

RAY COMFORT

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would
anyone
follow
Jesus?



12 Reasons to Trust What
the Bible Says about Jesus

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Introduction

There's a particularly heartwarming passage of Scripture in the Gospel of John:

There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. (John 12:20–21 KJV)

I have had the honor of preaching in many pulpits, but there is one pulpit I will never forget. Across the top of the surface where I placed my Bible was a small plaque. This plaque faced toward me and any other preacher who used the pulpit. The congregation couldn't see it. It simply said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." That is the cry of every congregation and should be the aim of every preacher. It certainly is my goal with this book—I want you to see Jesus.

When my publisher asked if I would like to write a book that points people to Jesus, I didn't hesitate to say yes. I knew it would be an easy assignment. Writing about my Savior is like talking about my beloved bride. Ask me about Sue, and, if you care to listen, I will spill on you like a burst dam.

I will, with great delight, tell you how we met in a bank in 1967, how she didn't like me at first, how I loved and pursued her, how she changed her mind, and how she eventually proposed. I will explain how she has always been my best friend, how we talk about everything, and how I love to help her do anything. If you care to listen, I will drill a hole through your earlobe, nail it to a door (Exod. 21:5–6; Deut. 15:16–17), and bore you to tears with a thousand stories of the love of my life.

So it is with my precious Savior.

There is no one like my Jesus. He's my greatest love; the light of the world; the hero of heroes; the conqueror of death; the way, the truth, and the life; and the only name under Heaven by which we must be saved. He became my light and lifeline when I was hopelessly sitting in the shadow of death. I'm honored when even one lost person stops and listens to me share His glorious gospel. May the chapters of this book not only help you to see Jesus but also bring you closer to Him.

Ray Comfort

PS: The “Witnessing Encounter” sections at the end of each chapter are transcripts of real-life witnessing encounters captured on video.

1

Jesus and Intellectual Arguments

Who was Jesus? Was He just a great teacher, or was He the Son of God? Was He the promised Messiah—the one for whom many Jews are still waiting? What if someone told you there is no historical evidence that Jesus even existed? Such a thought removes the wind from the sails of some would-be witnesses. *Live Science* said of Jesus:

Jesus was the Messiah (Christ), the Son of God who was crucified for the sins of humanity before rising from the dead, according to Christian Gospels and early Christian writings.

According to the Gospels, Jesus, who was born around 4 BC, was able to perform supernatural feats such as healing a wide range of diseases by simply touching people or speaking to them. He supposedly also had the ability to walk on water, instantly create vast amounts of fish and bread, resurrect the dead, rise from the dead himself, calm storms and exorcise demons from people.

The stories told about him have led many scholars to explore these questions: What was Jesus really like? Did he really exist? Today, many of the supernatural feats Jesus is reported to have performed are regarded by scientists as impossible to do—certainly by someone who lived 2,000 years ago.¹

This article confirms that some *scientists* think that the supernatural feats Jesus did are impossible. What a strange thing to say. *Anyone* can tell you that those feats are impossible to do—today or two thousand years ago when He did them. It’s not possible to walk on water, to calm an angry storm just by telling it to, to multiply loaves and fish, or to raise the dead by speaking to them. But the Bible doesn’t say only that He did the impossible but also that He *said* things in the same category. His words were seemingly senseless. They were more than wildly strange; they were without precedent—and we will look at many examples in this book.

When someone asks me for evidence that Jesus existed, I ask them a couple of questions. “We mark our yearly time through a numbering system. What number are we up to at present?” When they tell me what year it is, I then ask, “Since when?” The answer is “*since Christ*.” We mark the years with the BC/AD dating system. The birth of Jesus is the dividing point of history. No other historical figure so impacted humanity that they were given the honor of splitting time in two. Only Jesus. Napoleon, Shakespeare, Caesar, and Joan of Arc were not given that distinction as a birthmark. Yet no one seriously doubts *their* existence.

We also have the historical records of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These give us four detailed accounts of Jesus’s birth, life, death, and resurrection.

