

A pair of hands is raised in a gesture of prayer or seeking help, set against a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright yellow and orange near the horizon, with scattered white clouds. The hands are silhouetted against the bright light, with the fingers slightly spread. The text 'HERE IS THE ANSWER' is overlaid in a bold, teal, sans-serif font, centered between the hands.

HERE IS THE ANSWER

Desmond Ford PhD

Here is the Answer

—Solutions Worth More Than Gold—

Dr Desmond Ford

PhD MSU, PhD Manchester

© Good News Unlimited 2015.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be changed or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owners except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. The moral right of the author has been asserted but Good News Unlimited Ltd whose registered office is Unit 7/55 York Road, Penrith NSW 2750, Australia, has been assigned the copyright for the work by the author.

A copy of this book may be found in the National Library of Australia
Category: Religion/Christian life/spiritual growth
ebook creation: Linda Ruth Brooks Publishing Services

This book may be ordered in print and Kindle format through
www.amazon.com booksellers or by contacting:

Good News Unlimited

PO Box 973

Penrith NSW 2751 Australia

email: admin@goodnewsunlimited.org.au

This book is a gift from Desmond Ford and Good News Unlimited and is provided for readers to enjoy and share in the spirit of the commission of Christ who said, 'Whosoever will may come'. The reader is invited to be a part of spreading the good news of the Gospel. Dr Desmond Ford has written many books on the Gospel of Christ. He is the founder of Good News Unlimited, a **trans-denominational** gospel ministry that produces media and resources to spread the gospel rapidly and effectively.



Is your life a riddle without an answer? Has everything stopped making sense?

Thankfully, there's a shortcut to solving all life's difficult questions—a simple recipe contained in one of the world's oldest books. Dr Desmond Ford explains how the Bible's good news can turn on the lights and give you a rewarding, happy life.

Contents

Climbing the Ladder of Life

The Power of Good

Who Am I? Where Am I?

Is Life a Rehearsal?

Solving the Riddle of Life

God is the Answer

Climbing the Ladder of Life

I was browsing through the stacks of the Michigan State University Library when a book tempted me. Plucking it out and whisking through its pages, I halted at some scribble. It read:

Just think, one night the stars will gleam

Upon a cold gray stone

And trace a name in silver beam,

And Lo, 'twill be your own.

The year was 1959. I was thirty—in my prime. The news hasn't improved. Here is the latest:

Time and place will cease to know you,

Men and things will pass away,

You'll be moving on tomorrow,

You're only here today.

If after all we've done and thought,

All comes to Nought,—

If there is nothing after Now,

And we know that anyhow,

...—why live?

The first 20 years are the longest half of anybody's life. So I was more than halfway through when at MSU Library. Now I am past the 'use-by' date. What can I say to friends struggling up the ladder of life behind me?

Thomas Huxley, who invented the term 'agnostic', wrote this: "The ledger of the Almighty is strictly kept, and every one of us has the balance of his operations paid over to him at the end of every minute of his existence."

Hmm! A bit sobering. It makes me think of an old Pharisee who lived 2,000 years ago. He said: *“Whatsoever a man soweth, that he shall also reap”*.

Isn't it time for some good news? But, maybe, all of that **is** good news. Think of it this way. You're planning two journeys.

Right now, you're going to dash up to the corner store to get some bread. But tomorrow, you leave for New York. It will take you many hours to get there and you plan to stay awhile.

What's the difference in the preparation for your two trips? Well, for the first one, all you need is sneakers and cash. A minute and you're ready.

But the next trip is different. You need to prepare and this will take more than a minute. You may stay a while or forever. It might be your last trip, or one of many.

We mightn't all be planning a dash to the corner store or a trip to New York, but we are all travelling—towards eternity. Quite a trip! Should we not be much more careful in our preparation than if we are only off to New York or the corner store?

I've been around a long time. I've studied and travelled a great deal. I've made plenty of mistakes and learned many lessons. I don't pretend to know it all, but I have picked up a few tips on life's journey that I'd like to share with you.

There's a lot of good advice around, which most of us know, but we all forget or ignore from time to time. When I'm reminded of it, I find it very helpful and I hope you will too.

The Power of Good

The most powerful thing in the world is goodness. You doubt it? Think of the people you know. Think of the characters of history. Have the dictators won out? Are you off to visit Adolf Hitler at his palace tomorrow? Guess not. What about Stalin? Mussolini, Idi Amin, and others like them?

What's the difference between those evil characters and the people you trust? Why did Wilberforce succeed? Why did folks give millions to Mother Teresa? Why is Florence Nightingale remembered? Francis of Assisi?

