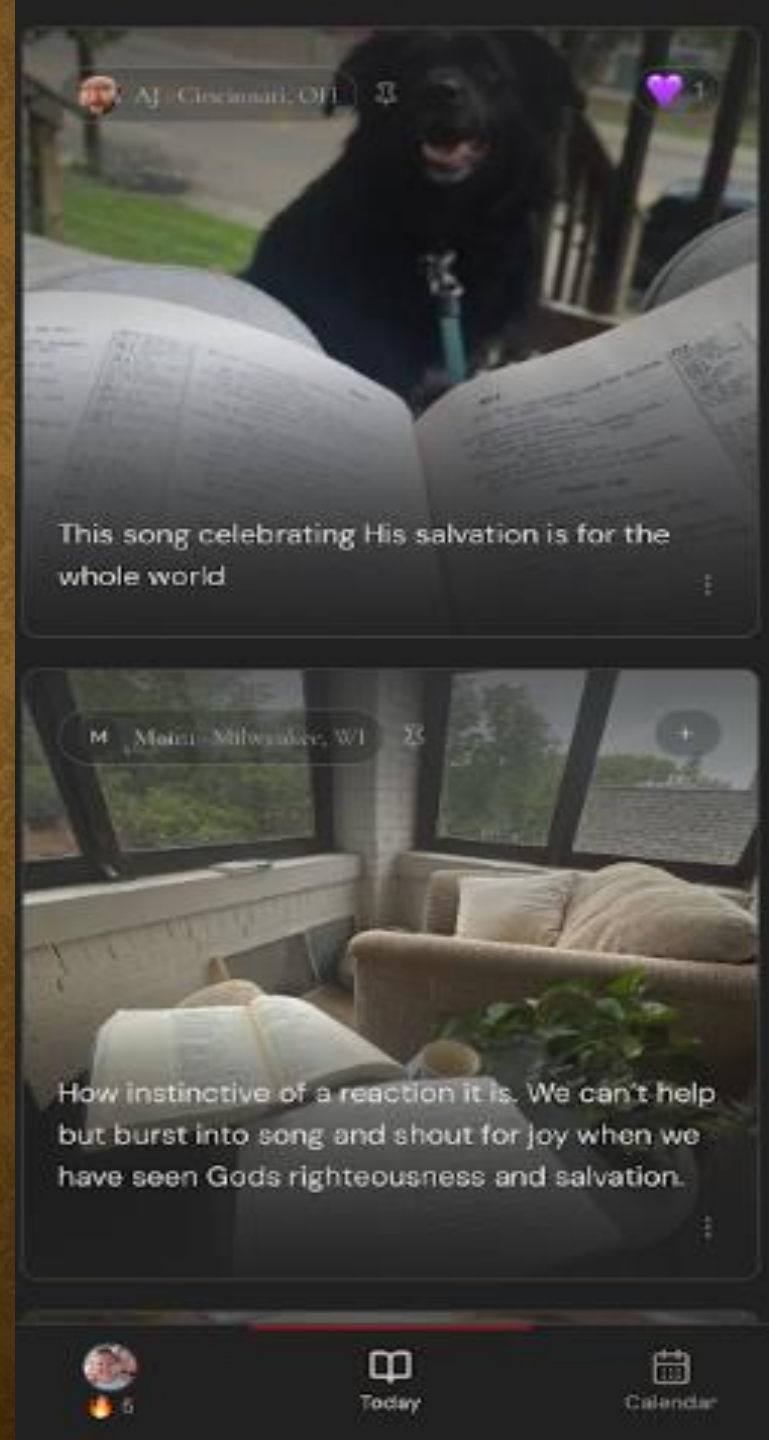
“Open Book”

It tells you where to turn in Scripture.

It offers brief commentary.

It poses a question.

You take a picture with your Bible open and the setting of your devotion.



Sing to Jesus

Fernando Ortega

IVA

Identify

What feelings are present?

Validate

It's only human to feel these things

Align

Now, What's True?



Closing Remarks
“From the fullness of the heart...”



Closing Remarks

“The desired end is brought about by our becoming again ever more deeply absorbed in the gospel – not letting go until it blesses.” – JP Koehler

Closing Remarks

CS Lewis: “I believe in Jesus like I believe in the sun. I not only see it. I see everything else by it.”

GK Chesterton: “Allow one sun in your sky, one mystery too bright to look into, and all else is lit up in that light.”