And then there’s the record of respected historians. An article on History.com recounts, “The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus . . . twice mentions Jesus in *Jewish Antiquities*, his massive 20-volume history of the Jewish people that was written around AD 93. . . . In one passage of *Jewish Antiquities* that recounts an unlawful execution, Josephus identifies the victim, James, as the ‘brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah.’”²

The same article describes more evidence, saying the following:

Another account of Jesus appears in *Annals of Imperial Rome*, a first-century history of the Roman Empire written around 116

A.D. by the Roman senator and historian Tacitus. In chronicling the burning of Rome in 64 A.D., Tacitus mentions that Emperor Nero falsely blamed “the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius.”³

In minutes, we can gather more evidence that Jesus of Nazareth existed than we can of many other historical figures, famous though they may be. Faced with this evidence of His existence, people often start looking around wildly for a detour away from Him. They bring up facts about His life that seem impossible. And one of those pieces of evidence would be His famous words.

Jesus predicted that the heavens and the earth would pass away but that His words would certainly remain (see Matt. 24:35). And two thousand years later, they remain—encapsulated for us in the bestselling book of all time.

No philosopher or historical figure holds a blown-out candle to the brilliance of the words given to us in the Sermon on the Mount. If Jesus didn’t give us the Golden Rule and the many other breathtaking truths in that sermon, who did? And why would anyone not want it to be the person whom these detailed historical records maintain it was? One answer to that question is the biblical one. Jesus was hated because He continually spoke of our moral accountability to God: “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil” (John 7:7).

And that’s why He is the only figure in history who has been so despised that His name is used as a popular cuss word.

The Virgin Birth Problem

One popular impossibility that sits forever in the doubter’s head and causes many arguments is the virgin birth. The teaching of the

Bible is that Jesus was born of a virgin *because* He came to suffer as a sacrificial Lamb for the sin of the world. The Lamb of God had to be without spot or blemish, so Jesus had to be sinless. If He had been born through the lineage of Adam, He would have inherited sin and had tainted blood. Therefore, Joseph couldn't be His father. Jesus's blood had to be pure. Because God was His Father, He had untainted blood.

That's the *why*. I've given the *natural* explanation. Then there's the *supernatural* explanation, the *how*. If we can't accept the virgin birth because we are having a problem with God's abilities, we need to expand our perspective of His power.

Take for example the human body. Scientists estimate it's made up of seventy trillion cells, and each cell contains approximately one hundred trillion atoms. If we want to find out how many atoms make up our bodies, we would multiply seventy trillion by one hundred trillion. Here's my point. God put in order every one of those atoms to make me who I am, and He's intimately familiar with each atom—from the inside out—because He made it. Having knowledge like that can help us refine our understanding of God's power, and from there, expand our thoughts of the immensity of His power. God's power isn't bound by the possible. It reaches into the realm of the impossible.

When religious leaders came to Jesus with a far-fetched scenario in an attempt to confound Him, Jesus pointed to two errors.

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. (Matt. 22:23–33)

Jesus told them they were mistaken in two ways: one, they didn’t know the Scriptures, and two, they didn’t know anything about the power of God. In reality, there are no limits to the power of our Creator. If we adopt the biblical view and give Him *unlimited* power, then we can sit back, relax, and say, “With God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37). This understanding of His power opens the door of reasoning to the virgin birth, the calming of storms, the multiplying of loaves and fish, and the raising of the dead by simply speaking to them.

The Easier Way

But what if you want to do more than simply convince someone that Jesus was born of a virgin? If you want to bring them to Jesus, there’s an easier way. If they say, “I *can’t* accept the virgin birth,” and we try to address that stubborn denial of the biblical account, we are attempting to climb a mountain we need not climb. They’re scrambling for a detour, and we need to lead them straight back to Him.

Romans 8:7 says that the carnal mind is in a state of enmity toward God, and that “it is not subject *to the law of God*, nor indeed can be” (emphasis added). In other words, all unregenerate human beings are offended by the moral government of God. This is epitomized in the fact that they use His name in vain. They would never think of using their mother’s name as

a cuss word, but they use the holy name of the God who gave them life in the place of a filthy word to express disgust. They despise God:

He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD,
But he who is perverse in his ways despises Him.
(Prov. 14:2)

It is *that* hard ground upon which we sow. And more often than not, the problem is not that they don't understand the concept of the virgin birth; it's that they simply refuse to accept it as truth. Their stumbling block is the sin of unbelief, similar to the unbelief that Zacharias had when the angel of God told him that his elderly wife was going to become pregnant well after she had passed the age of childbearing.

