

A painting of a person standing on a rocky cliff edge, looking out over a vast, hazy landscape.

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**BOOK OF HOPE**

# What is KnowMyStory?

Everyone has a story. In this book, you will discover many stories. What is your story? You may have questions about why certain things happen. What's life all about? What's my purpose? As you read, be honest with yourself about any hurts, worries, addictions and brokenness. No matter what you are going through, there is hope. Whilst it may seem that the world is sometimes unsettled, you can find healing, purpose, forgiveness and a fresh start.

Why not commit to reading the entire book with an open mind?

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Special thanks to Kate Austin and Oliver Pengilley for sharing their art for this special edition Book of Hope. Visit Oliver and Kate online at [oliverpengilley.co.uk](http://oliverpengilley.co.uk) and [christart.co.uk](http://christart.co.uk).

# What's in the Book?

- Links to true stories. No one's life is perfect. Learn how others have dealt with problems. Follow the links or use a mobile device and a QR Code reader to link to more content online.
- Where to get help. There are many resources for young people in the UK. Find the help you need by using the links in this book and online at [knowmystery.co.uk](http://knowmystery.co.uk).
- Information that may change your attitude about life and your perspective on how you live it.

*So we're not giving up. How could we!*

*Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us,  
on the inside, where God is making new life,  
not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.*

*These hard times are small potatoes  
compared to the coming good times,  
the lavish celebration prepared for us.*

*There's far more here than meets the eye.*

*The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow.  
But the things we can't see now will last forever.*

*2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (The Message)*

## NOTE:

You will see words in *italics* in this book. These words come directly from the Bible. You will see references where you can read the Scriptures for yourself. See [youversion.com](http://youversion.com) to read more.

**You.**

**Me.**

We've all got a story.  
The good and the bad.  
The guts and the glory.

## What makes a **good story?**

Exciting characters? A happy ending?  
Or just something real, with no pretending?

You might feel like your story doesn't have much meaning.  
That if you told it, nobody would listen.

But that's not how we see it.  
We think everybody's story is worth listening to.

This book is filled with stories from people's lives,  
some of them are happening right now,  
others have been told for thousands of years.

They all have something in common.

**They are real.**

Just like your story.

So why not check them out,  
and see what you think?

**[www.knowmystory.co.uk](http://www.knowmystory.co.uk)**

**46% of children say they have been bullied – nearly half the population.**

**48% of children growing up today will see their parents' divorce before their 16th birthday.**

**Teenagers and young adults account for the highest number of hospital admissions for poisoning by drugs.**

**About 2 students in every secondary school classroom have or will self-harm.**

**More than a third of teenagers who have had sex say they regret it.**

**73% of teenagers say that alcohol was a factor in their decision to have sex.\***

*How can a young person live a clean life?*

*By carefully reading the map of your Word.*

*I'm single-minded in pursuit of you;*

*don't let me miss the road signs you've posted.*

*I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart*

*so I won't sin myself bankrupt.*

*Be blessed, God;*

*train me in your ways of wise living.*

*I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel*

*that comes from your mouth;*

*I delight far more in what you tell me about living*

*than in gathering a pile of riches.*

*I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you,*

*I attentively watch how you've done it.*

*I relish everything you've told me of life,*

*I won't forget a word of it.*

Psalm 119:9-16 (The Message)

\*Sources: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Office for National Statistics, National Health Service, Samaritans Suicide Prevention Strategy, The University of Glasgow, Royal College of Physicians.

## Chris' Story

Chris was trying to be someone he wasn't. He struggled to find his own identity and purpose. He saw qualities in others and tried to be like them. He became popular in the process. Yet this didn't help Chris; it only brought sadness. How can you replace judging and comparing yourself to others with the confidence of a full life? Watch Chris' story at: [KnowMyStory.co.uk/chris-story-2](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/chris-story-2).

*Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life. You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.*

Proverbs 19:20-21

*I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.*

John 10:10 (The Message)

*What happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshall and direct our energies wisely.*

Galatians 5:22-23 (The Message)

# THE STORY

You may not think about the Bible very much. It may seem like a huge book with random stories. But it's much more; the Bible is God's story for us... a Book of Hope for mankind. It tells us how our world became messed up and it explains the remedy for it. God's story shows us how we can have forgiveness, peace, healing and joy in our lives—no matter who we are, or what we've done.

It's a book full of ordinary people searching for the truth, for hope and for meaning in life. It's about people like you and me. The Bible is the greatest story ever written, but the story isn't finished yet. You and I are still living the story! To understand why our world is messed up, we need to go back to the beginning...

## CREATION

It's all good...

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

*Then God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters and the heavens from the waters of the earth". Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear". Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit". Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day and the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years". Then God said, "Let the water swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind". God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth and the small animals that scurry along the ground". So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!*

Genesis 1

Watch 'The Beginning' at [KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos).

*The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. But the Lord God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die".*

*The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"*

*"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden", the woman replied. "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die'.*

*"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil". The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.*

*When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

Genesis 2 & 3

## REBELLION

Only three chapters into the Bible, humans are already messing things up by rebelling against God. Isn't it weird how we often hurt the people who love us the most? Adam and Eve rejected God and a great situation turned very bad, very quickly. Now that humans have sinned (which is disobeying God), they invited death into creation.

# RESCUE ON THE WAY

Then along comes this guy named Abraham, and God decides that he's going to undo everything that humanity has messed up, by making a new way through Abraham and his family. Long story short, Abraham's family becomes the nation of Israel. God promised Abraham that through his offspring, he would one day send the Saviour into the world.

*God told Abraham: "Leave your country, your family and your father's home for a land that I will show you. I'll make you a great nation and bless you. I'll make you famous; you'll be a blessing. I'll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I'll curse. All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you".*

Genesis 12 (The Message)

A few generations later, they all end up as slaves in Egypt, but God's still with them and brings them out to a great place to live in and call their own. (God often uses people you wouldn't expect and gives them incredible influence. You will see this same message over and over again in the Bible.)

God wanted his people to follow him and live out the amazing life that he had for them, but they kept choosing their own way and getting hurt in the process. But God always had something bigger planned... something incredible.

Many years later God chose David to be king over his people, Israel. God gave David a special promise; that the coming Saviour would be one of his own descendants.

Isaiah wrote this more than 600 years before Jesus was born: "*Alright then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')".*" Isaiah 7:14

# RESUCE PLAN ACCOMPLISHED

At just the right time, God fulfilled his promises by sending his Son Jesus to become a human. Jesus was God who became human by being born into this world.

(Think about this statement again: God. Became. Human.)

It was through ordinary young people (Mary and Joseph), in an ordinary town (Bethlehem), that God came to earth to save us.

Jesus came and did what we couldn't do on our own. And the thing is, when God became human, we killed him. Jesus was brutally crucified like a criminal. But that's not the end of the story. Jesus rose again! He came back from death, and his resurrection is the victory over sin and death that we have been waiting for all this time! The rescue that God had promised (back when we first rebelled) finally happened in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus rose again to show once and for all that God is more powerful than all the brokenness, messiness and even death of the world as we know it because he conquered all of it by coming back to life. That's good, very good news.

