

THE  
G O D -  
S H A P E D  
B R A I N  
S T U D Y G U I D E

---

A Companion to  
*The God-Shaped Brain*

---

Timothy R. Jennings



IVP Books

An imprint of InterVarsity Press  
Downers Grove, Illinois

InterVarsity Press

P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426

World Wide Web: [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)

E-mail: [email@ivpress.com](mailto:email@ivpress.com)

©2013 by Timothy R. Jennings

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from InterVarsity Press.

InterVarsity Press® is the book-publishing division of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA®, a movement of students and faculty active on campus at hundreds of universities, colleges and schools of nursing in the United States of America, and a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. For information about local and regional activities, write Public Relations Dept., InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, 6400 Schroeder Rd., P.O. Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895, or visit the IVCF website at <[www.intervarsity.org](http://www.intervarsity.org)>.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Interior design: Beth Hagenberg

Image: Head with Gear inside: CSA Images/Color Printstock Collection/Getty Images

# God Is Love

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Luke 24:13-32, and describe what happened in this story.
2. What belief changed in this story?
3. What was the basis for the change in this belief?
4. What was the consequence of changing this belief?
5. What lesson does this teach us about how are beliefs are to be formed?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

I attended a conference at Harvard University on spirituality in medicine, which sought to explore the benefits of spirituality on physical health. Speakers at the conference represented a variety of religious groups: Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Islam, Christian Science, Mormon, to name a few. One of the main emphases of the seminar was that people were free to believe whatever they wanted and all beliefs should be equally valued. I pointed out that, while the freedom to choose one's own beliefs should be valued, not all beliefs are equally healthy. Consider the following scenario, recognizing people are free to believe whatever they choose, but evaluate the various costs and benefits resulting from which belief is actually chosen.

For example, Wanda was admitted to the hospital for severe de-

pression. She was required to wear oxygen at night due to severe lung disease. During my evaluation she disclosed that she smoked two packs of cigarettes per day. When I asked why she smoked, given her lung problems, she stated, “Smoking helps me breathe better.”

1. Was Wanda free to believe cigarettes helped her breathe better?
2. What was the consequence for believing this?
3. Does science provide evidence that would demonstrate her belief to be false?
4. What would motivate a person to cling to a belief in the face of contradicting scientific evidence?
5. Consider your beliefs about God, and reflect on the law of love as described in chapter 1. Then examine God’s creation, where do you find evidence of God’s character of love in nature and science?

## **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

Jerry had a lifelong pattern of exploiting others, bending the rules and manipulating the system. Jerry was a dentist who had recently lost his license for illegally selling narcotic pain prescriptions to make money. Jerry refused to accept any personal responsibility but, instead, blamed society for having draconian rules on substance use, restricting adults from making their own decisions. He insisted he had done nothing wrong since he was merely ensuring the drug users (who, he said, would use drugs anyway) got a safe and pharmaceutically clean supply of drugs. Jerry believed he was helping others.

1. What unhealthy beliefs did Jerry have?
2. What consequences did this have for Jerry—both professionally and even spiritually?
3. Can God heal Jerry as long as he holds to such beliefs? Why or why not?

4. What truth might help Jerry?
5. List three examples from your life where you have changed your beliefs. What happened as a result of changing your belief, and how did you come to change it (i.e., what factors led you to change your belief)?

# The Human Brain and Broken Love

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Genesis 3:1-6, and describe what happened in this passage.
2. What belief changed in this story?
3. What was the basis for the change in belief?
4. What was the consequence of changing this belief?
5. How could this lie be exposed and the truth retained?
6. Read 1 Samuel 16:7. What does it mean that God looks upon the heart?
7. Now read Hebrews 8:10. What does writing the law on the heart mean?
8. Discuss the difference between external behavior and a heart's motive.
9. What law does God desire to "write" onto the hearts of humankind?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. Describe five healthy activities that result in positive emotional experiences, and identify which principles of God are utilized during these activities.

2. Describe five destructive activities that cause initially positive emotional experiences, and identify which principles of God are being violated during these activities.

