



# COMPASS CHECK

Helping you turn your spiritual compass toward God

## Who Was Jesus?



Don't Be Fooled  
*God's Truth About the Value of Women*

Make Church Happen

Letting Your Father Wound Heal

Perfection Through Practice: *Bible Study  
Tips Learned From Playing an Instrument*

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## COMPASS CHECK

*Compass Check* is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA). Our name, *Compass Check*, refers to pointing your spiritual compass toward God. Our goal is to inspire readers to respond to the gospel message.

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## COMPASS CORNER

*Dear Compass Checkers,*

In the last *Compass Corner*, we talked about the coming events of this spring and summer. I hope the Holy Days were profitable for you and that you were able to make plans for summer camp. My family will be attending Camp Cotubic and Camp Pinecrest this year, and I look forward to seeing many of you there!

In this issue of *Compass Check*, we have quite an array of topics for your reading pleasure. Our cover article “Who Was Jesus?” explores the persona of Jesus. We know He was God in the flesh and is our Savior, but what kind of person was He to be around?

We also will spend some time talking about two lies our societies tell us about being a woman. There are a couple of common stereotypes that don't align with what your Bible shows to be true, and that cause quite a bit of frustration and emphasize wrong values.

Then there's the subject of painful wounds. Our world can be a painful one at times, and perhaps some of you have experienced that most painful of losses, losing a parent. A first-time contributor shares her story of losing her father, and what she has learned to help with healing that father wound.

This issue also welcomes back our Managing Editor and new mom, Kourtney Kovanis. She shares what she's learned from watching her daughter and how it relates to our struggles and growth as Christians.

How many of you play a musical instrument? We'll look at how the practice it takes to master an instrument relates to growing in biblical knowledge. Finally, we'll take a look at some practical ways we can more effectively serve at our local church services.

*Your camp friend,*



*Dan Preston, Compass Check editor, pastors in North and South Carolina, enjoys UYC, the outdoors and getting dirt under his fingernails in the garden and garage.*

# Dear Readers



I had a baby. Let me tell you about her. Gracie's olive skin feels like velvet. Her eyelashes are fantastic. When she stretches her limbs she does it with every ounce of her being, becoming like a little starfish. In fact, everything she does is unequivocally wholehearted, which I'm in awe of. How do babies know how to focus with such intensity, approach things with a somber seriousness, and yet switch effortlessly to fun and silliness, never taking themselves too seriously? I feel like I'm learning as much from her as she is from me.

I'm surprised by the urge I feel to help Gracie whenever anything is a struggle, to take away any pain. Even something as simple as her reaching for a toy, trying to roll over, feeling hungry and wanting milk. I feel such a strong desire, almost a physical pulling towards her like a magnet, to resolve it for her. But I know I can't always take away negative experiences, emotions or pain. And it wouldn't even be good for her if I could. Butterflies need to squeeze through the cocoon to dry out their wings and be able to fly; babies need to stretch and reach and flounder a bit to strengthen their muscles and develop control to crawl and eventually walk and do everything adults do. But it's hard to see her struggle at all.

And she surely makes her displeasure known. She cries just as wholeheartedly as everything else. I never knew how many different cries a baby has: a slow, pitiful cry with lip pout, a screech, a cry that sounds like a laugh (and vice versa), a hungry cry, a grunting cry, a general, indiscriminate *wahh* after I've taken too long to respond to any of the other more specific sounds. Some of them are easier to handle than others, but they all pull at my heart.

As our Father, God probably feels a similar yearning to shelter us from pain and discomfort, to rescue us from trials. Just as Gracie can't see why I don't always immediately come to her aid, we wonder why He doesn't instantly heal us, or take away our troubles. He sees the big picture in ways we cannot, just as I can see from an adult's perspective that it's best to let her be challenged sometimes. All the while I'm watching over her of course, supporting her and wishing I could take on her struggle as my own. We know God watches over us as well. He's there for us even when we can't see Him working or fixing things in the way or the timing we'd like. Psalm 121:8 says, "The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever" (New Living Translation). And God goes further for us than I ever could for Gracie. He lets us be challenged for our own ultimate good, but Christ took on the penalty for our sin as His own, through His sacrifice (Romans 5:8).

It's amazing how much time things take for babies (to our sense as adults), things that seem like they should take no time at all. She reaches only a little farther each day, she shifts her weight, she becomes a bit steadier on her legs. Tiny movements are a big deal for her. And yet little by little, oh so steadily, she changes. I can see it so clearly in her, but still I get impatient in the moment, when it



seems like she could "get" whatever she is doing with just a little more effort.

How patient God is with us (infinitely more than I am), when He sees us struggle at things that are nothing for Him. God is allowing us to be stretched in the ways we need so that we can mature, grow skills and function as spiritual adults, rather than continue as infants. How amazing it is how He watches over us, supporting us and rooting for us, with the perfect wisdom of knowing how to work all things together so that we have the best chance at growing into maturity and becoming members of His family.