And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."
(Luke 1:18–20)

Zacharias was rightly struck dumb because he insulted the integrity of God. It's common for unbelievers to say something like "I find it hard to have faith in God." The question to ask such a person is, "Do you find it hard to have faith in your mother? If so, what does that say about her? It says that she's not trustworthy—that she's a devious liar and not worth trusting."

If it's an insult to someone to lack faith in them, how much more is it an insult to a holy God to lack faith in Him? It is to call him a liar. That's exactly what the Bible says: "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not

believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10).

If our agenda is to convince someone that with God the impossible is possible, we can possibly do that by reasoning about the details of His infinite power. But again, if it’s to bring sinners to the Savior, there is an easier way. We simply do what Jesus did.

The problem isn’t that the virgin birth is a stumbling block in their minds but that their sin is an offense to God. To address an intellectual problem and not the problem of sin is to put the cart before the horse. Or to put it in modern vernacular, we are putting the trailer before the SUV. When we do that, we’re not going anywhere.

When the Pharisees wanted a sign from Jesus, He could have pointed to the virgin birth, which Scripture says was a *sign*. The prophet Isaiah foretold: “Therefore the Lord Himself *will give you a sign*: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14, emphasis added).

But Jesus didn’t point to the virgin birth. This is what He said instead:

An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, *and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah*. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt. 12:39–40, emphasis added)

Jesus was alluding to the cross—that He would be swallowed by death itself and then be raised back to life. That’s the *sign* sinners need. It is the gospel that brings us to God. The gospel—not perfect explanations of supernatural phenomena.

Here’s the problem with addressing the human intellect. If somebody is talked into their faith through an intellectual argument, all it will take is a better intellectual argument to talk them out of their faith. However, when the new birth comes to an

unbeliever, the moment someone truly believes, they are transformed into a new person (see 2 Cor. 5:17). God takes His law and writes it on the new believer's heart, causing them to walk in His statutes. In other words, the new birth described in John 3 will cause a person to love the things that God loves. I once loved the darkness and hated the light. I once drank iniquity like water. But at the moment of my conversion, I suddenly began to thirst after righteousness. And that's a personal and undeniable miracle for a sin-loving sinner. It was the sign that can never be taken away by a mere argument from a skeptic. When that transformation occurs, we experientially know that with God nothing is impossible, including the virgin birth.

Witnessing Encounter

Fifteen minutes before this interview, I felt inordinately tired. Suspiciously tired. I just wanted to doze off, but I thought, *This is just so obvious; I've got a divine encounter somewhere*. So I stood myself up, went out, found Clarence, and did the following interview—which I'll never forget. Clarence said he was a Christian, that he'd been born again. He said all the right things, but something wasn't right in his heart. I wasn't convinced that he'd truly been born again. I kept that thought in mind throughout the interview, hoping that he wouldn't be offended. He wasn't. After our talk, as Clarence walked away, he said, "Right on time, Ray. . . . Awesome."

RAY: You say you like information?

CLARENCE: Yes, I do.

RAY: Tell me, why is that?

CLARENCE: Because you can never have too much information.

RAY: That's true. There's a Bible verse that says "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."⁴ There's a lack of information. Have you heard that verse?

CLARENCE: Yes, I have.

RAY: What's the world's biggest selling book of all time?

CLARENCE: The Bible.

RAY: That's the most loved book in the world; it's also the most hated. Why do you think the Bible is hated?

CLARENCE: Because it opens up the truth about each individual. It separates also. It separates because most people want to have their own will and free will to do the things that they want to do, and not God's. And so it separates.

RAY: Have you heard of the Dunning-Kruger effect?

CLARENCE: No, I haven't.

RAY: Two psychologists back in 1999 did a study and found that incompetent people always thought they were competent. That means they thought they could jump higher, run faster, and sing better than what they actually could. All of us are subject to that. I remember back when I was about 13 years old, I thought I could sing pretty good, and I sang into a tape recorder and I played it back and I was horrified at how bad it was. And so for the last 50-something years, if I sing in public, it's always very, very quiet, because I can't sing. Tears come to people's eyes when I start singing. They request that I sing on a hill far away. So now let's see if the Kruger effect goes over to the moral aspect: Clarence, do you think you're a good person?

CLARENCE: A great person.

RAY: I mean morally, are you a good person?