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. Recount two times when you have believed a lie.
2. What impact did believing the lie have on you and your relationships?
3. Did love and trust get stronger?
4. How did you discover the lie was a lie?
5. What impact did the truth have on you and your relationships?
6. Recount two times when you told a lie.
7. What was that experience like? Did you experience anxiety and stress? Were your relationships impacted?
8. Review the brain circuits in chapter 2, and contemplate the impact that such action has had on your health.
9. What happened when the truth was revealed?

# The Infection of Fear

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Romans 7, and describe what Paul is writing about?
2. What is the source of Paul's turmoil?
3. Does it make a difference to realize that all humans since Adam and Eve have been born infected with fear and selfishness, and that they didn't choose to be this way?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. Science has shown that the mind affects the body and the body affects the mind. List examples from your experience where this has happened.
2. How does illness and fever affect your mood? your ability to think sharply?
3. How do powerful emotions affect your appetite, sleep, energy? Do you ever get aches and pains when you're upset?
4. List three activities you can do or can change in order to improve your physical and mental health?

## LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. Identify the fears you struggle with (e.g., fear of abandonment, what others think, getting fat, getting sick, not being loved,



failing, finances, not being good enough, etc.).

2. How do your fears impact you?
3. What actions do you take as a result of your fears?
4. What beliefs have you developed based on fear?
5. Examine your fear in light of truth, evidence and facts. What lessons can be learned?
6. What principles of God can bring healing? (If you're unsure, don't worry, just keep reading and doing more lessons.)
7. List three of your favorite television programs, and then list the emotions these programs arouse. Compare these emotions, feelings and desires with God's principles, and describe any conflicts you find.
8. Examine the content of the programs you watch and contrast the content with God's principles, methods and motives (see Philippians 4:8).

# Freedom to Love

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Matthew 27:19-54, and describe what happened.
2. Do you believe Jesus was not only man but also God? Did Jesus have the power, if he so chose to utilize it, to deliver himself from the cross?
3. What do we learn about Jesus and God that he didn't do this?
4. When Jesus was faced with the choice of saving himself by the use of his power or giving humankind the freedom to kill him, what choice did he make?
5. What does this say about the kind of being God is? about God's valuing of freedom?
6. Read Revelation 13:11-17, and describe what is happening.
7. What methods were being employed (pay special attention to verses 16-17)?
8. What differences do you notice in the methods of Christ and the methods of the beast?
9. What implication does this have for your life?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

In the first decade of the 2000s, the news reported how the Taliban treated people under its rule: There were strict regulations on all as-

pects of one's personal life, including dress codes, travel restrictions, dietary habits, and speech. If someone were to choose to become a Christian they would be executed.

1. If you lived in such a society how would you react?
2. What law of God is being violated by such behavior?
3. While the Taliban are an extreme example, describe why no government of the world accurately represents the government of God.
4. Can love be won by the use of might, power, force and coercion?
5. Would you want to live eternally in a universe governed like the Taliban governs?
6. Have you ever heard anything taught within Christianity that would violate God's law of liberty? If so, what?

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. Describe two examples in your life where you had your liberties violated.
2. How did you react?
3. Did love get stronger or get damaged?
4. What did you do to get your freedom back?
5. If you are currently in a situation where freedoms are being violated—whether it is your freedoms that are being violated or you are violating someone else's—describe what you can do to restore liberty in your life and relationships.
6. Have you ever been worried about what people think of you? (If you have not experienced this, then answer about what you think would happen to someone who was in that situation.)
7. Describe how these feelings can lead to loss of liberty.

8. When you surrender your individuality to the opinions of others, what happens to you?
9. If you know someone who does this regularly, does this type of behavior cause you to admire and respect him or her more?
10. If you set others free to think whatever they want of you, realizing their opinions don't determine reality, what happens to you?

## Love Strikes Back

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

God created the world to operate on the principle of love. When humankind sinned the principle of self-first infected creation.