*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.*

John 1

# STRESSED!??

Jesus said in John 14:27:

*"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid".*

## Lucy's Story



At only five years old, Lucy's father abandoned her and her mother. Lucy and her mum were forced to move from their comfortable home. As a young girl, Lucy was mugged and became very fearful.

**Everything changed one day.**

Lucy is no longer stressed and afraid.

Find out what happened here:

[KnowMyStory.co.uk/lucys-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/lucys-story).

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:6-7*

Are you experiencing stress or fear? Anxiety is a normal reaction. It can be caused by a trauma like Lucy's mugging, or even from trying to fit in. But if you feel stressed for too long, it can affect your physical wellbeing. Stress is very common amongst young people. If you or someone you know experiences anxiety, there is help (see Page 44).

# THE DREAMER

Have you ever been betrayed or hurt by the people closest to you? There's a good chance that Joseph knew how you felt. Joseph lived in Israel over three thousand years ago. Firstly, he was nearly murdered by his own brothers and then they sold him to human traffickers as a slave. With all the crazy stuff he went through, Joseph knew plenty about anxiety and fear...

*When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.*

*One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. "Listen to this dream", he said. "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"*

*His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.*

*Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem. When they had been gone for some time, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers, the flocks and bring back a report.*

But before he got there, they saw him coming and made plans to kill him. The brothers said, "Let's kill him and throw him into a pit and say that some wild animals ate him. Then we'll see what happens to those dreams."

One of Joseph's older brothers (Reuben) secretly planned to rescue him, so he suggested they throw Joseph into a dry well instead.

When Joseph came to his brothers, they pulled off his fancy coat and threw him into a dry well. As Joseph's brothers sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with all kinds of spices that they were taking to Egypt.

So Judah said, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his body? Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him. After all, he is our brother." And the others agreed.

*Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?" Their father recognised it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!"*

*Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard. Joseph was ripped away from his home and sold as a slave in another country!*

But this is not the end of Joseph's story.

You can read more on Page 12.

Genesis 37 (NLT, CEV)

## Paige's Story

Paige was just a young child, but she felt that she had to be the strong one in the family. Her mum had remarried, but her stepdad and mum fought. Then more family issues flooded her young life. As a teen, she finally broke down. Find out what happened next:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/paiges-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/paiges-story).



Is your family life difficult?  
Find help here:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp).



*The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:28b-31

# SHATTERED FAMILY

Joseph found himself in a scary situation. His brothers hated him so much that they wanted to kill him! Now, he was alone in a far away country and a slave at the mercy of his master. He must have been afraid and lonely. But Joseph trusted God to take care of him.

*Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realised that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake.*

*Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me", she demanded.*

*But Joseph refused. "Look", he told her, "My master trusts me with everything in his entire household. How could I do such a wicked*

*thing? It would be a great sin against God".*

Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of trying to rape her!

*Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.*

Joseph was in prison for several years! Even though his life was in turmoil, he continued to trust God. God helped Joseph interpret the dreams of several of the king's personal servants.

*Genesis 39*

Eventually, the Pharaoh had a dream that troubled him. Finally, one of his servants remembered Joseph. Joseph told the Pharaoh all about his dreams and what they meant. Egypt was going to have seven years of good crops, and then seven years of famine. Joseph even gave the Pharaoh suggestions on how to prepare for the coming food shortages.



*Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt". Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or a foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval".*

Everything Joseph had predicted came true. The entire region experienced seven very good years for crops and then seven very bad years where nothing grew. Those who were unprepared were starving!

*When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another? I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die".*

*Since Joseph was the governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. Although Joseph recognised his brothers, they didn't recognise him. And he remembered the dreams he'd had about them many years before.*

Genesis 41 & 42

In Genesis 39-46, we find out how God used the bad stuff in Joseph's life to save his family and his whole nation from starvation. Would Joseph decide to take revenge on his brothers for what they had done to him? Or would he forgive and welcome them? Read some of the story to find out.

Even though Joseph had experienced so much pain and hardship in his life, years later he was able to look back and see that God had a plan all along. Joseph told his brothers, *"Don't you see, you planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now—life for many people!"*

Genesis 50:20 (The Message)

Romans 8:28 says:

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*



Read more of this story at  
[MoreOfTheStory.com!](http://MoreOfTheStory.com)

## Amy's Story

There is an emptiness **We can't explain.** It's a longing for something more.

Amy had these same feelings.

Check out her story at:

[KnowMyStory.co.uk/amys-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/amys-story).



*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*

*Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

# Hope and Healing

*I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

Ephesians 3:14-19

## THE GOOD NEWS

The Old Testament of the Bible tells many of the promises of God. He promised to send a rescuer, (in those days they called him the Messiah) who would save the world and restore our relationship with God. God is pure and perfect. Yet no matter how 'good' people try to be, we cannot be perfect like God. This separates us from him. Adam and Eve could not even follow the one rule God gave them. They chose to sin against God by not following his rule. But they are not alone. We also have sinned and our sins separate us from God. When you read the Bible, you will see lots of examples of how people tried to do things their own way.



Even when we disobey him, God still loves us. He loves us so much that he made a plan way back in the beginning to restore our relationship with him. God's plan to save us was completed through Jesus. Jesus is God's only Son. While God is only one God, he exists as three distinct persons: God the Father, Jesus our Saviour and the Holy Spirit. But he is still one God. It's difficult to wrap our heads around, but if we could work out everything about God, then he wouldn't be God!

The New Testament shows us how God's plan was accomplished and how we can have a relationship with him. Jesus made this relationship possible. He made it possible for people to have eternal life with God. Think about how small we are on this lonely little planet. Yet to God, we are very important and Jesus loved us so much that he left paradise to come and live amongst us and to die for the sins of the world.



*The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world*

*not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or pain, but a birth that comes from God. John 1:6-13*



*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

Romans 5:6-8

*to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—*

*he created, but the world didn't recognise him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But*

# THE GREATEST GIFT

Do you love receiving presents? Most people do. But God prefers giving gifts, rather than receiving them.

You may love Christmas because of the surprises that wait when opening carefully wrapped presents. Think about the sacrifice of time or money that your parents or loved ones might have to give you the perfect gift. We don't always realise the sacrifices made by the people who love us. But if somebody really loves you, they don't see it as a sacrifice; because they enjoy giving gifts to the people they love. As much as a good parent loves their children, God loves each of us even more. And he gave the greatest gift ever.

When Jesus came to live amongst us, many people had been waiting for the rescuer God had promised. He would save the world and restore our relationship with the Creator. How would he do that?! Most people did not expect the Saviour to come to us as a helpless baby. But that is what happened. You've no doubt heard the story of Christmas before, but read it once more. This time, think about a few things as you read it:

- God promised a Messiah, but sending Jesus as a baby who was born to common people (rather than royalty) was a surprise to most in Jesus' day.
- The miracle birth was a sign to us that this was not a normal birth, or a normal child... He was God in human form. Jesus' birth fulfilled many prophecies made about him in the Old Testament.
- Jesus was born, grew up and lived as a person on earth – so he knows what it's like to be one of us. He knows pain, suffering, fear, stress, anger, injustice, bullying, temptation and more.