CLARENCE: Morally, a great person.

RAY: So, you're going to do good on judgment day?

CLARENCE: Yes, I am.

RAY: So, there's nothing you're doing or nothing you've done that could offend God or anger Him?

CLARENCE: No, there's nothing to anger God but not following Him and only Him.

RAY: Have you been born again?

CLARENCE: Yes, I have.

RAY: And what does that mean?

CLARENCE: That means to renew your mind and it means to put away the old things and to renew your mind, body, and soul.

RAY: So out of 1 to 10 where would you say you are in your Christian walk? One is really, really bad; 10 is really good.

CLARENCE: I'd say a 7.

RAY: A 7?

CLARENCE: Yeah, 7.

RAY: Now, does that concern you at all?

CLARENCE: Yeah, it always does.

RAY: Yeah, because if I was going to jump out of a plane and you say, "Parachute on tight: 1 to 10" and I said "7," you'd say, "Hey, don't jump on a 7. You want to jump on a 10!" We're talking about your eternity, so we want to make your calling and election sure. So I'm going to see if I can dismantle the fact that you think you're a good person. Do you think I could change your mind?

CLARENCE: No.

RAY: OK. I'm going to use two weapons to shoot it down. Number one I think will work anyway. In Mark 10:18 Jesus says there's none good but God. Who's lying, you or God?

CLARENCE: Me.

RAY: Yes, there's none good. The Bible makes it very clear, and that's because of the fact that *good* in God's book,

good means “moral excellence.” In the dictionary there’s over 40 different definitions of the word *good*, and number one is moral excellence—and none of us are good in God’s book. When you got up this morning, did you look in the mirror?

CLARENCE: Yes, I did.

RAY: Why did you do that?

CLARENCE: Because I wanted to see my face.

RAY: Yeah, you want to clean up before you go public! You know, puffy eyes, messy hair, whatever. The mirror reveals what you are in truth; it doesn’t lie to you. Then it sends you to the water to have a wash. So I’m going to turn the mirror on you so you can see yourself in truth. This will put your Christian walk on steroids, so let’s do that. This is the moral law, the Ten Commandments: How many lies do you think you’ve told in your life?

CLARENCE: I’m not a big liar, but short fibs, I guess. I don’t know; I can’t really name, little ones here and there.

RAY: Just little lies?

CLARENCE: Yeah.

RAY: What do you call someone who tells lies?

CLARENCE: Untruthful person.

RAY: A liar.

CLARENCE: A liar.

RAY: So what are you?

CLARENCE: I am a truthful person.

RAY: Yeah, but if you tell lies what are you called?

CLARENCE: [laughs]

RAY: Rhymes with fire and begins with *L*. You know, Clarence, it’s really hard to judge ourselves.

CLARENCE: A liar.

RAY: Yes, that's it. Now if I told lies, you'd have no trouble saying, "You're a liar." Have you ever stolen something in your whole life, even if it's small?

CLARENCE: Yeah.

RAY: What do you call someone who steals things?

CLARENCE: A thief.

RAY: So what are you?

CLARENCE: A thief.

RAY: No, a lying thief. Do you still think you're a good person?

CLARENCE: Yes, I am.

RAY: You think a lying thief is a good person?

CLARENCE: Yes, he is.

RAY: [laughs] No, he's not.

CLARENCE: Lying thief; it puts you down on number five out of ten, yeah.

RAY: So have you ever used God's name in vain?

CLARENCE: Yes, I have.

RAY: It's using God's name as a cuss word when the Bible says His name is holy. Would you use your mother's name as a cuss word?

CLARENCE: No.

RAY: Because you'll dishonor her, you'll insult her. You'd even anger her, you know, and we anger God when we use His name as a cuss word to express disgust.

CLARENCE: Totally.

RAY: It's called blasphemy and is punishable by death in the Old Testament. Jesus said if you look at a woman and lust for her, you commit adultery with her in your heart. Have you ever looked at a woman with lust?

CLARENCE: Yes.

RAY: Have you had sex before marriage?

CLARENCE: Yes.

RAY: So, Clarence, here's a quick summation. I'm not judging you.

CLARENCE: Break it down.

RAY: Yeah, I'm breaking it down—you've just told me you're a lying, thieving, fornicating, blasphemous adulterer at heart, and you have to face God on judgment day. So if He judges you by the Ten Commandments on judgment day, do you think you'll be innocent or guilty?