1. Read Exodus 2:11-12. What principle was Moses operating on in this scene?
2. Read Exodus 32:31-32. What principle was Moses operating on in this scene?
3. Read Acts 8:1-3. What principle was Saul of Tarsus practicing in his life?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:15. What principle was Paul (formerly Saul) practicing then?
5. Read 1 John 3:16. What principle is being described?
6. Read Revelation 12:11. What character trait is being described here, regarding those who are ready to meet Jesus when he comes?
7. Read Luke 7:36-50, and describe what is happening.
8. What motivated the woman to anoint Jesus' feet?
9. What motivated those who criticized her?
10. What did Jesus say regarding those who are forgiven much?
11. Have you experienced God's forgiveness and love in your life? What impact has this positive or negative experience had on you?

**LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE**

The law of love is the principle of outward, other-centered giving, and it emanates from the character of God himself. All creation is designed with this principle as its basic code of operation, the secret on which life is founded. Describe examples of this principle that you can observe the world around you.

**LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. Describe an experience where you acted in love, with a genuine interest in giving to benefit another without any expectation or desire for reward. What happened inside you?
2. Now describe an experience where selfishness dominated your actions, where you were thinking of your needs, desires and wants, forgetting about others. What happened inside of you? Contrast this experience with times when you acted in love; what differences do you observe?

## Engaging the Battle

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read 2 Samuel 13:1-15. When verse 1 says Amnon “fell in love,” do you think this was love?
2. What was the motivation for his action?
3. After acting on lust, does fear go up or down? What does fear lead one to do?
4. If you are attracted to someone who is not interested in you and you act with genuine love, what action will you take?

### LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. Imagine that you’ve found an injured sparrow. You have a desire to rescue it, but as you approach to save it, the bird does all in its power to flee.
2. What motivates the bird to act this way?
3. What lessons are there in this scenario regarding how we act toward God in our spiritual sickness?
4. Does fear lead to greater openness and trust, or greater secrecy and caution?

### LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. When you have sinned, do you or have you ever struggled with fear of God?

2. What helped you overcome that fear in order to open your heart to him?
3. What would you say to someone who is struggling with guilt and too afraid of God to open her heart to him?
4. If you became sick from doing IV drugs and had a high fever, would you be afraid to go to the doctor or would you want to go? Would you want to go see a judge? Does it make a difference in opening our hearts to God if we see him as our heavenly physician instead of a cosmic judge?



## Love Stands Firm

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Judges 16:6-22. How would you describe the relationship depicted here?
2. Was this a love-based relationship?
3. In Judges 16:16, Delilah accuses Samson of not loving her. What do you make of this?
4. If Samson did love her with a godly love, what would he have told her? So why did he tell her what he did? Did Delilah love Samson?
5. Does godly love ever require a person to violate his or her conscience?
6. Read 2 Samuel 2:11-16, and describe what happened.
7. What motivated David to pursue Bathsheba? Were his actions based on love?
8. Once she became pregnant, how did David respond?
9. What motivated David's actions?
10. What was the consequence for David?
11. What is the lesson for us from this, when we let fear override love?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

In today's society people turn to many sources to alleviate fear in decision-making—astrology, fortune-tellers, witchcraft, friends, powerful feelings, religious leaders, alcohol, drugs, etc.

1. What sources for alleviating fear are reliable, and what ones are unreliable?
2. What makes a resource reliable?
3. Is there a difference between “claims” and “evidence”? Which one is more trustworthy?
4. How would you describe genuine, godly love? Is godly love reliable or unreliable? Is it a feeling, more than that, or something else?
5. In Gethsemane, did Jesus experience powerful feelings? What was the emotional tenor of his feelings? Did he act on those feelings or take an action contrary to what the feelings wanted? Did Jesus choose to act in harmony with love? If so, what does this tell us about love and emotions?
6. Review the scientific studies at the end of chapter 1, which document the impact volunteerism has on health. What do studies like those tell us about love?

## LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. List three examples of situations where you have been tempted by fear or insecurity.
2. How did you choose whether to give into the fear?
3. What was the consequence when you went with fear?
4. What were the consequences when you did what you knew was right and loving, despite the fear?
5. What choice would you make today and why?

