

Journey of a Lifetime

It began with little things, just small questions...

the way fog creeps in on a cool summer evening.

Then, it became a blinding fog

and bewildering questions

surrounded me.

My easygoing existence
was challenged in a way
I never experienced before.

Why is life troubling me now?

Everything I had considered
trustworthy was falling apart.
My life was no longer safe
and secure.

No, it's okay.

I can handle everything myself.

But I knew I had lost my way.
The fog completely enveloped me.
It was a dark barrier blocking me
from the truth.

I was so confused.
I called out,
struggling to find a way
out of the darkness!

Slowly, someone emerged from the swirling mists.
He stood before me holding out a book.

"Don't be afraid. This book will help you find
the way out of your darkness and confusion," he said.

Really?

On the outside it looked like any other book.
Then I could see it was a beacon of light in the
shadows around me.

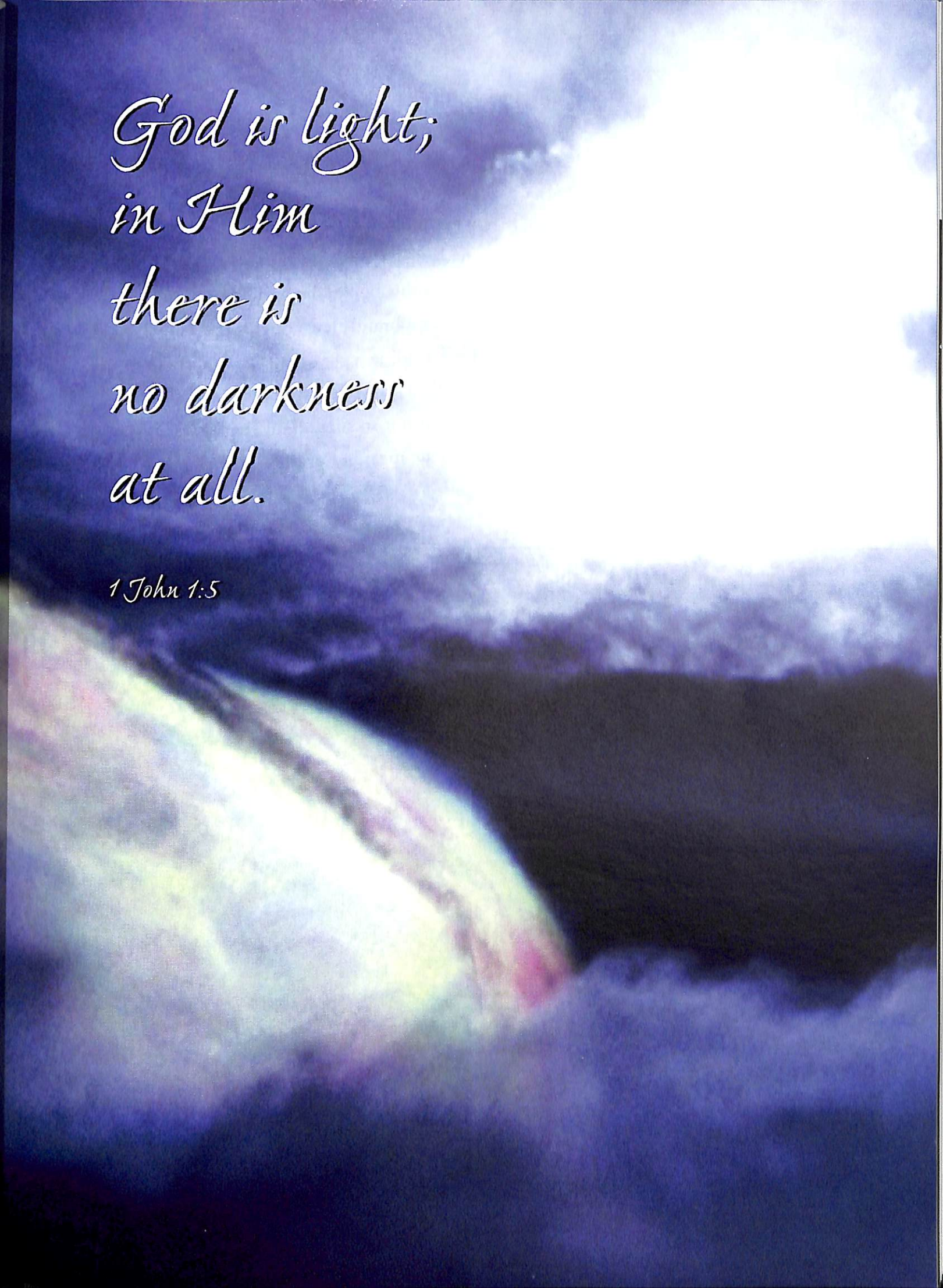
"Come with me," he said, taking my hand.
"Let me guide you out of this darkness!"