God sent an angel named Gabriel to a young woman named Mary. She was a virgin and engaged to a guy named Joseph (but he is not the same Joseph you read about earlier, this happened a long time afterwards).

*The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you". Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High.*

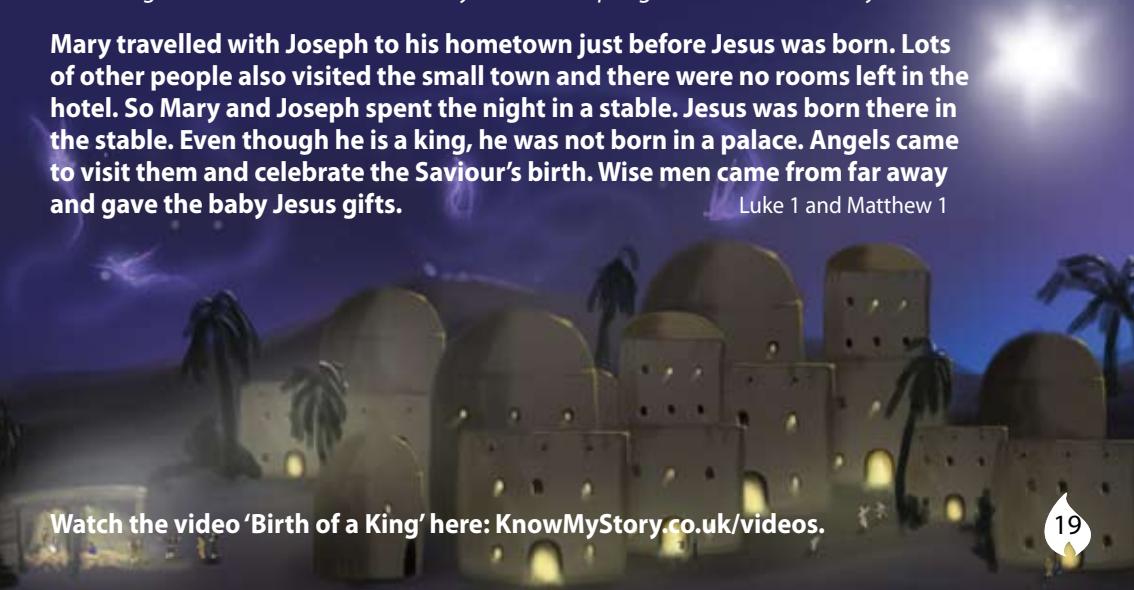
**The angel also told Mary that her son would be a great king. He would set up a different kind of kingdom. It is a kingdom that will never end!**

*Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said". And the angel left her.*

*An angel from the Lord came to Joseph in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins". Joseph and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do. But they did not sleep together before her baby was born.*

**Mary travelled with Joseph to his hometown just before Jesus was born. Lots of other people also visited the small town and there were no rooms left in the hotel. So Mary and Joseph spent the night in a stable. Jesus was born there in the stable. Even though he is a king, he was not born in a palace. Angels came to visit them and celebrate the Saviour's birth. Wise men came from far away and gave the baby Jesus gifts.**

Luke 1 and Matthew 1



Watch the video 'Birth of a King' here: [KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos).

While Jesus' birth was very unique, his childhood probably wasn't all that different from yours. He went to school, got a job, and grew taller and more clever. Some people liked him a lot, but others did not. We return to the story thirty years after Jesus was born...

## SYMBOLISM AND CHANGE

Before Jesus began his ministry, he was baptised in water as an example for us. Being baptised means being lowered underwater and then brought up again a few seconds later. Just like Jesus was dead, buried and then rose again; when we are baptised it shows that we are linked to Jesus Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. There's nothing magic about the event, but followers of Jesus do it as a symbol of their faith. Amongst other things, baptism is a public statement that a person has asked God to forgive him or her of doing wrong things and is willing to change their ways and follow Jesus Christ. We will learn more about the ways of Christ in this book. This is how Jesus was baptised:



*In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near". The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!'"*

*John was Jesus' cousin. John said: "I baptise with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

*Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptised by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptised by you", he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires". So John agreed to baptise him.*

*After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy".*

Matthew 3

# TEMPTATION

Satan (the devil) tricked Adam and Eve into disobeying God. Satan tries to trick all of us. He even tried to tempt Jesus to sin! But Jesus never sinned; he never gave in to Satan's tricks.

*The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so that the devil could test him. After Jesus had gone without eating for forty days and nights, he was very hungry. Then the devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, tell these stones to turn into bread". Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say: 'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.'"*

*Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest part of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say: 'God will give his angels orders about you. They will catch you in their arms, and you won't hurt your feet on the stones.'" Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!'"*

*Finally, the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms on earth and their power. The devil said to him, "I will give all this to you, if you will bow down and worship me".*

*Jesus answered, "Go away Satan! The Scriptures say: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.' Then the devil left Jesus, and angels came to help him.*

The devil did to Jesus what he does to all of us. He tempts us to sin against God. Talking to God about our problems and memorising the Scriptures like Jesus did can give us the power to say "No" to wrong things in the moment of temptation.

## FOCUS

We all struggle with

temptation. Sometimes we have urges or we're pressured to do things that are not healthy, like drugs. Or someone may try to push us into having sex. Even if you have made the decision not to do drugs or to wait to have sex, you will still be tempted! But if you plan ahead for how you will react in those moments when you may think 'it's ok', if you use Scripture to give you strength and if you stay away from people and places that may get you into trouble, you won't give in to temptation. You can ask God for help!

1 Corinthians 10:13 says:

*"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure".*

Matthew 4



## FOCUS

Jesus did not go through life alone, and neither should we. You can connect with a group to help you navigate life, and to help support you when you have troubles. That is one of the reasons the Church exists. When you choose to follow Jesus, you don't have to do it alone.

# THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

After Jesus left the desert, he started his ministry here on earth. But Jesus did not work alone. He chose ordinary people to help him share the good news of God's love and plan to restore our relationship with him. These followers were called 'disciples'.

*One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.*

*When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish".*

*"Master", Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again". And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.*

*When Simon Peter realised what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you". For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.*

*Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.*

Luke 5

# WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

Jesus and his disciples travelled from town to town, often on foot. Jesus taught people about God's love and he taught them how to live. He performed many miracles too. Some of the things Jesus said were shocking, but he didn't come to tell people what they wanted to hear. Jesus came to share the truth.