It could be helpful to see our own trials a little more in the perspective that we are infants compared to God. While He sees and feels for us in our pain, He also sees how small, in the grand scheme of things, our trials are. The eternal life that He wants to give us will eclipse our current trials in every way, just like Gracie, who cries out so desperately now for help in her baby struggles. But when she grows up, she won't even remember these difficulties, and will look back at pictures with a knowing smile.



*Kourtney Kovanis*

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# LETTING YOUR FATHER WOUND HEAL

BY HARMONIE DONNERBERG

When I was in fourth grade, there was a father-daughter dance at my school. I remember the feelings I had hearing the buzz from all the girls, talking about what dresses they were all going to wear, and how they were going to match with their fathers. I absolutely dreaded the thought of going because I knew I wasn't like the other girls. My father died when I was 8 years old, and I had been living with my grandparents since I was 4. And even though I had an amazing father figure, I knew I was going to be looked at differently.

I talked through all these emotions with my grandmother one day, and after hearing her out, I decided to go. My grandmother even encouraged me to enter my grandfather in this contest they had for "King," or in other words, best dad. You did that by entering a letter for your father (or whoever you were bringing) about why you believed he deserved to be King. I went ahead and entered a letter (my grandmother's very persuasive if you couldn't tell). The

letter was all about how my grandfather had swooped me off my feet when I was only 4 years old and given me the chance at life that my parents could have never given me. How he had helped me up when I'd fallen down, forgiven me whenever I messed up, and how he woke up early enough every morning just to pack me a lunch every day. They say superheroes don't really exist, but they obviously haven't met my grandfather. And sure enough, he won. We never did get that letter back, but it totally changed my perspective on things. I may not have my biological father here with me, but I have my grandfather, and it means exactly what it says: *grand-father*.

I know I am not the only teen in the Church who has lost a parent, or who doesn't live with their parents. I know there are people who have even lost both parents, or who maybe just don't have good relationships with their parents. And I know that it feels different, because no one can substitute the place in your heart where your parents should be. It's almost like a void

waiting to be filled—I understand. And if you're reading this and you know what I'm talking about, I want you to know that you're not alone. But I'm here to encourage you not to shut down and question your beliefs or your outlook on life because of your unfortunate circumstances.

Have you ever heard of the term, "the father wound"? In the medical field, it's used as a term for someone who had an awful relationship with their father, or their father was absent in most or all of their childhood. One article explains, "The effects of an emotionally absent father can impact an individual's self-esteem, relationships and even their motivation in life" ([fherehab.com/learning/father-wound-family-trauma](http://fherehab.com/learning/father-wound-family-trauma)). Throughout the Bible God puts things into a physical perspective so it's easier for us as humans to understand, and family is a great example of that. Sadly, experiencing the absence of a physical father could make you question if there really is a heavenly Father. After all, the world is full of doubting Thomases, not believing because they cannot see, which ultimately is just lack of faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Even though you may lack the presence of a physical father, one you can see, you and I have the great blessing to know and have enough faith to believe that we do have a spiritual Father. And you have the opportunity right now to start cultivating a relationship with Him if you want one. In Jeremiah 29:13 it says, "And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me, with all your heart." God wants a relationship with us, and maybe now is the time to start thinking about the Church and your beliefs more seriously, if you haven't already been doing so. There will come a time when you will no longer be able to say you only go to this church because your family goes, a time closer than you think will come and you will have to choose. And one thing that will help the most at that point is knowing with complete certainty that there is a heavenly



*I know I am not the only teen in the Church who has lost a parent, or who doesn't live with their parents. I know that it feels different, because no one can substitute the place in your heart where your parents should be.*

Father who loves you.

I know for me, I've always had faith that there's a God. Sure I've had questions and doubts, but the Bible has answers and so much proof of what we believe. Delving into all of the evidence and scriptures has led me to have a personal belief in God, one that is no longer tied down or related to my family being in the Church, but me really believing what we practice. I have the blessing of having a great father figure, which I'm sure has had an impact on my viewpoint as well, and I know not everyone has a sense of security in that area as I do. But for those who don't, that's all the more reason to find a reliable, stable sense of security in your heavenly Father, and really find the Church for



*God wants a relationship with us, and maybe now is the time to start thinking about the Church and your beliefs more seriously, if you haven't already been doing so.*

yourself on a personal level.