# Changing Our View of God

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read John 4:4-29, and describe what transpired here.
2. How did Jesus initiate contact with this woman?
3. Why did he ask her to do something for him rather than simply proclaiming the truth?
4. How did Jesus bring her to have confidence in him?
5. Do you think Jesus was breaking down preconceived ideas she held about God? If so, describe how.
6. What did Jesus' actions reveal to us about God?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. Many people believe that there is no God, that nature reveals only natural forces at work. What evidence can you provide that supports the existence of God and his character of love?
2. We cannot demonstrate either the big bang or creation in a lab experiment, but we can examine the assumptions both theories rest on. Examine each of the assumptions below and then list tests, or experiments, we can do today to demonstrate whether the various assumptions are true or not. Which assumptions are and are not scientifically valid based on what can be demonstrated today?

- Evolution: something came from nothing
- Creation: something came from something
  
- Evolution: life comes from nonliving matter
- Creation: life comes from living matter
  
- Evolution: complex things come from chaos without any intelligent input
- Creation: complex things come from chaos with intelligent input

### LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. List two beliefs about God you have changed during the course of your life.
2. Discuss the basis for the change in belief, as well as the impact on your life when the belief changed.

Mark was angry with God and, despite being raised in a conservative Christian home, no longer attended church. Ever since the death of his unborn child, he no longer believed God cared. He concluded that if God were all-powerful and all-loving, then he wouldn't sit by idly and let children be sick and die.

3. If Mark were your spouse or friend, what might you say to him?
4. What Bible examples can you give that deal with this issue?
5. How does Zechariah 4:6—which says “ ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit’ says the Lord” —apply?
6. God has all power yet he prefers to win people, rather than coerce people. How does this truth impact your life?

# The Power of Truth

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read 1 Kings 13:11-25. What is being described here?
2. Is the old prophet a “false prophet”?
3. Did the old prophet lie?
4. What is the lesson? Are we responsible for the truth God has presented to us—regardless of what some other person, including one claiming to be speaking for God, might say?
5. Read John 8:32. What does this mean?
6. List three biblical examples of truth setting people free.

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

History is replete with accounts of doctors utilizing treatments that not only failed to help but actually harmed. For more than two millennia, physicians practiced bleeding and leaching to drain evil humors. George Washington, after falling ill, had half his body’s blood drained, certainly accelerating his demise.<sup>1</sup>

Tobacco was used by doctors for centuries to treat a variety of medical illnesses, including ulcers, polyps, skin lesions, headaches, respiratory problems and diseases of the glands.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century doctors used a variety of poisons such as opium, quinine, arsenic, calomel (mercury), antimony and strychnine<sup>3</sup> to treat a broad range of conditions. They called these toxins “medicines.”

1. What do these examples tell us about “secular” truth? Is it progressive, unfolding, increasing over time?
2. Is it healing to embrace and apply the truth once it is understood?
3. What about spiritual truth? Is our understanding of God increasing over the centuries, or are we stuck with antiquated concepts that, in some instances, are no healthier than leaching?
4. Identify examples of unfolding spiritual truth.

### LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. Examine three decisions you regret most in your life. What would you do differently if you could? How many of those decisions were made based on truth, and how many were made either because you believed a lie or you knew the truth at the time but chose to ignore it?
2. What does your own experience tell you about the power of truth?

---

<sup>1</sup>V. Vadakan, “The Asphyxiating and Exsanguinating Death of President George Washington,” *The Permanente Journal* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2004); Gilbert R. Seigworth, “Bloodletting Over the Centuries,” *New York State Journal of Medicine* (December 1980), [www.pbs.org/wnet/redgold/basics/bloodlettinghistory.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/redgold/basics/bloodlettinghistory.html).

<sup>2</sup>James Grehan, “Smoking and ‘Early Modern’ Sociability: The Great Tobacco Debate in the Ottoman Middle East (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries),” *The American Historical Review* 5, no. 3 (2006); S. A. Dickson, *Panacea or Precious Bane: Tobacco in Sixteenth Century Literature* (New York: New York Public Library, 1954); J. E. Brooks, *The Mighty Leaf: Tobacco Through the Centuries* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952); G. G. Stewart, “A History of the Medicinal Use of Tobacco, 1492-1860,” *Med Hist.* 11, no. 3 (1967): 228-68; A. Charlton, “Medicinal Uses of Tobacco in History,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 97, no. 6 (June 2004): 292-96.