*There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi", he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you". Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God".*

*"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again'. The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit".*

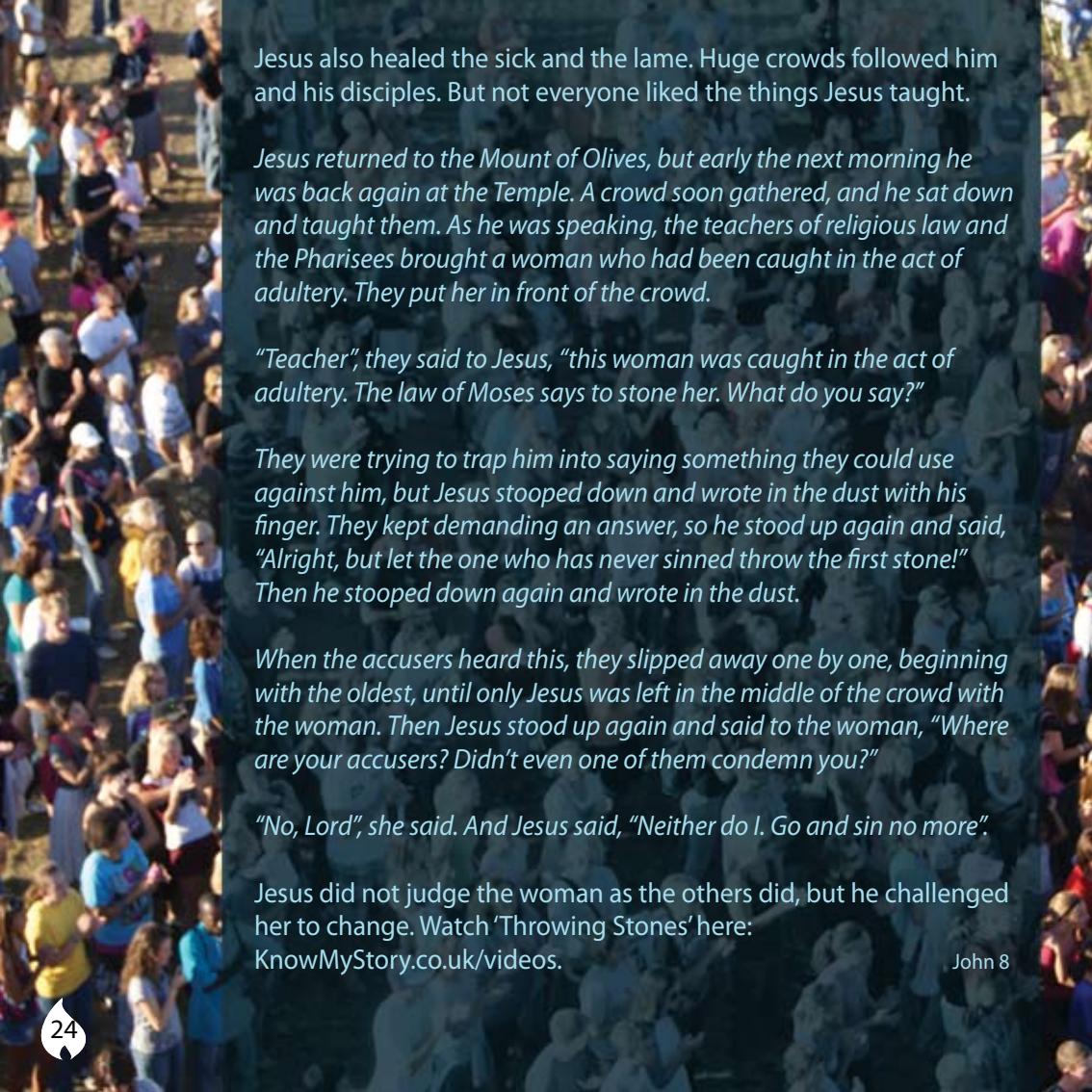
## GOD'S BLESSINGS

*God blesses those who are poor and realise their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (If this seems upside down to you, watch 'Upside Down Kingdom' at [KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos).)*

## LOVE FOR ENEMIES

*"You have heard the law says, 'Love your neighbour' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else?"*

John 3, Matthew 5



Jesus also healed the sick and the lame. Huge crowds followed him and his disciples. But not everyone liked the things Jesus taught.

*Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.*

*"Teacher", they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"*

*They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "Alright, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.*

*When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"*

*"No, Lord", she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more".*

Jesus did not judge the woman as the others did, but he challenged her to change. Watch 'Throwing Stones' here:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/videos).

John 8

*For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*      John 3:16-17

## Faith's Story

Faith was in love with an older guy. He pressured her to have sex with him. Then, she caught him cheating on her. She felt alone and unloved, until something miraculous happened.

Faith shares her story here:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/faiths-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/faiths-story).



*If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak of God's Word with power, revealing all mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump", and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but don't love, I've gained nothing. So no matter what I say, what I believe and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.*

*Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first", doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end. Love never dies.*

*1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (The Message)*

# Q & A

**Q:** How do I feel better about the way I look?

**A:** The media, our families and even our friends all have something to say about the way we look. Sometimes this can make us feel negative about our appearance. There are certain messages that the media convey about size, weight, style and identity that can make us feel ashamed to be who we are. BUT you don't have to accept these messages—each person is made unique, valuable and precious! There is no one else in the world like you, so don't try to be someone you are not! Next time you hear or think a negative message about the way you look think I'm not going to pretend to be someone else when I can be the best at being me!

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do good things he planned for us long ago.*

Ephesians 2:10

**Q:** How can I help someone who I think may have an eating disorder?

**A:** Talk to them. Tell them you are worried about them and that you have noticed they are skipping meals, exercising excessively, etc. Give them an opportunity to share with you how they are feeling. Be accepting and supportive but encourage them to seek help.

You could advise they visit their G.P. or school nurse for advice or look into support services such as [anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk](http://anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk).