On the other hand, Aristotle was one of the smartest men who ever lived but I doubt that the thought of him stirs your pulse.

But Jesus of Nazareth? Well, that's different. Exactly. Goodness is mightier than armies. What did the Buddha, and most great religious teachers have in common? They taught that the selfish life always fails, that there could be no happiness until one was absorbed in seeking the happiness of others. Christ went so far as to say that in order to truly live we must die to the attractions of self and the world.

Cast your memory net back over the years. Who has influenced you most? I suggest that in most instances it has been those who have shown you kindness and patience. That sort of virtue is strong and memorable. But the bullies and bigots who have crossed your pathway—they will never be missed.

All very well. But it sounds like my mother telling me to be good. What if I don't know how? What if I don't even want to be good?

Well, there have always been some people who seem to have gotten it all together, who have been unusually kind, gracious and happy. Let's ask them. What would they tell you and me? The famous author, Louisa May Alcott, said, "*Simple, genuine goodness is the best capital to found the business of this life upon. It lasts*

when fame and money fail, and is the only riches we can take out of this world with us.”

Ghandi, who changed the course of his country with his philosophy of nonviolence, said, *“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it—always.”*

Who Am I? Where Am I?

Everything depends on your image of yourself. Remember G.K. Chesterton, the inventor of the Father Brown detective stories?

He said: *“If I wish to dissuade a man from drinking his tenth whisky and soda, I slap him on the back and say, ‘Be a man!’ (No one who wished to dissuade a crocodile from eating its tenth explorer, would slap it on the back and say, ‘Be a crocodile’.)”*

Who do you think you are? A coincidental conglomerate of accidental molecules? An absurd accident? An eddying speck of dust? A leaf driven on the wind? A child of God?

Everything depends on your answer. We make all life’s significant decisions in harmony with our philosophy of existence. If I think that the universe, our planet, and its inhabitants are the product of chance, I will behave differently than if I believe the universe, this planet, and I were planned and designed.

I need to be sure about life. Is it a disease for which the only cure is death? Is it the punishment for the crime of being born, a nightmare between two eternities, the bubbling, senseless flow of time and space of which man is a part—man being but a parasite on the epidermis of a midge-like planet, hardly perceivable in the backwaters of one of a trillion galaxies?

Is human life no more significant than that of a fly, which is born and dies in a single day? Is human existence just a dusty scuffle across a parched terrain?

Is thinking only itching, and are values only feelings? Is love, even a mother’s love, just a chemical phenomenon? Is death the great benefactor that releases us from struggle and pain? Is the world a ship or an iceberg, an egg or a bubble? Is it a planned place or an accident? Can anyone really discover the right answer?

Berdyayev, the philosopher, has given his opinion that modern man has not only lost his way, but also his address. Modern humanity is

like the little dog in the parcel van of a freight car, which had lost his label and gone on to Washington with a new one: “Here is nobody, from nowhere, going no place”.

Why bother with the questions? Because I can't dodge making decisions, and on my choices hangs my future. Every action has a corresponding reaction. Even failing to choose can be fatal—like a man being swept down Niagara towards the Falls. If he doesn't struggle and lay hold of the rescue rope, it's all over for him.

Life is demanding, inexorable, precise, rewarding, and punishing. When I pick up one end of the stick I must also pick up the other end. A student wrote to his University President: “It's about time you heard of the guy called Kick”. The reply was, “And you need to know about Kick-back.”

John Baillie makes us think:

The ultimate sadness of life is that nothing lasts; that the bloom so soon disappears from all things that are young, that the vigor of maturity is so short-lived while age brings weariness and forgetfulness and decay such as presage the oblivion and corruption of the grave. That is why our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught (Invitation to Pilgrimage p 115).

Baillie is reminding us that it is the fact of death that makes life so important. If our time here were forever, it would not seem to matter so much how we behave. But life is temporary and therefore we are reminded that our choices are important. Days must not be wasted. There is a limit to them. Choices must not be careless for they usually determine the length and quality of our days. Remember in Western countries, three out of every four people die prematurely of heart disease or cancer.

*How easily things go wrong,
A sigh too deep, a kiss too long,
A mist and a blinding rain,
And life is never the same again.*

So how should we live?

There is a clue that Cambridge Professor C.S. Lewis often pointed out: Life is full of joy, pleasure, and merriment, but no security! It's as though the old philosophers and theologians were right that this world is a vale of soul-making, a preparation for another.