Closing Remarks

“What good would it do me to construct a world in which I did not live, but only held up to the view of others?” Soren Kierkegaard



Closing Remarks

“Speak a Word of Christ then leave them alone. Trust the two of them to work it out.” Soren Kierkegaard



Closing Remarks

“Speak to Christ
about the man even
more than you speak
to the man about
Christ.” Dietrich
Bonhoeffer



Closing Remarks

God, grant to each...

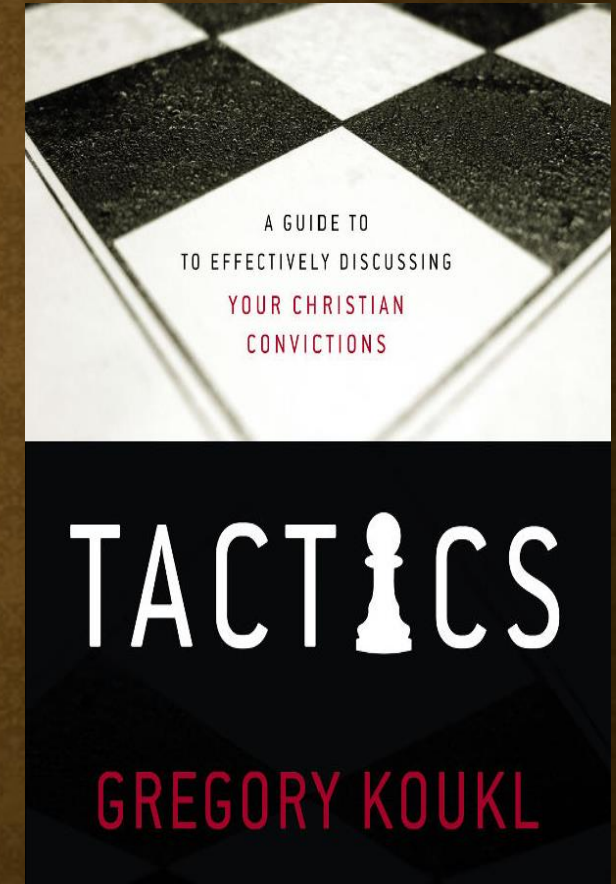
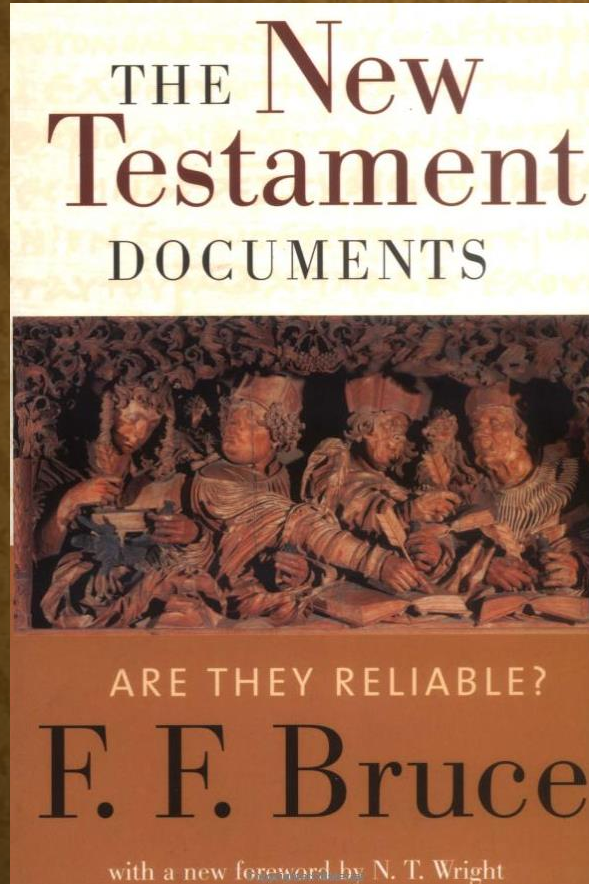
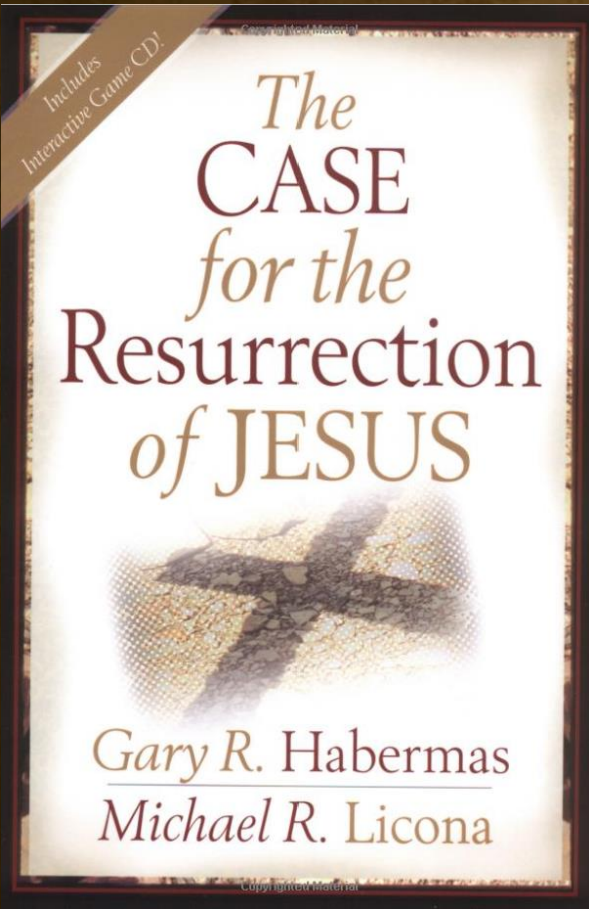
a full heart