Something else to think about is what you do have. It's so easy, as humans, to dwell on what we don't have. I'm sure you've heard the saying, "you never know what you have till it's gone." Well, the truth of the matter is, generally we do know what we have, we just take it for granted until it's no longer there, and it's too late. There's a common saying, "I cried because I had no shoes, but I stopped crying when I saw a man with no legs." Which means, always be grateful for what you have because there will always be someone who's less fortunate, or should I say less blessed, than you are. Earlier I shared my experience with my grandfather and the father-daughter dance. I realize now how blessed I am to have him. In my mind I was dwelling on not having a father, which blinded me from seeing how blessed I am to have such an amazing father figure in my life. Some kids don't even have that much.

My grandmother always says, "happiness is a choice." And I do truly believe that. No matter what you have, or don't have, you can choose to be happy and content. Your heavenly Father will never disappoint you or let you down. Humans are flawed and parents mess up, but God doesn't. "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken" (Psalm 55:22, New International Version). Trust God enough to

give all your worries, all your cares to Him, and you'll be happier for it. Now that doesn't mean kick your feet back, relax and not do anything, but to trust that God will bring you through whatever comes. Don't be like Jesus' disciples and let the storm phase you. Do you remember what He said to His disciples in Matthew 8:26? "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Have faith, don't fear.

Maybe you don't have a physical father, or a physical mother, maybe you have neither, maybe you have both. But no matter what your circumstances are, no matter how the wind tosses you to and fro like it did Jesus' disciples, no matter what you have or don't have, you have a heavenly Father who loves you, who wants a relationship with you, who is waiting for you with open arms. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). There's a quote I read and it said, "in order for a wound to heal, you have to stop touching it." Now, you can continue to touch your wound, or you can finally put the past behind you, run to your Father who really loves you, and finally allow your father wound to heal. **CC**



*Harmonie Donnerberg started attending the Cincinnati east congregation when she was 11 years old. In her free time she enjoys listening to music and spending time with friends.*

# Who Was Jesus?



BY DAN PRESTON

# WHEN

you think of Jesus, what exactly do you think about? Words like Savior, Lord, High Priest, Shepherd, Servant and King of Kings come to mind. While those are all very appropriate ways to think about Jesus Christ, none of them really tells us much about what He was like as a person. Was He interesting? Was He kind? Was He mean? Could you count on Him to lend a hand if you needed help moving?

The answer to all of those questions can be found in your Bible. Well, maybe not the one about helping you move exactly, but I think we'll see that He is definitely someone you could count on if you needed help!

Was Jesus an interesting person? He chose a compelling and beautiful setting to speak to His disciples, on a mountaintop high above the beautiful Sea of Galilee, to give the Sermon on the Mount. Here, in one of His first public messages, Jesus expounded on many biblical teachings (Matthew 5-7). He explained that being popular and rich wasn't really what life was all about. Instead, it was better to be meek, merciful and a peacemaker (Matthew 5:3-10). He also went on to explain that it wasn't just about the physical keeping of the Commandments, like not murdering or committing adultery; it mattered how we thought about people (Matthew 5:21-30).

He taught many other things that day as well: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law" (Matthew 7:28-29, New Living Translation). People were amazed at what and how He taught. It was in sharp contrast to the traditional teachers of the day.

He did a lot of other interesting things as well, like healing the sick, feeding thousands at a time and revealing Himself as the "I AM" (Matthew 9:32-34; 12:9-14; John 6: 8:48-59). He angered the religious leaders of His day and was eventually killed for it. By anyone's standards, it's safe to say that Jesus led a unique and exciting life.

People can be interesting, yet not be very nice. History books are full of people like Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot who, while memorable and noteworthy, weren't really people you'd want to hang



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around with. But what about Jesus? Was He a nice guy?

We read about Jesus and His friends and family attending a wedding. Weddings back then were multi-day festivals and involved a lot of meals together as a community. After three days, they began to run out of wine. Jesus' mom asked Him to help. Out of kindness to the wedding party, Jesus turned the water into wine. He could have told them to go buy more, or just left them to figure it out on their own. Being the nice guy He was, He performed this miracle.

Jesus healed many people. But notice the reason why: "A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. 'If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean,' he said. Moved with *compassion*, Jesus reached out and touched him. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be healed!' Instantly the leprosy

*Okay, so Jesus was interesting. He was nice, and He could be not-so-nice when He needed to be. But what about helping you move? Would He do that?*



disappeared, and the man was healed” (Mark 1:40-42 NLT, emphasis added). Jesus was moved with compassion—a feeling of sympathy or pity for someone who is enduring a trial of some sort. Jesus could have said “No” or “Not right now” and just moved along. But out of compassion and kindness, He was moved to heal.

Okay, so Jesus was a nice guy—a kind and caring person. But did He ever get sick and tired of things and lose His cool? While it might be a stretch to say He lost His cool, He did at times show a righteous sort of anger. Perhaps the most famous example occurred just before the Passover when many people were going to the temple to make sacrifices. Local merchants took advantage of this and set up shops to sell various things needed for temple worship. They often charged exorbitant prices to rack up a huge profit.