We are intended to enjoy our days, but not to settle our ultimate affections on this life or this world. There is something better to come for those who prepare for it.

Every person's life is filled with ambiguity, plurality of options, annoyances, irritations, interruptions, challenges, disappointments, as well as love, joy, friendship, the privilege of using our faculties — physical and mental. Only if we realize that all of these have one objective—to make us ready and worthy of another life that will have no end—only then can we be reconciled to life's trials. These trials are workmen, whereby we are shaped for the future.

Do you doubt that? Let me call your attention to a few intimate things. Sometimes we miss the obvious. Let's start by thinking close to home.

Why are all my senses so designed as to give me pleasure? Why isn't everything I see ugly, everything I smell foul, everything I touch a sting, everything I hear a discord, everything I taste bitter? Well, why?

Why is it that this planet is placed just right: if nearer to the sun, everything would burn; if further away, everything would freeze. Yes, there are clouds, but the blue sky is usually more common. Yes, there are nettles, but tall green grass is commoner.

Yes, I sometimes get sick, but the years usually testify to most people that we were made for health. And then there is music, fragrance, beauty, friendship, sex, love, pets, and the sense of fulfillment when we use our gifts. What do these things mean?

Is Life a Rehearsal?

When you stop to think of it, we are all preparing ourselves for something. Our habits prove that. Consideration of the following two quotations from William James will prove enlightening:

Habit is thus the enormous flywheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deckhand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again. It keeps different social strata from mixing.

Already at the age of twenty-five you see the professional mannerism settling down on the young commercial traveler, on the young doctor, on the young minister, on the young counselor at law. You see the little lines of cleavage running through the character, the tricks of thought, the prejudices, the ways of the 'shop', in a word, from which the man can by and by no more escape than his coat sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds. On the whole, it is best he should not escape. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again. ...

The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state.

We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!' Well! He may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it, but it is being counted nonetheless. Down among his nerve cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work.

Those words from William James's classic *Principles of Psychology* convey more wisdom than many a College course.

So we make our habits, and our habits make us. Therefore life's insistent problem is how to form the best habits. Habits are the result of choices, and choices are the result of what we love.

The most important thing about you and me is our love life; not our sex life, but what we think important and worthy of our best affections. It's easy to go wrong here. Most things on which we fix our affections are temporary and cannot yield lasting fulfillment. We must choose to love what is permanent. And what is that? No, that is the wrong question. The question should be: *Who* is that? None of the 'whats' last.

Whether we recognize it or not, we are all looking for something worthy of our loyalty—something worth living for and dying for. The genius behind *The Great Books of the Western World*, Mortimer Adler, said that to every thinking person the greatest fact in the world is God. He insists that this belief may be right or wrong, but it is not trivial.

God is either a fantasy like Santa or a fact like sand. No other idea in all of history has had so much impact on thoughts, words and deeds.

Think about this. We believe in the sun, not because we see it, but because we see everything else because of it.

There are only three options about the beginning of things: either an eternal nothing made matter and mind; eternal matter made mind; or an eternal mind made matter and mind. Not hard to choose, is it? In the last fifty years, there has emerged what is known as the Anthropic Principle—the fact that all the items known to physics have but one purpose: to produce us. At an historic symposium in the 1970's in honour of Copernicus, many of the world's greatest scientists gathered, but the only talk ever remembered was given by Brandon Carter of Oxford, on the Anthropic Principle.

Today there are countless articles and many books on this important topic. Francis Collins, head of the genome project, which included hundreds of top scientists, had this to say:

When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are fifteen constants—the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and the weak nuclear force, etc.—that have precise values. If any one of these constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the place where we see it. Matter would not have been able to coalesce, there would have been no galaxies, stars, planets, or people.

On another occasion he wrote:

It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.

Stephen Hawking concludes:

The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications.

All three quotations are cited by Timothy Keller in *The Reason for God*, page 130.

Solving the Riddle of Life

Our problems, then, boil down to two questions: who is worthy of our enduring love, and can the answer to that first question give us the motivation to form the habits that alone can shape us for all time?

There is an option to which we should give our primary attention. One of the wisest men who ever lived, who influenced his world tremendously for lasting good, put it this way:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if any one 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. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5: 14-21 NIV).

What is that all about? Paul, the writer, is saying that we are all judgment bound, which is more than embarrassing because we are conscious of many wrong things done, and so many good things left undone. But the apostle is saying that God has solved our problems for us. He is holy, he is righteous, but most of all, he is love. And he loves the unlovely, the unworthy, the weak, the foolish, the sinful.

