

THE GREATEST MAN WHO EVER LIVED

*“He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman.
He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty.
Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.
He never wrote a book.
He never held an office.
He never had a family or a home.
He didn’t go to college.
He never visited a big city.
He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where He was born.
He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness.
He had no credentials but Himself.
He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him.
His friends ran away.
One of them denied Him.
He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial.
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.
While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His garments, the only property He has on earth.
When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.
Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race.
All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not effected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life.”*

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ is the greatest man who has ever lived in all of history. **He changed the world forever.** When He was born, **He transformed the very way we measure time.** He turned aside the river of the ages out of its course and lifted the centuries off their hinges. His birthday, His Incarnation, touched and transformed time. Now the whole world counts time as Before Christ (BC) and AD (Anno Domini – in the year of our Lord). Jesus Christ is the central figure of history. **More books have been written about Jesus Christ than any other person in history.**

The world before Christ was a world without hospitals, a world without charity, a world without respect for the sanctity of life. **Hospitals** were an innovation of Christianity. Hence the healing symbol of a cross represents hospitals. The **nursing** profession was founded by Christians such as Florence Nightingale out of devotion for Christ. One of history’s greatest humanitarian movements, the **International Red Cross**, was founded by Christians in response to the Scriptural injunctions to care for the sick and the suffering. Christians such as **Dr. Louis Pasteur** have fuelled some of the greatest practical advances in medicine. Pasteur has probably saved more lives than any other individual in history through his inventions.

The whole concept of **charity** was a Christian innovation. Benevolence to strangers was unknown before Christ. **The teachings and example of Jesus Christ have inspired the greatest acts of generosity, hospitality, self-sacrifice and service for the poor, sick and needy over two thousand years.**

Before the advent of Christianity every culture-practised slavery and human sacrifice – even the highly esteemed Greek and Roman civilisations. Child sacrifice was common among the pagan religions. The Aztec Empire in Mexico and Inca Empire in Peru engaged in slavery, ritual rapes and mass human sacrifice. *Suttee*, the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, was common practice in Hindu India before the missionary William Carey arrived.

Slavery was eradicated as a result of tireless efforts of Christians such as William Wilberforce and David Livingstone. Respect for life and liberty is a fruit of Christianity. Those promoting abortion, euthanasia and pornography are not offering us progress, but only a return to pre-Christian paganism.

The positive impact of Jesus Christ on the world cannot be overstated. Everything from education to human rights, from public health to economic liberty – the things we cherish most and many of the blessings we take for granted – all can be traced to the spiritual and the cultural revolution begun by Jesus Christ.

The irrefutable fact is that **Christianity gave birth to modern science**. The scientific revolution began with the Protestant Reformation and the Bible played a vital part in the development of scientific discovery. **Every major branch of science was developed by a Bible believing Christian. The Bible essentially created science.** When we get into a car, start the engine, turn on the lights, drive to a hospital, receive an anaesthetic before an operation, and have an effective operation done in a germ-free environment, we need to remember that we owe it all to Jesus Christ.

“Every school you see – public or private, religious or secular – is a visible reminder of the religion of Jesus Christ. So is every college and university.” Dr. James Kennedy.

The phenomenon of education for the masses has its roots in Christianity. The pursuit of the knowledge of God in a systematic, philosophical and in-depth way gave rise to the phenomenon of universities all around the world. **It was the Christian faith that gave rise to the idea of higher learning.**

Most of the languages of the world were first set to writing by Christian missionaries. The first book in most languages of the world has been the Bible. Christianity has been the greatest force for promoting literacy worldwide throughout history.

The Christian missionary movement in the 19th Century pioneered tens of thousands of schools throughout Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands – providing education for countless millions, even in the remotest jungles, giving the gift of literacy to tribes which had never before had a written language.

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ was **the greatest Teacher the world has ever known**. When He spoke, *“They were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority...”* Mark 1:22. The life, teachings and example of Jesus Christ have profoundly influenced the whole development of education worldwide. The Great Commission of our Lord Jesus was to *“make disciples of all nations...teaching them...”* Matthew 28:19-20.