This didn’t sit well with Jesus: “In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers’ coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, ‘Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!’ Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: ‘Passion for God’s house will consume me’” (John 2:14-17, NLT).

Jesus didn’t mess around! He made a whip and broke up the merchants’ businesses, literally driving away their profits. While this was an act of zeal

and not anger in the way you and I think about it, He certainly wasn’t Mr. Nice Guy at the moment.

Okay, so Jesus was interesting. He was nice, and He could be not-so-nice when He needed to be. But what about helping you move? Would He do that? Bear with me on this one, but I think we can prove that He would!

In John 11:1-3, we read about a friend of Jesus: “A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, ‘Lord, your dear friend is very sick.’” Notice that Lazarus wasn’t just a friend, but a *dear* friend.

As you read through the story, we see that Lazarus actually died. His family was upset that Jesus didn’t save him. Jesus’ disciples even showed a bit of doubt as to His abilities. But in the end, Jesus reveals that it all happened so they could see God’s glory. The story concludes: “Then Jesus shouted, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, ‘Unwrap him and let him go!’” (John 11:43-44, NLT).

I’ve had a lot of friends help me move over the years. But I only have one that can move me from being dead to being alive as He did for Lazarus. That friend is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It’s especially encouraging to know that He even calls us His friends: “This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command . . . Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me” (John 15:12-15, NLT).

Jesus Christ was and is eternal with God the Father. He is returning to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God as the King of Kings. He was, is and will always be divine. But beyond that, He was an interesting man; one who was very kind and compassionate, showed emotion and was passionate about His work. He is a friend of yours and mine! **CC**



*Dan Preston is a pastor serving in North and South Carolina. He is grateful for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and really looks forward to getting to know Him in person some day.*



# PERFECTION THROUGH PRACTICE

*Bible Study Tips Learned  
From Playing an  
Instrument*

BY NIA FLAVIN

I have been playing alto saxophone for about five years now. A few years ago, my band director asked me to switch to tenor saxophone, something not unheard of in my band. Unaware of the effort required in an endeavor of that sort, I said yes.

Alto and tenor saxophones are similar instruments, but they require very different skill sets. I was also being asked to learn an instrument when a competition was only months away. I said yes, so there was nothing to do but go to work. I ended up taking the tenor sax home almost every day. I never took my alto saxophone home every day. There's an old saying that 10,000 hours working at a skill will make you a master. I was nowhere close to master level, but I put in many hours out of sheer necessity. When it came down to it, I knew the only way to get better was to put in the time. And thankfully, it worked. I was able to

dramatically improve in a very short amount of time, learning both a new part and instrument.

I realize my situation was rather unique and doesn't happen to everyone. You might not be asked to switch instruments in the middle of concert season. However, the principle still applies to every area of life, and especially to our spiritual lives.

Are we guilty of not practicing, especially when it comes to Bible study at home? I know from experience how easy it is to mentally check off the religion box the moment Sabbath services end. It's too easy to close the Bible after the sermon and not open it for the rest of the week. This is a hugely detrimental practice, and one that does a large amount of harm spiritually.

Consider it this way: Church is like a training ground. We go every week to become sharpened and to be taught, and then we go back out into the world. The world is where we implement the skills and lessons we learn in church. "For the word of God is living

and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, English Standard Version). By not practicing regular Bible study, we harm ourselves spiritually and make it easier for temptations and sin to enter our lives. It’s like showing up to a sword fight and realizing you not only left your sword at home, but you also looked at your sword for only three hours that week. We are going to lose with practice habits like that!

Thankfully, it is never too late to change. The first step to getting ourselves in good fighting shape is easy. Open the Bible during the week. Make it a priority to read it daily. To quote from the book of Joshua, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

Life gets busy, and it’s difficult to juggle school, work, hobbies, sports and church. But the excuse of being busy gets a lot of mileage. I think it’s past time to retire it. Time can be found. Maybe it’s time to sit down and look at our daily schedules and shift priorities. What’s really important? What isn’t? Odds are, there is free time in there, and even more can be made if we try.

Take some time to go over your schedule, looking for any gaps in time or activities. How hard would it be to read a few verses in that time? It is very easy to download a Bible app on your phone, and some apps even come with reminders that you can set. If you prefer the feel of a traditional Bible



*We will never get better if we are not working daily and making a conscious effort to mentally engage when we read.*

in your hands, there are many compact printed versions available, the perfect size for pockets or purses.

Once you find time in your schedule to read the Bible, the next question that often occurs to people is what to read. The Bible is a pretty big book, and it can be daunting at first. There are tons of resources out there for breaking the Bible down into approachable sections. If you are just trying to build the habit of reading daily, a read-the-Bible-through-in-a-year program can be a great way to start. These programs give you a set number of chapters and verses to read daily, slowly working you through the Bible over the course of a year. There are a variety of programs with several different orders of the books and lengths of passages, so it is very easy to find one that is right for you. And once you finish the whole Bible, you can always start it again.