<sup>3</sup>J. Haller, *American Medicine in Transition, 1840-1910* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 67.

## The Truth About Sin

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Isaiah 1:10-18. In these verses God berates the people of Israel in an effort to alert them to how far they are from his ideal. He even refers to them as Sodom and Gomorrah. But in these verses, what specific activities is God upset with them for doing?
2. Who told the people to offer animal sacrifices, to come to the temple, to observe the sabbath and to keep the feast days? If they were doing the activities God had instructed them, then why was he upset with them?
3. Read Isaiah 1:13 closely. God tells the people to “stop bringing meaningless offerings.” What does it mean to bring a “meaningless” offering?
4. Were the various religious observances and rituals God instructed the people to participate in capable of curing humanity’s sin?
5. According to Hebrews 9:9, 14 and 10:2, why were the rituals not able to cure humanity of sin?
6. What insight does this give as to where sin occurs?
7. Read John 6:53-59. What is being described here? Is Jesus being literal or metaphorical?
8. When you think about the “blood of Jesus,” what comes to mind?

9. Where did Jesus say his “blood” is to be applied? What does this mean?
10. Could it mean we are to internalize Christ into our hearts? Does this give any insight regarding the truth about sin?

### **LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE**

Imagine you have a child, and during your child’s youth, you have taught him or her to live in harmony with the laws of health—to not smoke, to eat right, to exercise, not to do drugs or alcohol, to drink plenty of water, etc. However, once your child is grown and on his or her own, your child rebels, “finally free from all those rules.” Your child begins to smoke, do drugs, drink heavily, never exercise and eat only junk food.

1. What would happen, and how would you respond?
2. Would you stop loving your child?
3. Would you inflict diseases, sicknesses or death on your child to make him or her pay for disobeying what you taught?
4. Would you try to reach out to your child to redeem, heal and restore?
5. But what if your child got sick with liver failure and cancer from violating all the laws of health, how would you feel?
6. What would you do if you had a cure for your child, but your child refused the cure? Would you kill your child? Would you let your adult child make his or her own choice?
7. What lessons can we learn from this example about sin and how God deals with us?

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. List three examples in your life when you knowingly did something wrong. What happened to you after each action?



2. Did you have more peace or less? Did your loss of peace come from an external or internal source? What does this indicate about what “sin” does to the sinner?
3. If you didn’t immediately correct your mistake, what happened to your thinking? Were you tempted to make excuses or blame others? What does this mean in regard to critical thinking and the ability to examine evidence without bias?
4. Did your relationships get healthier and more harmonious? Why or why not?
5. What action was necessary to heal the damage and find peace again?
6. What happens to people who refuse to accept responsibility for their mistakes and refuse to experience a change in their heart attitude through God’s grace?

## Enlarging Our View of God

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Judges 6:36-39. What did Gideon ask God to do?
2. While we believe that God is the one acting in this exchange with Gideon, do you think Satan has the ability to make a fleece wet and the ground dry? Do you think a human being could produce such an event? If so, describe ways a human could put a dry fleece on a wet ground or a wet fleece on dry ground.
3. Both times, God granted Gideon's request, do you find this evidence to be the most reliable God can give? Is this evidence easily counterfeited?
4. What does it say about God that he is willing to meet people where they are and provide evidence they need?
5. Read Genesis 18. How did Abraham respond to God when God told him he was going to destroy the cities on the plain?
6. Should Abraham have said, "God said it, who am I to question God?"
7. What does it say about God that Abraham could question him as he did?
8. What does this imply regarding God's desire for us to speak our minds to him?

### **LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE**

Jesus used many parables from nature. Pick one and explain how the example from nature reveals God and his character of love.

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

Describe an experience in your life when you struggled to understand God and his actions during that event.

1. Based on concepts from chapter 11, what are some possible ways to understand those events that are in harmony with God's character of love?
2. Have you told God what is really on your mind? Have you expressed your frustration and heartache to him? If not, consider telling him exactly what your burden is, and then ask him to help you find the truth.