*O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you restored my health.*

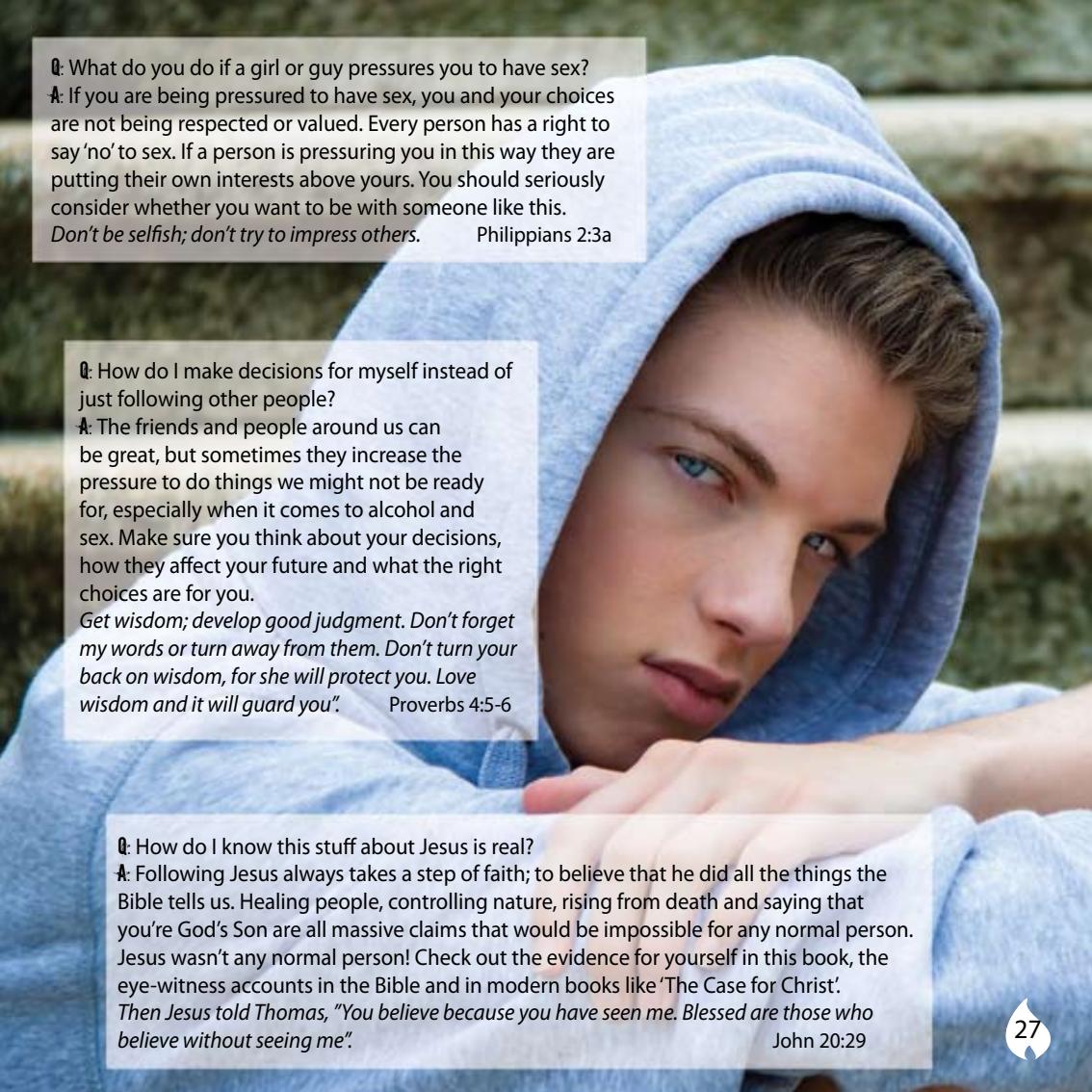
Psalm 30:2

**Q:** How do you know if you are ready to have sex?

**A:** Sex is a good thing—it can bring two people together in love and intimacy; but it is also a powerful act between two people and should be seen as such. There are many things to think about when making a decision about sleeping with someone. There are some consequences of having sex at the wrong time and without the right things in place that can harm you physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The Bible teaches that God's plan is for sex to be enjoyed within a married relationship between a husband and wife. Many people wait until they are married to have sex for the first time. Check out [moralrevolution.com](http://moralrevolution.com) for more information!

*There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one". Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one".*

1 Corinthians 6:16-17 (The Message)



**Q:** What do you do if a girl or guy pressures you to have sex?

**A:** If you are being pressured to have sex, you and your choices are not being respected or valued. Every person has a right to say 'no' to sex. If a person is pressuring you in this way they are putting their own interests above yours. You should seriously consider whether you want to be with someone like this.

*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others.* Philippians 2:3a

**Q:** How do I make decisions for myself instead of just following other people?

**A:** The friends and people around us can be great, but sometimes they increase the pressure to do things we might not be ready for, especially when it comes to alcohol and sex. Make sure you think about your decisions, how they affect your future and what the right choices are for you.

*Get wisdom; develop good judgment. Don't forget my words or turn away from them. Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love wisdom and it will guard you". Proverbs 4:5-6*

**Q:** How do I know this stuff about Jesus is real?

**A:** Following Jesus always takes a step of faith; to believe that he did all the things the Bible tells us. Healing people, controlling nature, rising from death and saying that you're God's Son are all massive claims that would be impossible for any normal person. Jesus wasn't any normal person! Check out the evidence for yourself in this book, the eye-witness accounts in the Bible and in modern books like 'The Case for Christ'.

*Then Jesus told Thomas, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me".* John 20:29



## Dave's Story

His life spiralled out of control  
and the alcohol only made things worse.

**Dave was at the end of his tether.**

What happened to change his life? Watch Dave's story here:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/daves-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/daves-story).

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues  
those whose spirits are crushed.      Psalm 34:18

[God] He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the  
mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground  
and steadied me as I walked along.      Psalm 40:2

## FEELING DOWN?

Everyone feels down sometimes. It is normal to be sad when bad things happen, like when a loved one dies, or when your parents split up, or when you are being bullied by someone. But if you feel really sad for more than a few weeks, you may be suffering with depression. If so, reach out to a trusted adult and get help. See Page 44 for more information or visit [KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp).

*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?  
Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover  
your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk  
with me and work with me—watch how I do it.  
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay  
anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company  
with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)



HELP!

Jesus met a lot of people who were troubled. One man had been lame for many years. He had completely given up hope.

*Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches.*

*Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralysed—lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”*

*“I can’t, sir”, the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up.”*

*Someone else always gets there ahead of me”.*

*Jesus told him,  
“Stand up, pick up  
your mat, and walk!”*

*Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! John 5*

*Another man was blind but he reached out to Jesus for help.*

*As Jesus and his followers were walking down a road, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus was sitting beside the road.*

*When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

*"Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here". Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.*

*"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "My rabbi", the blind man said, "I want to see!" And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you". Instantly the man could see and he followed Jesus down the road.*

Mark 10

The first man at the pool of Bethesda didn't see a way out of his situation. He had given up hope. The other man was screaming for help. And even though people told him to be quiet, he kept asking for help.

Like the first man at the pool, when someone is depressed, they may not be able to see past their current situation. Life may seem completely hopeless. Learn about the symptoms of depression and suicide here: [KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp).