**THERE ARE SO MANY GREAT WAYS TO READ THE BIBLE DAILY, BUT READING TO LEARN MUST BE PRIORITIZED. THERE NEEDS TO BE A DEEPER LEVEL OF INTERACTION WITH THE TEXT EVERY TIME YOU READ.**



There are many people in the Church who read the whole Bible over and over again every year using programs like this.

If that method doesn't work for you, there are lots of other ways to study Scripture. Try sitting down and writing out the books of the Bible, or even the types of books that appeal to you, and use that list as a study guide. Topical Bibles are great for this. They are kind of like a dictionary for Bible topics that reference scriptures all over the Bible to help you study the topic you're interested in.

Perhaps you could dive into a type of Bible literature, like the Prophets, or you could explore a concept or word. Consider an upcoming Holy Day. If it's springtime, you could go through and read the Passover accounts in all four gospels, or read the law in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. There are many great resources that make studies like this easier, like concordances or online study guides.

There are so many great ways to read the Bible daily, but reading to learn must be prioritized. There needs to be a deeper level of interaction with the text every time you read. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). This renewal and transformation can come from dedicated study and thought about what you read. You have to engage your brain; it's called Bible *study* for a reason. This kind of reading is not meant to be passive. It might be worth

it to take notes over what you learn just like in church.

Physically writing things out often translates into a better understanding of the subject matter and could help promote a higher level of mental engagement. Remember, we are reading to learn to be a better Christian. The Bible is God's way of speaking to us, but in order to hear what He says, we have to be listening. Listening will not come through a passive reading of the Scriptures, even if we are reading daily.

Just like learning to play an instrument, improving ourselves spiritually takes a lot of time. We will never get better if we are not working daily and making a conscious effort to mentally engage when we read. And with a much loftier goal than a high school band competition, surely this deserves more effort. We stand to gain so much for such a small amount of effort in comparison to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is truly the least we can do to improve ourselves as Christians to better complete our walk with Christ. And with the reward of the Kingdom of God, there is plenty of motivation to open our Bibles and engage in daily Bible study. **CC**



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*Nia Flavin is a high school student, but would rather not be. She enjoys drawing, reading and writing in her free time.*

DON'T BE FOOLED!  
**GOD'S TRUTH**

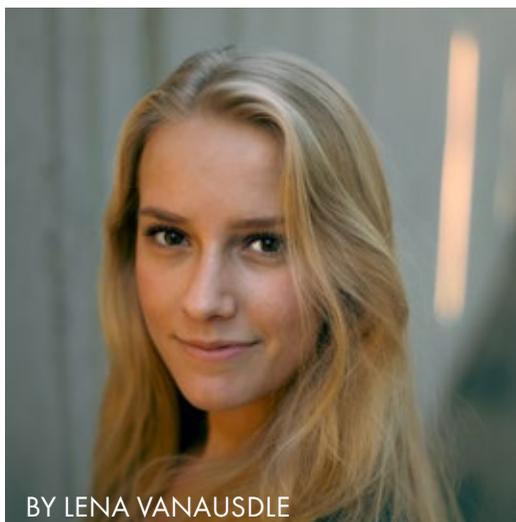


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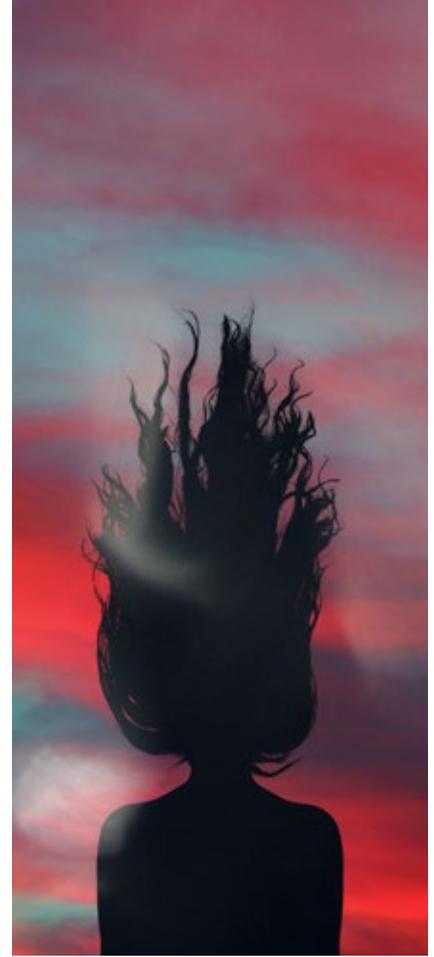
**VALUE**

OF



BY LENA VANAUSDLE

**WOMEN**



# THERE

is no denying that we live in a complicated and sometimes confusing world. *Everything* we say must be couched in caveats and disclaimers; seemingly harmless or innocent things can be surprisingly controversial. For example, pineapple belongs on pizza, pie is better than cake, dogs are definitely better than cats and coffee is objectively terrible. I was tempted to end that sentence with “come at me, bro,” because I’m ready for the ensuing fight. *But*, if I weren’t ready for that fight, I would have to say “while all pizza choices are valid, and I’m not saying you’re wrong if you don’t do this, I like pineapple on my pizza.” Or, “Obviously cake is delicious, no one is denying that, but for *me*, personally, I think pie is better than cake.” Except for the coffee thing, there’s no polite way to say that coffee is terrible (it just is).