From the very beginning Christians were establishing schools. Amongst the many innovations in Christian Education was that these Christian schools taught everybody, including girls and women. Formally educating both sexes was a Christian innovation. The Greeks and Romans before the birth of Christ did not formally educate girls. Only boys from the privileged classes obtained an education. **Christianity revolutionised education by making it available to all classes and both genders.**

Saint Augustine observed that Christian women were better educated than the pagan male philosophers.

Every branch and level of education was pioneered by Bible believing Christians. The concept of **graded levels of education** was first introduced by a German Lutheran, Johan Sturm in the 16th Century. Another Lutheran, Frederick Froebel introduced **kindergartens**. **Education for the deaf** was also pioneered by Christians.

Before Jesus Christ, human life in the Greek and Roman world was extremely cheap. Infants born with physical defects such as blindness, were commonly abandoned to die in the wilderness. In Greece, blind babies were cast into the sea. Those who survived their blind infancy, or became blind later in childhood usually became galley slaves, and blind girls were commonly assigned to a life of prostitution.

However, **Jesus Christ showed particular compassion for the blind**, healing many blind individuals during His ministry on earth. When the Roman persecution of the Church ended, in the 4th Century, Christians established asylums for the blind. In the 19th Century, Louis Braille, a dedicated Christian

who lost his eyesight at age three, developed the world's first alphabet that enabled blind people to read with their fingers.

Sunday schools were begun by Robert Raikes in 1780 to provide boys and girls from the poorest homes with the gift of literacy and the riches of the Scriptures. **The first universities** grew out of the monastic missionary centers, which had disciplined Europe. The first university lecturers were the missionary monks who had collected books, accumulated libraries, copied manuscripts and were uniquely equipped for advanced academic study. **Most universities began as Christian schools**, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Oxford, Cambridge, Heidelberg and Basel.

The greatest invention in the field of learning, the **printing press**, by Johannes Gutenberg, was also a fruit of the Christian faith. **The first book to be printed was the Bible.**

The very name "*university*" testifies to its Christian origins. University means "*One Truth*". Isn't it time that teachers, lecturers and professors took an in-depth look at the greatest Teacher the world has ever known, the greatest Book ever produced and the Faith with inspired and pioneered every major branch of education and science?.

Just consider some of the every-day things, which have been inspired by the Bible. The word "*breakfast*" comes from the concept of breaking the fast.

The word "*restaurant*" comes from Jesus' promise in Matthew 11:28 "*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*" The first restaurant founded in Paris in 1766 placed that verse from Matthew 11:28 in bold letters outside this first public establishment dedicated to providing meals in a pleasant atmosphere.

The fact that our week consists of seven days is a testimony to the fact of God creating the world in six days, resting on the seventh.

The practice of Sunday being a Day of rest dates back to the Christian tradition of honouring the first day of the week as the Lord's Day, a testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

Every time a newspaper publishes the date, it is a testimony to the centrality of Christ. When we call this the year 2006, we are acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the central focus of history. This is the year 2006 AD, '*in the year of our Lord*'.

The very word "*goodbye*" comes from a parting prayer: ***God be with ye.***

The word "*holiday*" comes from *holy day*.

The Bible, particularly the Ten Commandments, laid the framework and legal foundations of Western civilisation. The very first statute, the first written restriction on the powers of government was the *Magna Carta* of 1215. It was written by a pastor and thoroughly saturated with Scriptural principles.

The Bible has inspired the greatest literature, the greatest art, the greatest examples of architecture, the age of exploration, world missions, the rule of law, the separation of powers, checks and balances, representative government, the sanctity of life, and so much more that we take for granted.

Christianity introduced a respect for life and liberty that was completely unknown before the coming of Jesus Christ.

In the ancient world, the teachings of Jesus Christ halted infanticide, liberated women, abolished slavery, inspired the first charities and religious organisations, created hospitals, established orphanages and founded schools.

In the medieval times, Christianity built libraries, invented colleges and universities, dignified labour and converted the barbarians.

In the modern era, Christian teaching has advanced science, inspired political, social and economic freedom, promoted justice and provided the greatest inspiration for the most magnificent achievements in art, architecture, music and literature.

Christianity has been the most powerful agent in transforming society for the better across 2000 years. No other religion, philosophy, teaching, nation or movement has changed the world for the better as Christianity has done.

Jesus Christ is the greatest Man who has ever lived, and the Bible is the greatest Book ever written.