These magnificent lines are declaring that when Christ died on Calvary, he represented every one of us. God counts it as though we were there, as though we paid for all our sins then. What a transaction! What grace! What mercy!

The Son of God was made what he was not that we might be made what we are not. Martin Luther, who began the Reformation, said:

Mine are Christ's living and dying as though I had lived his life, and died his death.

That's surely good news. This is the Christian gospel that Paul is offering us. This Christian gospel is so astonishing in its precious reality that it has the power to take one's breath away. These words of Paul the apostle echo Jesus' words in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This is the reality of the gospel. Do not confuse this reality with the counterfeit messages of much of formal religion. Focus on the pure, simple words of the gospel and its message of good news.

Is there a shortcut for solving the riddle of life? Is there some sure way of testing such pessimistic assertions as Sir Arthur Keith's pronouncement in answer to the question 'What follows this life?' He responded: "Nothing. Life goes out like a guttering candle."

There is a shortcut. There is a simple way of solving all of life's profundities, those enigmas that must needs be settled before effectual living can begin. If Christianity is the truth of God, and if salvation depends on believing that truth, we would expect that God would have prepared sufficiently simple and conclusive evidence to convince any sincere seeker of truth. But because you are human, you still have doubts.

Who was this Jesus of Nazareth anyway? The most direct route through the labyrinth of religious and philosophical controversy is to answer aright that question.

What was the real nature of the man who appeared two thousand years ago in Palestine claiming to be a ransom for the sins of the world? The New Testament makes the startling claim that our relationship to Jesus Christ is a matter of life and death.

He who has the Son has life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:12 NASV).

The same book offers Christ as the Great Physician for the ailing human race, the One who alone can cure all maladies. And the testimony of the ages has been that he is a Physician without peer, as far above all other men as the sun is above the earth.

Consider these verdicts:

*It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice. The simple record of these three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. (Words by William Lecky, cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *The Reason for Our Hope*, p. 34.)*

He represents within the religious sphere the highest point beyond which posterity cannot go; yea, whom it cannot even equal, inasmuch as everyone who hereafter should climb the same height, could only do it with the help of Jesus, who first attained it. As little as humanity will ever be without religion, as little will it be without Christ; for to have religion without Christ would be as absurd as to enjoy poetry without regard to Homer or Shakespeare. He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought; and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart.

(Words by David Strauss quoted in the same book, p. 32.)

Today no historian esteemed by his peers doubts the essential historicity of Christ. But to estimate him truly, we must listen to his words. They are breathtaking.

Pointing to the orb blazing in the heavens, he says, “*I am the light of the world*” (John 8:12).

In thus comparing himself to the sun of the natural world, Jesus claims to be the Author and Preserver of all life and all truth, the

Fountain of energy, strength, and knowledge, of all things good. Among Jesus' many claims are these:

That "all authority in Heaven and on Earth" had been given to him (Matthew 28:18 RSV);

That he had complete control over nature (Mark 4:39-41);

That the angels of Heaven belonged to him (Matthew 16:27);

That people should love him above their own family or their own life (Matthew 10:37, 38; Luke 14:26);

That he was the Saviour of mankind (Luke 19:10);

That he could forgive sins (Matthew 9:2);

That he will be the final Judge of all men (Matthew 25:31-46);

That he existed before Abraham, and that he enjoyed glory with God; before the world was (John 8:58; 17:5).

Jesus believed these claims so implicitly that he was prepared to risk not only his own life, but the lives of his friends, as they, too, advocated his gospel. He foretold that his followers would be persecuted and put to death, and yet he intimated also that such a fate was a light thing in comparison with the importance of establishing his sovereignty over the world.

Christ's claims even survived the test of apparent failure. On the Cross, after being rejected by his own nation and its religious leaders, he could still behave as King of eternity, promising Heaven to a penitent criminal, and interceding as calmly for his enemies as though he were walking the pavements of a country town on a sunny day.

Furthermore, it would appear that this Man's deeds matched his words. No man ever acted as this Man acted.

Could one flaw be found in the fourfold narrative, the whole picture would be blemished and Christ's claims dissipated. No such flaw exists. He did not have the peculiarities of any race or age.

While all other great men of history taught things time has rejected, such was not the case with Christ. None of the errors of his predecessors, contemporaries, or successors are to be found in him.

Had he never lived, it would have required his equal to invent the unique story of his life. No Jew would ever have given us a crucified Messiah.

Despite his insight into the nature of man and his thorough understanding of truth and morality, he himself carried no personal guilt, and he claimed to be aware of that fact. Here Jesus of Nazareth differed from all other good men. Thus it has been said of Christ that if he was good, then he was God, for good men do not lie regarding themselves.