CLARENCE: Guilty.

RAY: Heaven or hell?

CLARENCE: I don't want to say that one.

RAY: Well, I will because I love you, I care about you, and if I see you in . . .

CLARENCE: I'm going down.

RAY: Yeah. Say that again?

CLARENCE: I'd go to hell.

RAY: Now does that concern you?

CLARENCE: Very much so.

RAY: Now if you were on a thousand-foot cliff with your toes over the edge, we're talking a thousand-foot cliff, would that be scary for you?

CLARENCE: Yes, surely it would.

RAY: Would the feeling of fear be a horrible feeling?

CLARENCE: Surely it would.

RAY: Is the feeling of fear a good thing or a bad thing?

CLARENCE: Very bad.

RAY: No, it's actually very good—do you know why? Because it's saying, "Step back from the thousand-foot cliff! Don't die! Step back, step back!" So that fear is not your

enemy, it's your friend. That's making you step back from that cliff, and what I've tried to do is put you on the edge of eternity and let the fear of God fill your heart, because "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."⁵ The Scriptures say, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."⁶ Jesus said, "Fear not him who has power to kill your body and afterwards do no more, but fear Him who has power to kill your body and cast your soul into hell."⁷ That's a strange thing for Him to say. I don't know if you heard what He just said, but let me say it again. He said, "Fear not him who has power to kill your body."⁸ Imagine lying in bed at night; you hear the door creak open in the darkness and you see a guy coming at you with a mask on, with a glittering knife. He pulls the knife back to stab it in your chest! Man, your heart would be in your mouth; you'd be so horrified. But Jesus said, "Don't be afraid of him compared to the fear you should have for God," and so the Bible says, "By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."⁹ And so that fear that I'm trying to put in your heart by God's grace is your friend not your enemy—because it'll make you let go of those beloved sins. We love to fornicate; we love to look at pornography; we even love to lie and steal because, well, it gives us a bit of a buzz. When I was a kid, I used to steal apples from the neighbors. It was more exciting than getting them off the kitchen table!

CLARENCE: I used to take liquor. [laughs]

RAY: You used to take liquor because we've got a sinful heart that loves darkness more than light. So, Clarence, tell me what did God do for guilty sinners so we wouldn't have to go to hell?

CLARENCE: He gave His only begotten Son, so that we should have eternal life.

RAY: Yeah, the Bible says the Ten Commandments are called the moral law.

CLARENCE: John 3:15.

RAY: John 3:16. Yeah, you and I broke the law; Jesus paid the fine. That's what happened on that cross. You know, we tend to trivialize sin and say, "It was just white lies and fibs," but the Bible says, "Lying lips *are* an abomination to the LORD."¹⁰ We say we just take little things like candy from a store, but the Bible says thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God, and the way to see how serious God is about sinners is to look at the punishment He's given. Death . . . "the wages of sin is death."¹¹ Death is evidence that God is deadly serious about sin.

So the fear of God should fill our hearts. Death should make us think, *Man, I don't want to fall into the hands of the living God.* That's a terrifying thing. So Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins, took our punishment. If you're in court, Clarence, and someone pays your fine, the judge can legally let you go. He can say, "Clarence, there's a stack of speeding fines here—this is very serious; but someone's paid them, you're free to go," and he can do that which is just and right and legal.

CLARENCE: Right.

RAY: Well, God can legally dismiss our case, forgive our sins, commute our death sentence, actually, take the death sentence off us because Jesus paid the fine on our behalf, rose again on the third day, and defeated death. And now what you have to do, and this is probably what was missing before, is repent of your sins. Now let me explain why I think there's probably a problem. If I said to you, "Clarence, I've got some great news for you, someone just paid a speeding fine on your behalf," but you didn't believe you broke the law, that good news of me paying the fine

for you wouldn't be good news; it'd be insulting. You'd say, "What are you talking about? I don't have a speeding fine!" But if you realize you've broken the law—that you went like 60 miles an hour through an area set aside for a blind children's convention, that you did a terrible thing—and I say, "Someone has paid that fine for you," then that good news becomes good news indeed.