a ready Word

a transparently Christian life

a love like his





GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND

Thinking as a Christian in
the Postmodern World

TIMOTHY KELLER

The REASON *for* GOD

Conversations on Faith and Life

LOVE THY BODY



Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality

NANCY R. PEARCEY

Bestselling Author of *Total Truth*

JOHN C. LENNOX

NEW
UPDATED
EDITION

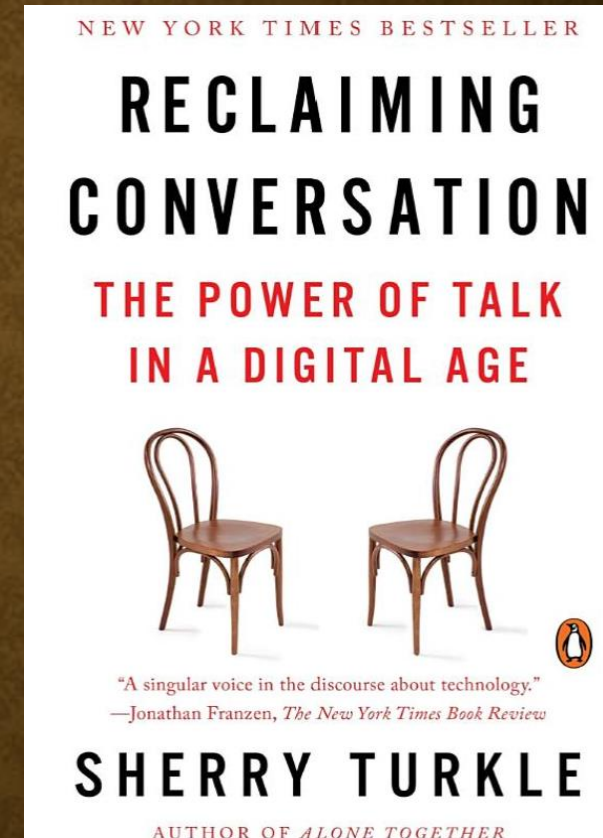
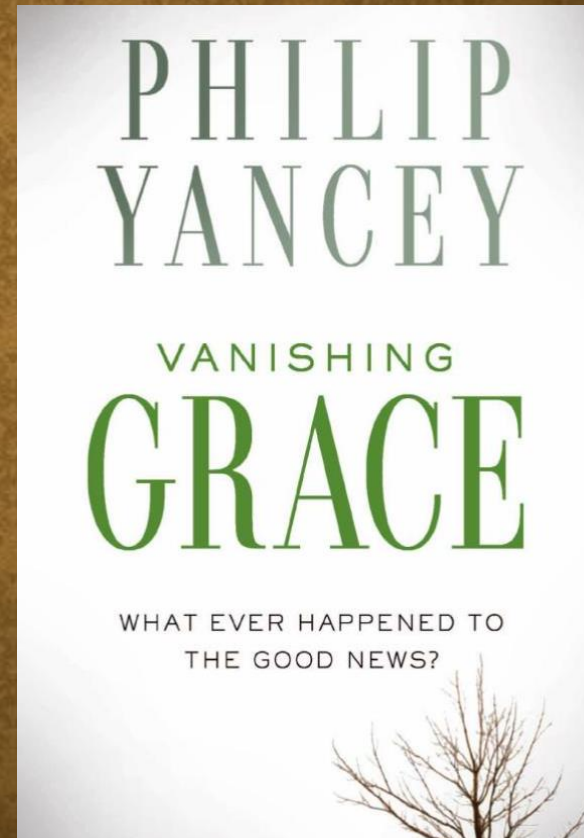
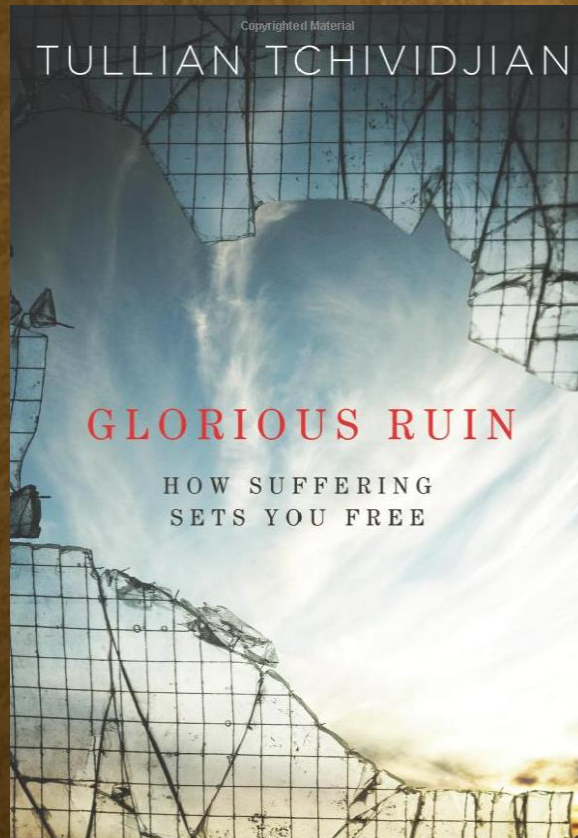
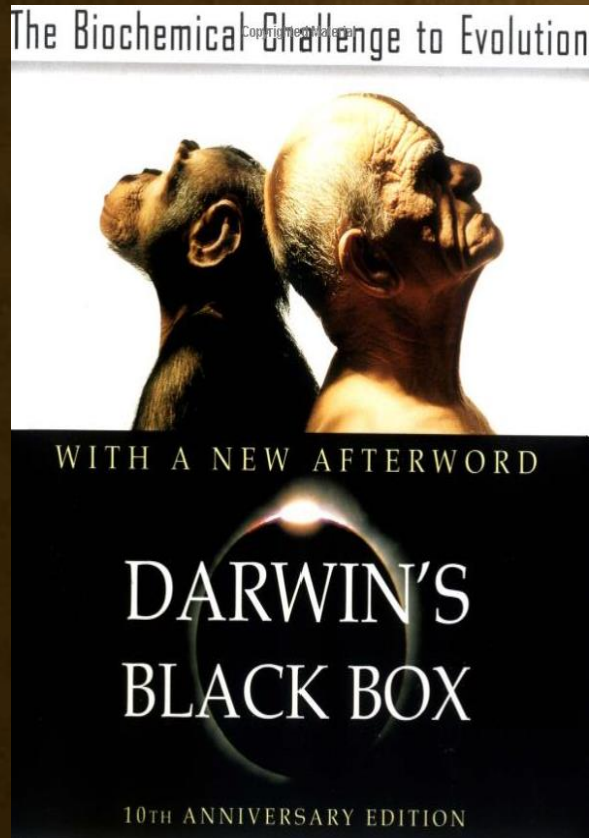
GOD'S UNDERTAKER HAS SCIENCE BURIED GOD?

There is no more important debate than this – science versus religion. But it needs to begin again, with clear understanding of what science and religion actually are. Lennox has done this wonderfully.

Colin Tudge, The Guardian

An exciting demolition of Dawkins's overreach from biology into religion.

Melanie Phillips, The Spectator



1 Corinthians

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Closing Remarks

Martin Luther: “See a man captivated by the cross”

Siegbert Becker: “I only have the gospel.”

CS Lewis: “God in the Dock”

Martin Luther: “The Three Lights”

Tullian Tchividjian: “The Last Idol to Fall”

Yours truly: “If it seems a weak thing...”