There are lots of things in this world that are not innocuous. There are serious things that we all must face each

and every day. And I think, today, for the subject at hand, I’m ready for a fight. I’m going to be unapologetic.

Growing up, becoming functioning members of society, is about how we contend with society and ourselves. And we have choices to make in how we do this. We can go with the flow and let society dictate to us what we think and how we act. We can do what we think is right, based on how we feel in the moment. Or, and this is the toughest one yet, we can let God tell us what is right and what is wrong and how to live our lives.

And God really *wants* us to choose Him, but He will always let us choose. “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him for He is your life and the length of your days” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

In a myriad of ways, society tells

us how to think about ourselves. This is especially true for women. From TikTok to Instagram, to streaming television and Snapchat, we are given a lot of information on who we’re “supposed” to be. We’re supposed to have flawless skin (thank you filters and Photoshop), be simultaneously thin while eating nachos and cheese fries with the guys (thanks TV shows with the tomboy protagonist); we should be beautiful, but accessible (thanks every teen rom-com ever) and most importantly, inherently be better than men (thanks to every TV show with a bumbling dad, “girlboss” culture and radical feminism).

Most of these messages aren’t stated outright, but they still influence our thoughts and beliefs about who we are and what our value is and where it lies. And so many of these messages are lies! Unfortunately, we live in a society that is influenced by Satan, “who is the god of this world, [and] has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe” (2 Corinthians 4:4, New Living Translation). This isn’t to say that the exact opposite of these

*Your value is not determined by your skin, your hair or the size of your body. Standards of beauty change, we age, we gain weight, we lose weight, we get scars, we get stretch marks, our hair gets thicker or thins. Outward beauty does not matter.*

messages is the truth; Satan is a liar, but he mixes truth in with lies to make them easier to accept. Notice Genesis 3:1-5: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”

Satan told the truth; the fruit from that tree would open their eyes to know good and evil, but he mixed it with a lie, that they wouldn’t die. This deception ushered in death for all of mankind. And his goal is to continue to deceive people, leading them to death.

I can’t possibly address every single lie that we are told by society. It would be overwhelming for both you and me . . . plus, my submission deadline for this article is looming. So, I will limit myself to two lies that our culture tells us.

## **1. OUR VALUE COMES FROM OUR APPEARANCE**

To quote a popular Instagram star, Elyse Myers, “The way you look is the least interesting and important thing about you.” Your value is not determined by your skin, your hair or the size of your body. Standards of beauty change, we

age, we gain weight, we lose weight, we get scars, we get stretch marks, our hair gets thicker or thins. Outward beauty does not matter. “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Proverbs 31:30, New International Version).

This truth shouldn’t be controversial, but my caveat alarm bells are freaking out in my brain: but, but, but . . . ! No buts. We are more than what we look like. Our character matters more than what we look like! “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3-4).

## **2. WE ARE INHERENTLY BETTER OR WORSE THAN MEN**

There was a time in our culture when women were viewed as property and as incapable of having any sort of intellect. It’s crazy to think of that, and I know there are some cultures around today that still view women in this way.

It is not true. Men are not inherently better or smarter than women.

Certain tropes today would have us believe that men are bumbling idiots who only survive because their long-suffering wives and mothers take care of them.

This is not true. Women are not inherently better or smarter than men.

We are equals in the eyes of God. We have the exact same potential: members of the family of God. “There

is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). How great is that?

Both men and women have equal potential in the eyes of God. The opposite gender is not our enemy;

Satan is. He would have us

pitted against each other, distracting us from our duty to love one another. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

When we view each other as family members working together toward the same goal, we can achieve great things.

So, what is the truth and what is the lie?

The truth is God created us in His image, and He created us with purpose and intrinsic value as potential members of His family; you matter, you have value, you have a purpose. The lie is that your value or purpose can be found through external validation from society. “An excellent woman [one who is spiritual, capable, intelligent and virtuous], who is he who can find her? Her value is more precious than jewels and her worth is far above rubies or pearls” (Proverbs 31:10-12, Amplified Bible).