God is the Answer

Most of us shrink from the idea of God because we are sure he is demanding something we don't want to give him. But there we are deluded. God wants to give, and to give the best—to even the worst of us. When we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good, we love him as a child loves and trusts a loving parent. Our will is swallowed up in his, all our ills and torments disappear, and the rest and peace Christ promised to all who believe becomes ours.

The Christian life, truly lived, is the easiest life. But that is true only for those who are persuaded of the gracious fatherly love and mercy of God. No man can empty himself of self. We can't drive the darkness out of a room with a broom. We turn the light on. When we can speak as Paul spoke of Christ as the one *“who loved me and gave himself for me”*, duty becomes pleasure. Heaven has begun for us. The whole of our life is then comprehended in three words: 'trust and obey'.

Christ gave us very important clues when he told the stories of the treasure hidden in the field, and the pearl of great price. When the discoverer of the hidden treasure realized what he had, “for joy thereof he sold all that he had and bought that field.” And the second story is saying that God is offering a gem of superlative value, and he is giving it away.

God's gifts to the unworthy are without comparison or competitor: God is offering us forgiveness. That's what true religion is about. Romans 4:8 says: *As far as the east is from the west he removes our sins from us*. This is called justification, which means the bestowal of a perfect status despite our very imperfect state.

After justification begins the path of sanctification, our ever-increasing likeness to Christ. One day there will be glorification, when our evil nature is fully removed at the return of Christ.

The righteousness of justification is 100%, but it is not inside us. It is in Christ. The righteousness of sanctification is inside us but it is never 100%. The righteousness of glorification will be both 100% and within us. That is the glorious gospel.

The love of God is illimitable. God so loved that he gave, and he gave the best—for the worst. That's the Christian gospel.

These great truths were all foreshadowed in the Old Testament. There, we read of prophets, priests, and kings, of a great temple, and of sacrifices. Then, at the end of that dispensation, one came who was all of these combined. And when he came, he said of the sacred writings: "*the Scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35). And he foretold the New Testament (John 14:26; 15:27).

This gospel is confirmed by our experience. The Bible says we are fallen people. We have sinned against God, against ourselves and others; experience testifies to that. Which of us has no regrets, no failures, no selfishness and no sin?

The Bible says the world is in rebellion and lies under a curse. Does not every day's experience testify to that? The Bible says that only the good is lastingly powerful and all those who have had any experience of life have discovered that. Sin is suicide but purity is paradise. God's way works. Every other way fails.

Well, if it's true that the Christian gospel is my only hope, and the only genuine source of committed love and loyalty and motivation for all that's right, how do I start? It's as simple as ABC: Admit, Believe, Commit. Start with Romans chapters 3 to 10. Admit to God that you are a sinner indeed. Believe, receive his forgiveness, no strings attached. Commit all your ways to him, heart, mind, hands, feet—all. It's the way to peace, progress, and joy unlimited.

Why not start today? Tomorrow is the fatal word that will fill Hell (and by Hell we do not mean everlasting punishing by fire, for that is now recognized as non-biblical, but the Hell of eternal loss).

Today is the day of salvation. Now is the appointed time (2 Corinthians 6:2).

He that cometh to me I will not cast out (John 6:37).

This man receives sinners (Luke 15:2).

He has gone to be the guest of a sinner

(Luke 19:7).

No one ever loved like Jesus! He loves you. He has a place for you—with him forever in an eternal fellowship where sorrow and pain and tears will be unknown. Don't spit in his face. Come today.

Afterword

For those who make the only sane decision, I recommend attending a Christian church or group where the gospel is always proclaimed. Avoid both legalism (the error of thinking salvation can be earned by our strict obedience) and antinomianism (the error of thinking God's grace means we can wilfully flout his law by disobedience).

Read the Bible. Begin with the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (a modern paraphrase such as *The Living Bible* or *The Message* might be easier to begin with). Skip what is difficult, such as the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew. You will skip less as the days go by.

You will also find it beneficial to read good books like those of C. S. Lewis, including his children's books which were written for 'children under one hundred and one'). I also recommend *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whitall Smith, available in any Christian bookshop or online. And learn to talk to God—about everything.

Why not read some of the classic Christian biographies sometime? Try the little book *Your Biography* by the present writer. It tells the stories not only of some Bible characters who typify us, but also of those who have changed the world for the better by lives which, though sacrificial, were filled with joy and assurance, faith, hope, and love