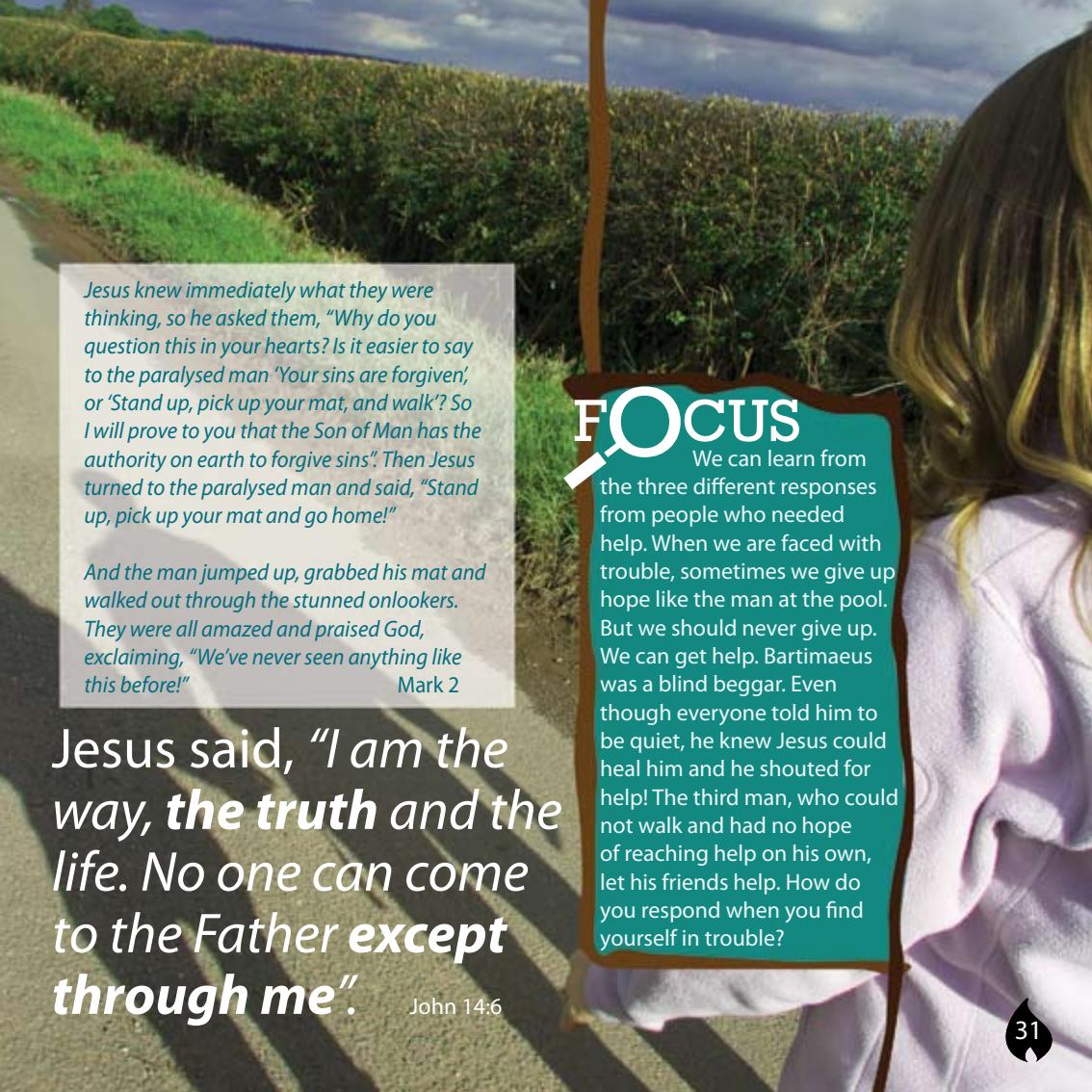
If you know someone that is depressed, they may not be able to call out for help. You can help them by reaching out to them and by talking to a trusted adult.

## HELP FROM FRIENDS

Jesus also encountered a man who needed to be healed, but had no way to reach Jesus. The man's friends helped him. They were fearless in their efforts to help their friend to receive healing...

*When Jesus returned to his hometown, the news spread quickly. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralysed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralysed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven".*

*But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"*



*Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralysed man 'Your sins are forgiven', or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins". Then Jesus turned to the paralysed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat and go home!"*

*And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"*

Mark 2

**Jesus said, "I am the way, **the truth** and the life. No one can come to the Father **except** through me".**

John 14:6

## FOCUS

We can learn from the three different responses from people who needed help. When we are faced with trouble, sometimes we give up hope like the man at the pool. But we should never give up. We can get help. Bartimaeus was a blind beggar. Even though everyone told him to be quiet, he knew Jesus could heal him and he shouted for help! The third man, who could not walk and had no hope of reaching help on his own, let his friends help. How do you respond when you find yourself in trouble?



## Ben's Story

Ben had a problem with online porn. He was ashamed and thought he could never be forgiven and move on with his life. But he found help. And so can you. Visit [KnowMyStory.co.uk/bens-story-2](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/bens-story-2).

## ADDICTION

You may think of drugs or alcohol when you hear the word 'addiction'. But it comes in many different forms. It could be sex, food, fitness, self-harm, being thin, sports, gambling, or any number of other things. These things are not necessarily wrong, unless you can't function without them.

Addiction is defined as being 'enslaved' to something. That means that you've stopped being in control and your addiction has started to control you. You feel like you can't live without it. It can bring shame and isolate us. But the truth is we were never meant to live alone.

*In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free.*   Psalms 118:5

*The Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.*

Galatians 3:22

*When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 6:20-23



# A LITTLE MAN WITH BIG PROBLEMS

In the first century, Rome ruled Israel. The Romans often hired Jewish people as tax collectors. Everyone hated them because they often over taxed people and kept the money for themselves. Tax collectors were the most hated people in their society, ripping off their own people for an enemy. They were also seen as traitors because they worked for the Roman Empire. Sometimes having power and money changes people. It brings out the worst in them. And the more they get, the more they want. It becomes an addiction...

*Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He*

*tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.*

*When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today".*

*Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner", they grumbled.*

*Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"*

*Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost".*

Luke 19

## FOCUS

Nothing good

ever comes from hiding  
your pain or remaining in  
isolation. It takes courage  
to bring pain into the  
light. Zacchaeus climbed  
the tree so he could see  
Jesus. In a way, he was  
reaching out. When Jesus  
saw Zacchaeus, he knew  
instantly that the man  
needed help. You can  
make a decision today  
to talk to God about  
what's troubling you.  
Ask him for help. Talk to  
someone you trust about  
what's going on in your  
life. Find resources here:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/  
gethelp](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/gethelp)

A photograph of a man wearing a blue camouflage hoodie, looking down at his smartphone. He is sitting on a bench or chair, with his hands resting on his lap. The background is slightly blurred.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" The man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind'. And, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'."

"Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

Jesus replied with a story:

A Jewish man was travelling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, "Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here".

"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy". Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same".

Luke 10

## FOCUS

Some people

think that being a Christian is about following a set of rules, but in reality Jesus only asks us to follow two. And when we do, we're not just living for ourselves anymore. We become part of a much bigger way of life. God's heart is to have a relationship with us and for us to show love and kindness to others. By doing this, we show God how much we love him too.

## TIME ALONE WITH GOD

Jesus' work on earth only lasted about three years. He and his disciples were busy people. But Jesus often took time alone to pray. We can follow his example. Christians believe it is important to spend time talking with God. You can be honest with him and tell him all of your troubles. Jesus said:

*"When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."*

*"When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this:*

*Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."*

Matthew 6

Jesus knew his time on earth was short. He would soon have to die. It was part of the plan all along. He and some of his disciples went to the Mount of Olives. There he told them, "Pray that you will not give in to temptation".

*He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine". Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.* Luke 22



## Lisa's Story

Lisa was cruelly bullied as a teenager. She developed an **eating disorder** as a result. Learn how her life changed here:  
[KnowMyStory.co.uk/Lisas-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/Lisas-story).

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

*Psalm 139:13-14*

*Don't bad-mouth each other, friends. It's God's Word, his Message, his Royal Rule, that takes a beating in that kind of talk. You're supposed to be honouring the Message, not writing graffiti all over it. God is in charge of deciding human destiny. Who do you think you are to meddle in the destiny of others?*

*James 4:11-12 (The Message)*

*Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.*

*Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging", says God. "I'll take care of it".*

*Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.*

*Romans 12:14-21 (The Message)*

# BETRAYED

Judas was one of Jesus' disciples. Yet evil entered his heart and Judas betrayed Jesus. The religious leaders that wanted to kill Jesus paid Judas thirty pieces of silver to help them. Judas led an angry mob to the garden where Jesus was praying.