Don’t believe the lies! Focus on the truth of your value and cultivate the things that are most interesting about you: your interests and your hobbies, your talents and your gifts and your relationship with God. And take the time to build relationships with other Christians focusing on the most interesting things about them! **CC**



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# MAKE CHURCH HAPPEN

BY DAN PRESTON

**H**ere's a question for you: When do you start thinking about going to church each week? If you're like me when I was your age, it's probably about an hour before you leave for services. Maybe you're a little more thoughtful than that, and actually pick out your clothes the night before.

While those approaches aren't wrong per se, they're not really ideal. As part of our worship of God, the Sabbath should be a key thought in our mind—whether it's an hour before services, or on Tuesday afternoon. We should be looking forward to the rest God gives us each week, as well as spiritual food provided through sermons, hymns, special music and fellowship. While we only go to church once a week, that shouldn't be the only time we think about God, our faith and our Church family.

Let's consider another question: How can you serve at church? This question relates directly to our first question, because if you'd like to help with Sabbath services, chances are there is some planning that will need to go into it.

## HOW CAN YOU SERVE?

What ways can you serve at church? Sometimes, we look at the things that go on during services and it seems like there's nothing to be done. The pastor usually gives the sermon. He also takes care of assigning the sermonette speaker and songleader. There might be an opportunity to do special music, but not everyone has those particular talents. So, are you stuck with no opportunity to serve?

As a pastor, I can share with you that there are a lot of jobs that need to be done

each week to make services happen—jobs that don't involve standing behind the pulpit. Someone likely has to arrive early and unlock the building, turn on the lights, perhaps set up chairs and set out song books. While perhaps only a few people in your congregation have a key, I'll bet they could use some help with the other tasks they do each week.

16, you can handle more responsibility.

What about sound, webcast or other tech stuff? As a guy who worked on sound for 30+ years, let me just say, don't be surprised if you see tears of joy coming from your A/V crew's eyes if you volunteer to help out. It's not an easy job, but is very rewarding, especially if you're a tech buff!

### **FIND OUT THE NEEDS YOU CAN FILL**

Okay, so now you're all excited and ready to help out at services next week. You show up with a plate of cookies that you set on a table near the

*What would happen if no one served? Assuming everyone knew when and where church was supposed to be, things might be rather chaotic if no one had put any planning into serving that week.*

Once people begin to arrive at church, it's nice to have someone greet them, especially if they are new. Perhaps they are wondering what time services begin, or if there's a place they can hang up their coats, or where the restrooms are. These are all questions you can likely answer easily and would be a great service to anyone new or who might be visiting from another area.

Then there's things like coffee and snacks. Perhaps your congregation has someone already assigned who schedules who will bring what each week. But I promise you, they are always looking for additional volunteers to help out.

Does your congregation have a parent's room or youth instruction? If you're old enough to receive your own copy of *Compass Check*, chances are you don't need those services yourself, but you may be among the most qualified to help serve in those areas.

Perhaps you serve now, and that is wonderful. But as you grow and mature, the ways in which you can serve expand. For example, picking up song books after services is a big job for a six-year-old. But by the time you're

back for others to enjoy. Then you decide you'll set out hymn books on the chairs, just as you've seen others do for years. Finally, you take it upon yourself to get out the microphone and place it in front of the podium where it normally is.

These are all great ways to serve, but there's a couple of problems . . . No one noticed your cookies because today there is a special cake being served to honor a couple in your congregation who are celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary. It was nice to set out the hymn books, but unfortunately, a few of the younger children had hoped to help with this task this week and are left with hurt feelings. And that mic you set out? Well, it's actually the old one that is being replaced because of poor sound quality, and the regular sound crew wound up taking it away and swapping it for a new one.



*“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

Did you do anything wrong? No, not at all. But it brings up an important point: While it’s very good to serve your Church family, it’s a good idea to talk to the people in charge of various things before you decide to do them on your own. There may be reasons things are done or not done a certain way every week, and perhaps by doing too much, we rob others of an opportunity to serve. They may also need help with tasks you aren’t aware of.

Of course, there are a lot of ways to serve that don’t really require checking with someone first. Having a conversation with someone who has no one to talk to, helping someone carry their things to or from the car or just being a smiling, friendly face are all great ways to serve too!

### **WHY SERVE?**

This probably seems like an obvious question with an obvious answer, but let’s think about it for a minute. What would happen if no one served? Assuming everyone knew when and where church was supposed to be (don’t forget—writing the bulletin and updating your congregation’s local website are ways to serve too), things might be rather chaotic if no one had put any planning into serving that week. Where are all the chairs? What do I do with the cookies I brought to share? Does the microphone even work?

The apostle Paul said, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). Apply this principle to the weekly

needs at church. If no one knows what to do or bothers to do any of the jobs we’ve mentioned thus far, things would be pretty crazy!