The Bible is the number one best selling book in all of history. It is estimated that well over 30 million Bibles and 100 million New Testaments are printed every year. **The Bible has also been translated into more languages than any other book in history.**

Wise men still seek Him.

He became like us – that we might become like Him.

He was rejected – that we might be accepted.

He was condemned – that we might be forgiven.

He was punished – that we might be pardoned.

He suffered – that we might be strengthened.

He was whipped – that we might be healed.

He was hated – that we might be loved.

He was crucified – that we might be justified.

He was tortured – that we might be comforted.

He died – that we might live.

He went to hell – that we might go to Heaven.

He endured what we deserve – that we might enjoy what only He deserves.

There is one appointment not one of us will miss. In fact none of us will even be able to be late for this appointment. *“It is appointed unto man once to die and after this to face judgement.”* Hebrews 9:27

We do not know when, or under what circumstances, our lives will come to an end. But we do know that when we die we will stand before Almighty God, our Creator and eternal Judge, and we will have to give an account of our lives to Him. *“For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

2 Corinthians 5:10

“Only life, it will soon be passed – only what’s done for Christ will last.”

We need to work out our priorities in the light of eternity. We need to invest our time, talents and treasure into those things that are going to last for eternity: the people of God, the Word of God and the Kingdom of God. These are what are ultimately important. *“Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”* Matthew 6:33.

In the light of eternity, knowing that you are going to stand before the Creator and eternal Judge, you need to review your life’s work, your family relationships, habits and activities. Imagine: On that great day when you will stand before the judgement seat of Christ and give an account of your life, do you

really believe that any of us will be thinking: *I should have watched more TV! I was too generous! I should have held on to that grudge for longer! I was too spiritual! I spent too much time studying the Bible and praying! I was too evangelistic! I sacrificed too much for God's Kingdom!*

Seriously, in eternity: Will any of us regret praying too much? Studying the Bible too intently? Being too forgiving? Being too generous? Sacrificing too much for God's Kingdom?

If you knew that you would die next year – what would you do differently this year? We need to work out our priorities in the light of eternity.

If I were to ask you: **What is the greatest sin that anyone could commit?** What would you answer? Would you say: Murder? Idolatry? Adultery? Perversion? Hatred or blasphemy?

If I were to ask: **What is the greatest need and priority of your life?** What would you think?: Academic achievement? Promotion? Marriage? Political advancement? Success in business? Money? Career? Or evangelism?

When our Lord Jesus was asked what **the greatest commandment** was He replied: *“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...you shall love your neighbour as yourself.”* Mark 12:30-31

It follows then that **the greatest sin would be to fail to love God with all our heart.** Failure to love God is the root sin that leads to all others. You cannot truly love your neighbour unless you first love God. The Scripture makes clear that even more serious than the bad we have done, evil as that is, is the good that we could have done, but did not do (Matthew 25:41-46).

“Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” James 4:17

What really matters? To know God and to make Him known. To know the Word of God and the God of the Word. Our greatest priority is to love God above all else and more than anyone else. This is what really matters.

There are **three ways of rejecting Christ:**

- **Blatantly** – like Atheism, denying God and openly rejecting Him.
- **By apathy** – knowing the truth, but not caring enough to do something about it.
- **By procrastination** – knowing the truth, being convinced, caring, but not actually getting around to making a decision.

It is not enough to know the truth of Gospel in our heads, we need to believe in our hearts. With all our heart. It is not enough to know about God, we must know Him personally, we need to have a personal relationship with Him. We need to trust Christ, love Him, follow and obey Him.

Our Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. Biblical repentance involves far more than *feeling sorry* for our sins. Sometimes we are only sorry because we got caught. That is not repentance, that is remorse.

Biblical repentance involves: **Conviction** – a change of mind
Contrition – a change of heart
Conversion – a change of life

We need to respond to the Gospel of Christ in repentance and faith. *“Trust and obey, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”*

You do not want to settle for just knowing the truth in your head, and failing to respond wholeheartedly with trust and obedience in your heart. Jesus Christ came to this world in order to die for our sins. We

need to respond in repentance and faith. We need a change of mind, a change of heart and a change of life. This is what Biblical repentance is all about.

Do you want to be one of those wise men who seek Him?

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

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