# The Judgment of God

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Psalm 34:8 and John 17:3. What do you think these texts mean?
2. Do they indicate anything regarding the necessity of making judgments of God?
3. Does God want us to examine him and the evidence he has provided in order to make a decision, a judgment, on whether we can trust him?
4. Read Luke 24:13-32. Did this event occur before or after Jesus' resurrection?
5. Did Jesus use might and power to influence their decision?
6. What method did Jesus use?
7. Why was it necessary for Jesus to utilize the evidence of Scripture and his own life?
8. What does this tell us about God and how he relates to us?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. What testable laws can you identify that demonstrate God is trustworthy?
2. Consider forensic science. Do people who are innocent of any crime need to fear the full and accurate disclosure of forensic evidence?

3. What evidence can you cite that confirms God is completely trustworthy? (Make a distinction between claims/proclamations, testable evidence and recorded historical events.)

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

Think of one or two people in your life who you genuinely, completely trust—with your life if necessary—people you know would rather die than harm you.

1. Why do you trust this person or these people?
2. What evidence do you have of their trustworthiness? Is your trust based on claims?
3. Did you have to work to trust them, or did trust naturally result from your experience with them?
4. If these people who you have found to be trustworthy told you something they did that you didn't have evidence for, would you believe them? If so, does that mean your faith in them is without evidence? Or has your faith in them been established on previous evidence?
5. Would these people, who are trustworthy, be offended if evidence became available that supported what they had previously told you—and you examined it?
6. Would examining the evidence for a genuinely trustworthy person undermine trust or strengthen it?
7. What do you believe God wants in regard to your judgment of him—for it to be evidenced based or based on claims?

## In the Brain of Christ

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Matthew 26:36-42. What is being described?
2. What emotions did Jesus experience?
3. Did these emotions tempt Jesus? to do what?
4. According to James 1:13, divinity cannot be tempted, so where did these powerful emotional temptations come from?
5. In conjunction with Hebrews 2:14, what does this reveal regarding Jesus' humanity?
6. Read John 10:17-18. What is Jesus telling his disciples about his nature?
7. What principle is being evidenced in this passage?
8. When comparing the emotions Jesus experienced in Gethsemane with the principle expressed in this passage, what two antagonistic principles are revealed?
9. What are the implications for what was happening in the decision-making part of Jesus' brain?

### LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

1. Examine the laws of health. Can a doctor heal a patient in violation of the laws of health, or do all healing interventions work to restore a person back into harmony with the laws of health?

Give three examples of medical interventions that restore a person to harmony with the laws of health.

2. Could God heal and restore humankind to his original design in violation of his law? Or would man's salvation require being restored to harmony with God's law, his design for life?
3. Examine again the law of love as described in chapter 1, then discuss how Christ acted in perfect harmony with God's law. What is this implication for humanity.

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. As a parent have you ever had to use "force" in dealing with your child? Did you prefer to act this way? If not, then why did you do it? Does loving discipline, restrain and even inflict pain, if necessary, to save and protect?
2. Did your heart rejoice in the moments when you acted in such ways? Or did your heart long for your child to "grow up" so that such interventions would never be necessary again?
3. What do you believe is God's attitude toward the exercise of "force" in relationship with us?
4. What conclusion do you draw if Jesus is the filter through which you see God?
5. Have you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ and asked for the Holy Spirit to enter into your heart?
  - If not, what prevents you from doing so? Is the evidence of God's trustworthiness sufficient to earn your trust? If not, what is needed to win your trust?
  - If yes, what has been your experience since surrendering your heart to him? Have you experienced anything like new motives, peace, increasing insight and wisdom, increasing love for others? If so, where do you think such transformational power comes?

# Forgiveness

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Genesis 37:23-28 and 45:3-7. Describe the situation, who was offended and who did the offending?
2. What was necessary for reconciliation to take place?
3. Who forgave? What enabled him to forgive?
4. Who repented and how was the repentance demonstrated?
5. Would reconciliation have occurred without both repentance from the offenders and forgiveness from the offended?
6. Read Genesis 34, and describe the situation. Who was offended and who did the offending?
7. What was necessary for reconciliation to take place?
8. Who repented and who forgave?
9. Who didn't forgive?
10. What happened as a consequence of unforgiveness?

## LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

Recently I had the privilege of meeting Kent Whitaker. In December 2003, Kent, his wife and their two sons, Bart and Kevin, went out to dinner to celebrate Bart's upcoming graduation from college, where they gave Bart a \$4,000 Rolex as a graduation gift. After dinner, Kevin, the younger brother, drove home and, as they approached the



house, Bart turned back to the car to get his cell phone. As the rest of the family entered the house, a masked gunman shot and killed Kevin and his mom. As Kent was the third to step into the doorway, he was shot in the chest, but survived. It turned out that Bart had arranged to have his family shot and killed so that he could inherit the family money. Bart was arrested and put on trial for murder, with the prosecutor seeking the death penalty.

Kent publicly forgave his son and asked the prosecutor not to seek the death penalty. But the prosecutor sought the death penalty anyway, and this year Bart was found guilty and sentenced to death. Throughout the trial of his son, Kent was consistently loving toward Bart, visiting him regularly in prison and openly forgiving him for what he did. His son eventually said, “If you can still love me and forgive me for all I have done, then I believe God can also.” Bart gave his life to Christ in prison. Kent states that, while he has lost his wife and younger son on this earth and will lose Bart too, he has peace knowing that through all of this Bart will now be with them in heaven. Their family will be together for eternity.

1. How does this story reveal the two antagonistic principles of God’s love versus “fear and selfishness”?
2. How does Kent’s forgiveness contradict the worldly principle of “me first”?
3. What is the impact of Kent’s forgiveness? Did it bring healing or further hostility?
4. How might you have responded if you were in Kent’s position?
5. Would it have been hard to forgive?
6. What enabled Kent to forgive his son?
7. How is love involved in forgiving others?

Every day the news is filled with Israeli and Palestinian violence— a suicide bombing on a metro bus, a retaliatory air strike, followed by

another bombing, followed by more military action—and the cycle seems to have no end.

8. How could God's principles of forgiveness change this situation?
9. What prevents people from experiencing and practicing God's methods of forgiveness?

### LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. Carefully examine yourself and your personal relationships, and list any people who you have offended and for which you have never sought forgiveness. Also list any "sins" you have never repented of (this could include offenses against God).
2. Would you like to heal? Make the choice to forgive, and ask God to help you forgive.
  - Do this for every unresolved issue in your heart.
  - Seek God, tell him of your sorrow for any mistakes you may have made, and accept his forgiveness.
  - Forgive yourself.
  - Then seek God's wisdom on how to heal and repair any damage you may have caused. Learn from the experience, and implement godly changes so that you don't continue to repeat the same unhealthy choices over again.
  - Finally, seek to repair any damage you may have caused, always keeping in mind not to actually cause more injury in the process (e.g., if you had an affair years ago with a person who is now deceased, it would not be loving or helpful to go to the deceased person's spouse and "confess and ask forgiveness"—as this would harm the innocent spouse by planting hurt into his or her heart.)

## When Good Prevails

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Second Corinthians 5:17-20 states:

Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making all human beings his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends.

Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! (GNT)

What does this text describe Christ doing with his enemies?

2. Is this different than what humans typically do with their enemies?
3. What happens when enemies are turned into friends?
4. How does Christ achieve this?
5. Read Revelation 12:11. What is this text describing about the character and motives of the people of God?
6. Is this description of people before or after the second coming of Christ?

7. What enables people to experience such love as described in this verse and shown in this chapter?

### **LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE**

Many humanists claim that giving in to hedonistic desires, as long you're not violating the human rights of another, is perfectly healthy.

1. What evidence can you cite that hedonistic self-indulgence is harmful?
2. From what you have learned in this book about the brain, what part of the brain is responsible for godly love?
3. From what part of the brain do selfish drives arise, and which part of the brain is strengthened by hedonistic indulgence?
4. What implication would this have regarding our ability to exercise godly love toward others?

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. Consider the persons you respect the most and why. Are they the ones who demand their rights, or are they willing to surrender their rights to help others?
2. Describe an event in your life when someone sacrificed themselves for your good. What impact did that have on you?
3. Describe an event in your life when love empowered you to overcome fear. What lesson is there in your experience?