So the good news depends on how serious you see your transgression is; and if you see sin as being deadly serious—lying, stealing, using God's name as a cuss word, lusting after women, committing adultery in your heart—then the good news of the cross will make sense to you. You'll find a place of genuine sorrow (and the Bible says, "Godly sorrow produces repentance"¹²), and you'll be able to truly repent, let go of those sins because of the godly sorrow.

That's the first thing; the second thing you must do to be saved is trust in Jesus like you trust a parachute. You don't just *believe* in a parachute; you put your faith into it, and when you have your faith in a parachute, you lose your fear. If you were going to jump 10,000 feet without a parachute, you'd be terrified. But someone gives you a parachute and you trust the parachute; you say, "Oh, I'm safe, I'm going to land at 5 miles an hour on my feet instead of 120 miles an hour on my face." When I face death (and it can come at any time), I've got no fear according to the faith I have in Christ. I've put on the Lord Jesus Christ so I can look death in the face. I can look at judgment day and have boldness because I'm trusting in the Savior. I'm trusting in His righteousness. Does this make sense?

CLARENCE: Yes, it does.

RAY: So, Clarence, if you died today and God gave you justice, despite your intellectual belief and knowing so much

truth, you'd end up in hell. There are two things you must do to be saved—you must repent and trust alone in Jesus.

When are you going to do that?

CLARENCE: I've already done it.

RAY: Yes, but remember the fruit wasn't there, so I think you should do it again.

CLARENCE: [immediately begins to pray] Dear God, I ask You right now to come into my heart and renew my mind. I ask You to work on my dailies, my thoughts, my endeavors, and everything that's in front of me. Let Your will be done and not mine. All these things I ask in the mighty name of Christ. Amen.

RAY: I pray for Clarence that today he'll see sin in a different light and find a place of godly sorrow and bring forth fruit worthy of repentance and know that he's passed from death to life. And that his walk will be one of holiness and glorifying You, and may You raise him up as a burning and a shining light to reach this generation, in Jesus's name we pray.

CLARENCE: Amen.

RAY: Amen, amen.

CLARENCE: Amen.

God can do the impossible—He can break through the lies that people like Clarence tell themselves all the time. After all, the lie “I'm a good person” is easier for most people than the truth of the virgin birth!

Special note: I'm often asked why I don't “close the deal” with the lost by having them pray what is commonly called the sinner's prayer. Think of Nathan and King David (see 2 Sam. 12). When David's sin was exposed, Nathan didn't say, “Pray this prayer after me and mean it from your heart.” Instead, he stood

back and let the Lord work in David's heart. David sought the Lord himself and prayed the penitent prayer of Psalm 51 from his own conviction.

When I was a new Christian, I found a popular little booklet that laid out the gospel as four laws. I didn't notice at the time that it didn't open up the Ten Commandments for the reader as Jesus did for His audience. Nor did it mention hell or hint of judgment day. This little booklet held up Jesus as a means of happiness. It didn't mention that Jesus is the One who gives us the righteousness we need to be saved from God's wrath. In my ignorance, I led twenty-eight of my surfing buddies to Jesus. I'd give them the four laws and then have them repeat the sinner's prayer at the end. It was so easy and simple. The trouble was, twenty-seven of the twenty-eight tragically backslid and became bitter against God. If we water down the medicine, it will lose its curative properties.

It's worth noting that my friends who backslid didn't actually backslide. They never slid forward in the first place. They had false conversions, and I was responsible. God forgive me. There's a much more effective way to evangelize. This way leaves out the sinner's prayer, but it gives God all the room in the world to work in sinners' hearts. Think of what happened after the Ethiopian eunuch was saved (see Acts 8:26–40). He was left without follow-up. The Spirit of God transported Philip the evangelist away and left the new convert alone in the wilderness. Perhaps this story is in Scripture to remind us that the new convert's salvation wasn't dependent on Philip but on his relationship with God. If God is the author of someone's faith, He will be the finisher (see Heb. 12:2). If God has begun a good work in us, He will complete it (see Phil. 1:6). He is able to keep each of us from falling and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (see Jude 1:24).

I do pray with and for penitent sinners. Then I give them our booklet called *The Bible's Four Gospels*.¹³ This booklet was pro-

duced especially for new converts and those who are open to the things of God. It contains the four Gospels, the twenty most commonly asked questions of the Christian faith, and the text of our very popular booklet *Why Christianity?* After I give them this publication, I commend them into the hands of the faithful Creator.