Then there’s Philippians 2:4 to consider, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” While we want to be able to go to church and see friends, have snacks and learn more about how to be closer to God, we must remember we aren’t the only ones who want to do that. By volunteering to serve, we are looking out for the interests of others.

However, it’s important to remember the main reason we serve. It’s not to be noticed by others, or try to receive some sort of reward, praise or favor. Christ said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Whenever and wherever you serve, let your service be done in a way that brings honor and glory to God! **CC**

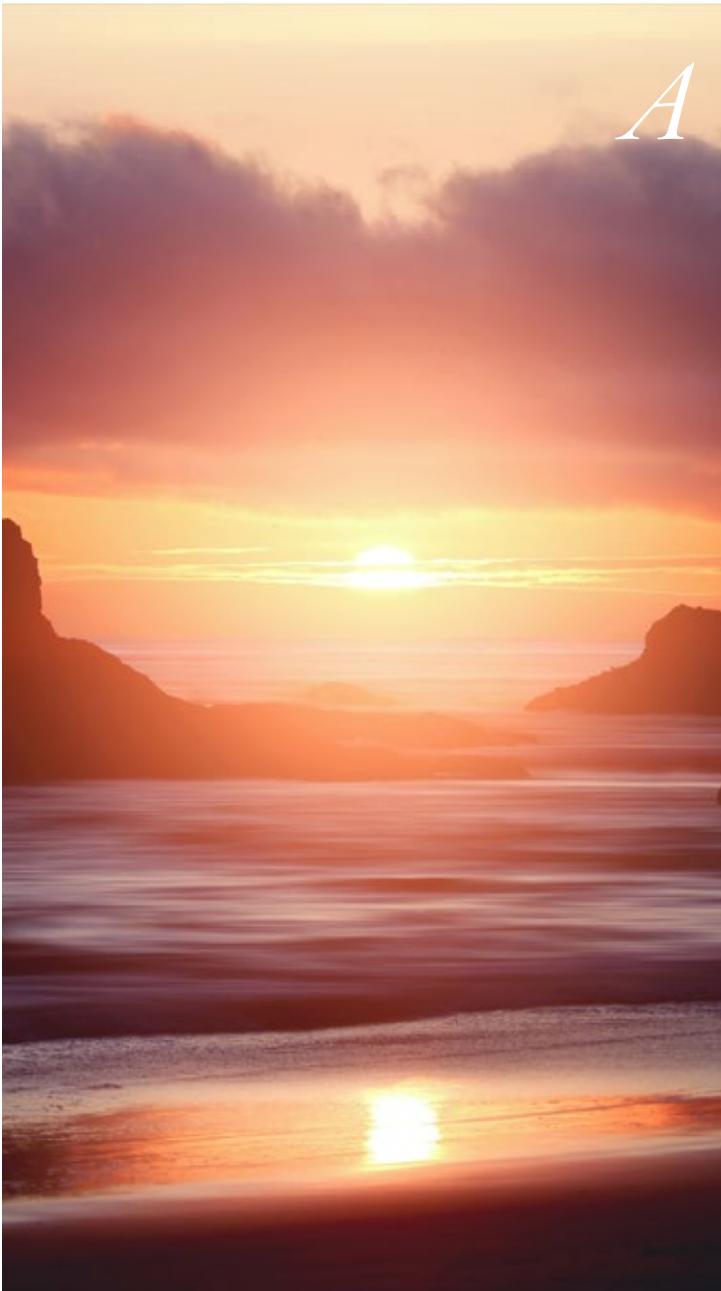
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## *Q Does the Second Resurrection Mean People Get a Second Chance at Salvation?*



The Bible does not teach that anyone will have a second chance. Those who are called now to the knowledge of the truth and who have repented and received the Holy Spirit (those of the house of God, the Church) are now being judged (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 1 Peter 4:17). Those elect (chosen by God) who endure and remain faithful (Matthew 24:13, 22; Revelation 17:14) are promised to be raised in the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-6), a resurrection to immortality at Christ’s return (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-52). This is called a “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35).

But what about all those who died and never were called to salvation (John 6:44)? Billions through history have never heard the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12), much less made any commitment to Him.

By saying there is a first resurrection, there must also be a second. “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5). This resurrection is further described in verse 12: “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

Judgment in the Bible is a process, not just a sentencing. These will have a first chance to really understand the books—the Bible—and a first chance to choose and faithfully follow God’s way and to be written in the Book of Life. This is a resurrection to physical life, with an offer of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 37:1-14) and a chance for repentance even for Sodom and Gomorrah and Nineveh (Matthew 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Truly God is not willing for any to perish, but that all should come to repentance and salvation (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4).

For more information, search “*The Resurrections and Eternal Judgment*” at [ucg.org](http://ucg.org) to read that chapter from UCG’s *Fundamental Beliefs* booklet.

# COMPASS CHECK

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