## When Love Burns Free

### LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

Review the following biblical texts: Isaiah 33:14-15; Exodus 3:2-4; 2 Chronicles 5:14; 7:1; Hebrews 12:29; Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

1. What do these text teach about the source of “consuming fire”?
2. Many good-hearted people have been taught that God says, “I am love and only want you to love me. But if you don’t I will be forced to torture and kill you (burn you in hell).” What is the problem with this position?
3. What law of God does this position violate?
4. If this were true, what kind of being would God be?
5. Does such an idea reduce or increase fear of God?
6. If this were true, could you trust God?

### LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE

Review the evidence of God’s law of liberty as described in chapter four. Test it in a variety of situations.

1. Are you confident of its reality?
2. Where does this law originate?
3. Can love exist without freedom?
4. What impact does it make on our understanding of God’s at-

titude toward the wicked in the end?

5. Reexamine the difference between natural law and imposed law, as described in chapter 13. Which type of law is God's government built on?
6. Contrast the differences between violations of natural law and imposed law? Which view more accurately represents God?

### LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

1. If your spouse said, "love me or I will beat you to death," how would you respond?
2. When you are threatened, do you experience greater love and trust? Or do love and trust get damaged?
3. Who wants to damage your love and trust in God?

Recently the president of Iran stated that the twelfth imam (the Islamic Savior) would soon appear, and when he comes, he will use his great power to kill all the infidels (Jews, Christians and anyone else who doesn't follow the way of Islam). Let's change this statement to read, "Jesus is soon to come and will use his great power to kill all who don't believe in him," and then answer the following questions:

4. Is there any significant difference between the two statements?
5. Do the "gods" represented in the two statements differ in any significant way?
6. If you believe Jesus will use great power to inflict pain, suffering and death on people, what reaction does that engender?
7. List the new truths about God you have learned while reading this book.
8. Describe how these truths have impacted your relationship with God, and if you appreciate God, tell him how much and why.

Then tell three people about the truths you have learned, and how it has impacted your relationship with God.

# Buddha, Jesus and Preparing Your Brain for Eternity

## LEARNING THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

1. Read Psalms 23, and consider this psalm as a description of the experience of salvation, being led by our Shepherd through a valley where we “die to self” for his righteousness’s sake, in order to restore our souls. Then describe the meaning of each verse in this transformational experience.
2. What does it mean that, at the end of this journey, we dwell in the house of the Lord forever?

The Bible records the life of Jesus. It records his miracles, including his control over winds and storms, him walking on water, turning water to wine, healing the sick, raising the dead. Christ himself stated that the Father had put all things under his power, and then Jesus got up and washed his disciples’ feet (Jn 13:3-5). At the cross, Christ had the power to come down and slay his abusers, but instead, he chose to not use his power to save himself nor to hurt those bent on killing him.

3. What does this evidence say to you about the kind of person Jesus is?
4. When you see someone being abused and choosing to restrain

themselves, not striking out against the abuser when they clearly could, does that increase your faith in how they would treat you?

5. Jesus said that, if we have seen him, we have seen his Father—they are one. When you think of the Father, do you take the evidence Christ has revealed about his character and see God in that very light?
6. Can you trust a God like this?

### **LEARNING THROUGH SCIENCE AND NATURE**

Review the evidence of Jesus' accomplishments in Scripture, highlighted in chapter 13, and then discuss the differences between what Jesus accomplished and what Buddha did.

### **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

1. Examine your beliefs about God. Have you struggled with contradictory beliefs that have created a “dualistic” belief about God and the universe?
2. What belief can you now change as a result of seeing that God is love?
3. After completing this book, consider why you do what you do in governance of yourself. Why do you avoid lying? adultery? stealing? Is it because God has a rule and if you break it he will punish you, and you don't want to get punished?

Are you afraid there are recording angels keeping records of all your sins, and one day you will have to face a judgment and get your just penalty? Or is it because you have come to understand God, his law, methods and principles, and have been won to trust? Has trust opened your heart to him and allowed you to experience transformation?

Have you come to understand the law of love is the law of life, and



breaking this law damages you, destroys God's image within you, misrepresents God and injures others? Have you come to gladly obey God because it makes so much good sense?