Urging me forward, he showed me I needed to
find the God of the beginning, who is the light in the
midst of my darkness. This was the answer that I was
desperately seeking. The God who had created the
entire universe was not so far away after all.

"Here, read this," he instructed. He kept at me
until I began to make the connection between what
I was reading and how to know the living God.
I was like a sponge, soaking up everything I could
from this precious book.

What a wonderful discovery!

I had the book with God's words in my hands.
And this new companion would guide me. A new life
opened up before me as the fog disappeared.



*God is light;
in Him
there is
no darkness
at all.*

1 John 1:5

*W*e had not gone very far when I saw a huge house ahead. Its size and beauty were awesome! I looked at my companion to see his reaction. He just smiled and walked on up the driveway. I followed, eager to get a closer look at this magnificent estate. There on the veranda sat a handsome man. Apparently he had everything going for him. But to my surprise, he was the saddest looking person I had ever seen.

"Welcome," he said. "My name is Rich."

"Excuse me for asking," I said after we introduced ourselves, "but you look so down. Someone like you shouldn't have a care in the world! What's the matter?"

"It's this book," he replied, pulling from his coat pocket a brand-new copy of the same book we had been reading.

"That's a wonderful book!" I exclaimed.

"I'm not so sure about that. I was told it contains the true meaning of life."



“Yes, my companion here is showing me where to find it,” I began, then hesitated. “Haven’t you found it?”

“I didn’t really read enough to know one way or the other. But I did talk to people who have spent their entire lives studying this book. I thought I could save time if they just told me what it means. However, they argue with each other about it and all have different answers.”

“You mean you haven’t read it?” I asked in amazement.

“I don’t know where to start,” Rich complained.

“It doesn’t matter. Just read it for yourself.”

“That’s right,” my companion encouraged.

“You can read history, poetry, wise sayings — why, the truth is everywhere in this book!”

Then I told Rich what happened to me. I explained that before I started to read this book I was living in a dense fog, unable to make sense out of my life. “Now when I read what is written here and ask God to help me as I read, so much becomes clear to me.”

I touched Rich’s shoulder and added, “This book looks like a collection of writings, written by different human authors, but I believe it is God’s book.”

“*God’s* book? Isn’t that a bit strong?” Rich objected.

“Not at all!”

“But saying that it is *God’s* book...” Rich continued to protest.

“Well, let’s read it so you can draw your own conclusion. After all, you have everything anyone might want in this life, but you admit that nothing is working for you.”

“I guess it might not be a *complete* waste of time,” Rich replied. (He sounded partly annoyed with my persistence and partly curious about what he might actually discover in the book.)

Our companion hovered over us as we read and pointed to other pages that could help us understand God’s words.

After a while I asked Rich, “So, what do you think about the book so far?”

“I’m learning a great deal about God and about his relationship with people.”

“Yes, that’s right!” I rejoiced.

“Sometimes people do what pleases God and sometimes they don’t. That’s certainly true-to-life.”

“Everyone can learn lessons from that,” our companion said.

Rich suddenly jumped up. Turning, he looked at his wonderful home for a moment. Then he turned back to me and whispered, “I’m thinking that if God is the author of this book, I have found the real treasure at last!”

“And,” I quipped, “you must *read* the book, not just carry it around in your coat pocket, to uncover that treasure.”

“Okay,” Rich said sheepishly. “I get the point.”

“Are you ready to continue?”

“Absolutely!”

ALL SCRIPTURE IS **GOD-BREATHED** AND IS

USEFUL FOR TEACHING, REBUKING, CORRECTING AND

TRAINING IN **RIGHTEOUSNESS**,

SO THAT THE **MAN OF GOD** MAY BE

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.

Then Rich said to me, "Something different happens when I read this book."

"What's that?"

"Even when our companion doesn't say a word, I think he is helping me understand what I'm reading."

"Yes!" I shouted joyfully over this shared discovery.

As our companion read God's word to us, his special identity was revealed:

**THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM THE FATHER
WILL SEND IN MY NAME, WILL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS
AND WILL REMIND YOU OF EVERYTHING I HAVE SAID TO YOU.**

JOHN 14:26

"We have God's book, the Bible, and we have a divine Companion, the Holy Spirit, to help us understand the book's content," Rich said.

"I guess God must really want his book to be read and understood."