*The men grabbed Jesus and arrested him. But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear. "Put away your sword", Jesus told him. "Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don't you realise that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly? But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?"* Jesus healed the man's ear.

Jesus was taken to the government leaders. The governor, Pilate, did not find Jesus guilty of anything. Some of the people demanded that Jesus be put to death anyway. They all yelled, "Nail him to a cross!"

*Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl and water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. The responsibility is yours!" He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.*

## BULLIED AND KILLED

Jesus had not done anything wrong, but he was still brutally shamed and beaten. If you've ever been physically abused or bullied, know that Jesus understands what it feels like too. When you pray, remember that he is there for you. There will come a time when he is going to make everything right again.

*Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a sceptre. Then they knelt down before him in mockery and taunted, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.*

Matthew 26, 27

*People who passed by said terrible things about Jesus. They shook their heads and shouted, "So you're the one who claimed you could tear down the temple and build it again in three days! If you are God's Son, save yourself and come down from the cross!"*

*At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last. And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow.*

## **HE IS RISEN!**

Jesus was buried in a tomb. As far as most people were concerned, he was dead and gone. But three days later, he rose from the dead! Because Jesus was God's Son, death had no power over him. The punishment of sin is death. Jesus was the only person to live on earth that never sinned, so he was able to take the punishment for all of our sins. He defeated both sin and death! We can be forgiven of our sins right now, just by asking

God. And someday, when Jesus returns, he will destroy death and evil completely. This may sound like a crazy story without any evidence, but when Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to more than five hundred different people, many of whom went on to be killed for refusing to deny that they had seen Jesus rise again. Jesus spent time with his disciples before he returned to heaven...

*Jesus' eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him—but some of them doubted!*

*Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations. Baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Matthew 27 & 28, Luke 23

# A CHANGE OF HEART

Jesus' followers shared the Good News of his life with others. (It's called Good News because it means we can be reconciled with our Creator and enjoy his goodness forever. We no longer have to fear the punishment for our sin, we can be set free from the things that hold us captive.) The amazing news had travelled to faraway places. Many people put their faith in Jesus and followed his teachings. But some of the government and religious leaders still felt threatened by this new way of life. They even passed laws that made it illegal to follow Jesus. The leaders wanted to stop the truth from being shared.

The first time we meet Saul in the Bible, he's a very angry guy. Saul did not believe in freedom of religion. Saul wanted the rulers to give him permission to lock up every person who followed Jesus. The rulers agreed with Saul. They let him do what he wanted with the followers of Jesus Christ.

Saul was on a journey to find Christians and punish them. A blinding light came down from the sky. A voice started speaking from within the light. Saul fell to the ground when he heard the voice.

*The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! Saul picked himself up off the ground, but*

*when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.*

*Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision. The Lord told him to go to Paul.*

*"But Lord", exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And he is authorised by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name".*

*But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake".*

*So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit". Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptised.*      *Acts 9*



## Mark's Story

Like Saul, Mark hated Christians because they were happy. He was miserable. Mark self-harmed and tried to kill himself. But Mark's view of the world changed quite dramatically. Watch Mark's story here: [KnowMyStory.co.uk/Marks-story](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk/Marks-story).

Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12:2

## FOCUS

Even if you feel you are a million miles away from God, nothing can separate you from his love for you. No matter what you've done, no matter how bad you may feel about your past, God is waiting to hear from you.

## NEW LIFE

When Saul got his sight back, he saw the world in a whole new way. He saw that Jesus was not the enemy. Jesus was God. And Jesus loved him even though Saul had been so cruel to Jesus' followers!

Now that Saul knew who Jesus really was, he began shaking things up. He told everyone he could about Jesus being the Son of God. It confused people, because they had only known Saul as the man that he was before, a man who hated Jesus and His followers.

Saul became known as Paul. He travelled long distances and shared the teachings of Jesus with many people. Paul wrote many books in the New Testament of the Bible! All because of Jesus, Paul became a great man of faith. Paul's writings have changed the lives of countless people over thousands of years.

No matter what you've done, don't give up. Jesus has not given up on you. If he was able to forgive Saul and give him a fresh start, imagine what Jesus can do for you. He wants to give you a great future. He wants you to join him and make a real difference in this world.

# THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE

Do you know someone who has attempted suicide? It's an incredibly tragic thing, and comes from a place of real pain. When a person feels there is no hope, they may consider it. But suicide is never the answer. Life can be painful, but there is always hope. As we learn from the story below, things often seem more hopeless than they really are.

Paul was travelling with a man named Silas. They taught about the way of Jesus. Paul healed a girl who was a slave that could tell fortunes. The people who forced her to work for them became angry with Paul and Silas because now the girl could not make them any money.

*A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.*

*Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"*

*The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

*They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptised. He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.*



# A NEW LIFE

Paul wrote:

*Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.*

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; new life has begun!*

*God was bringing the world back to himself through Christ. He did not hold people's sins against them. God has trusted us with the message that people may be brought back to him. So we are Christ's official messengers. It is as if God were making his appeal through us. Here is what Christ wants us to beg you to do. Come back to God!*

*Christ didn't have any sin. But God made him become sin for us.*

*So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us.*

2 Corinthians 5 (NLT / NIRV)

## A DECISION TO MAKE

God wants to give you hope and a new way of living. Only you can make the decision to accept this gift. Jesus lived a perfect life on earth so that he could take the punishment for our sins. He came back to life, proving his power over sin and death. That was Jesus' part. Your part is to believe and act on what Jesus did. Admit the wrongs you have done. Ask him to forgive you. Talk to Jesus today. There is power in the name of Jesus, and there is power in saying and really meaning these words to God. If you're not sure what to say, say this prayer:

"Jesus, I believe you were sent by God to take the punishment I deserve. Please forgive me and free me from my sin. Come into my life and help me to live this journey, knowing and following you. Thank you for answering my prayer".

# NEXT STEPS

There are four important things you can do that will strengthen your relationship with Jesus and will make your new life with God even better.

## GET WITH A GROUP

Find some Christian friends. Jesus had a close group of friends that shared his love for God. This is an example for us. We all need friends who believe in Jesus to encourage us and grow with us. You help them and they help you. God designed us to be part of a community. Visit a local church and become involved. You will discover more and become a part of God's family. Not sure where to go? Check out [findachurch.co.uk](http://findachurch.co.uk).

## GO BY THE GUIDE

Read the Book of Hope. It tells the story of Jesus and has real answers for real problems in life. You can read the Bible. Visit Youversion.com and you can read it anywhere, anytime! The Bible is the word of God, and it can teach you everything you need to know about living life in relationship with Jesus. You can also memorise some parts that are special to you, so that they never leave your mind. As you read and memorise, ask God to help you understand and remember. He will always help because he loves it when his people read the word he has given them.

## CHAT WITH JESUS

Pray often. Prayer is communication with Jesus. You can talk to him out loud or inside your head, wherever you are. He always hears you. Jesus loves it when you talk to him! You can tell him about your love for him, thank him for saving you and bring your needs to him. He is always listening and is always faithful to respond.

## SHARE THE GIFT

You can tell others about Jesus. You have received the greatest gift in the world from God: Jesus as your Saviour. Think about the people you love and tell them about this precious gift.

Visit [KnowMyStory.co.uk](http://KnowMyStory.co.uk) to watch videos from young people who have gone through difficult situations. All have faced tough times and were helped by a loving God.

If you have specific questions or issues, here are some links that may help you:

**Unplanned pregnancy?**  
**Worries? Questions?**  
[careconfidential.com](http://careconfidential.com)

**Thoughts of suicide?**  
[samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

**Questions about sex?**  
[moralrevolution.com](http://moralrevolution.com)  
[nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)

**Feeling sad and down? You  
may be experiencing depression.**  
[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)

**Problems with drugs?**  
[talktofrank.com](http://talktofrank.com)

**Does a parent have a drinking problem?**  
[nacoa.org.uk](http://nacoa.org.uk)

**Drug or alcohol dependency?**  
[addaction.org.uk](http://addaction.org.uk)

**Are you a victim of sexual abuse?**  
[childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)

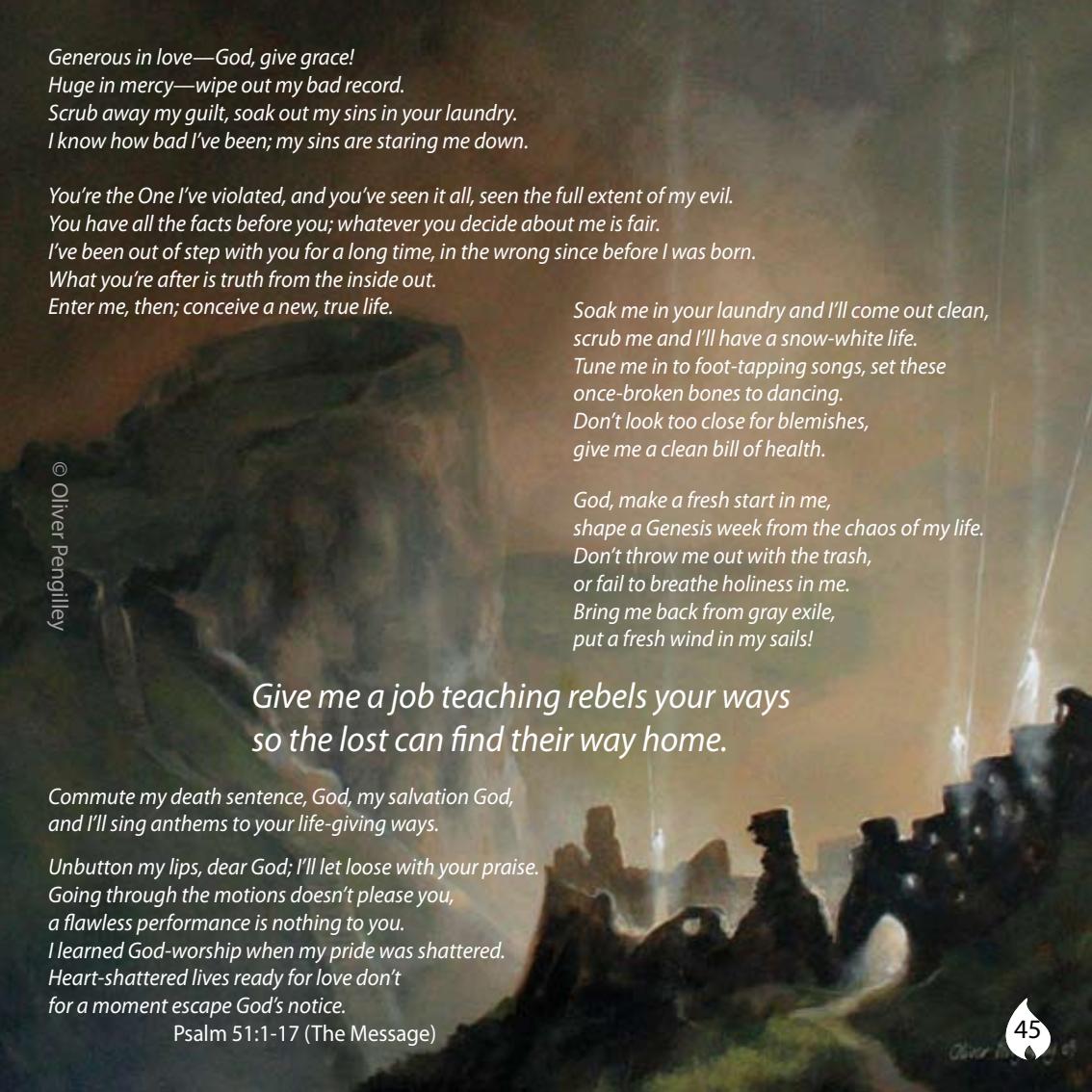
### **[purecreativearts.co.uk](http://purecreativearts.co.uk)**

Pure Creative Arts is a charity that specialises in theatre-in-education productions, interactive workshops, health projects and mentoring schemes. They work in schools and with youth groups across the U.K. to tackle many subjects that young people find it difficult to talk about and deal with.

They are passionate about seeing this generation of young people set free from the things that hold them back and discovering their God-given potential. They believe that each and every young person deserves a voice, and a chance to pursue the future and life that they were made for.

### **NEW RE Programmes!**

Ask your Religious Education teacher to check out a new programme for your classes! Share this website with them so they can learn more about the 'KnowMyStory' programme: [RETeachers.com](http://RETeachers.com)



*Generous in love—God, give grace!*

*Huge in mercy—wipe out my bad record.*

*Scrub away my guilt, soak out my sins in your laundry.*

*I know how bad I've been; my sins are staring me down.*

*You're the One I've violated, and you've seen it all, seen the full extent of my evil.*

*You have all the facts before you; whatever you decide about me is fair.*

*I've been out of step with you for a long time, in the wrong since before I was born.*

*What you're after is truth from the inside out.*

*Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.*

*Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out clean,  
scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life.  
Tune me in to foot-tapping songs, set these  
once-broken bones to dancing.  
Don't look too close for blemishes,  
give me a clean bill of health.*

*God, make a fresh start in me,  
shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.  
Don't throw me out with the trash,  
or fail to breathe holiness in me.  
Bring me back from gray exile,  
put a fresh wind in my sails!*

## *Give me a job teaching rebels your ways so the lost can find their way home.*

*Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation God,  
and I'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways.*

*Unbutton my lips, dear God; I'll let loose with your praise.  
Going through the motions doesn't please you,  
a flawless performance is nothing to you.*

*I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered.  
Heart-shattered lives ready for love don't  
for a moment escape God's notice.*

*Psalm 51:1-17 (The Message)*



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