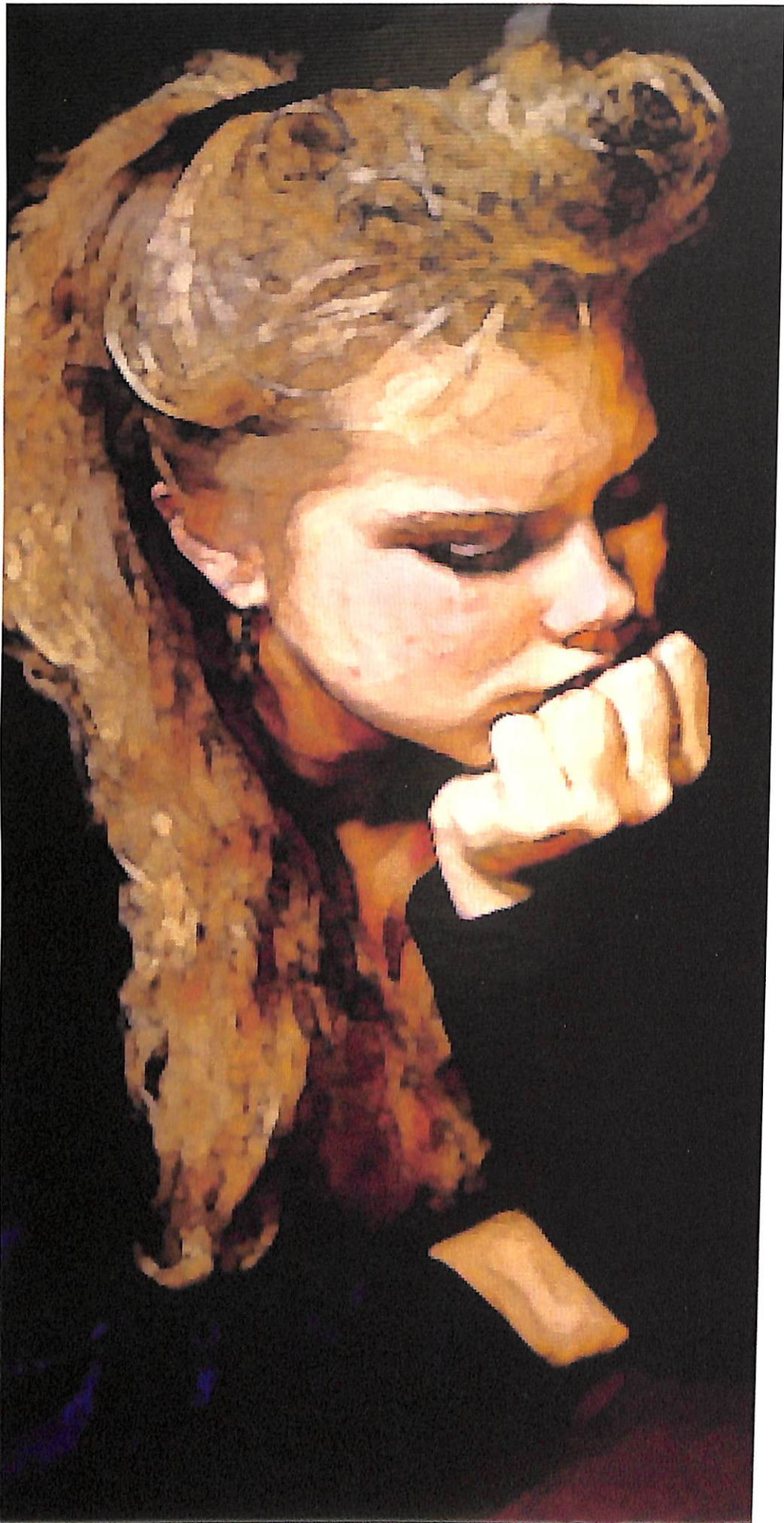
"That's how I see it, Rich."

"Let's get going then!"

So Rich joined me on the journey. We thought just reading would uncover what God wanted us to find. We didn't notice when our Companion went to the right as we wandered down the road to the left. We were totally consumed trying to top each other in our latest acquisition of knowledge. We began to memorize verses and entire paragraphs from God's book, as if that would make us superior to anyone else we met along the way. We delighted in stumping each other with trivia questions based on insignificant details.



During these days, we never missed our Companion.



It was getting very crowded on this road. Suddenly I stumbled over a sorry-looking person in the way and dropped my Bible. As I picked it up, I wondered who she could be. It was impossible to guess anything about her, except that her life must have been extremely difficult. She looked like the weight of the world had come crashing down on her and that she had all but given up on life.

"Who are you?" I hesitantly asked.

"Oh, you don't want to know me!" she wailed.

"But, who are you?" I repeated. "And what is wrong?" After much cajoling, we found out her name was Regretta.

Brushing tears from her eyes, she mumbled, "Is that book the Bible?"

"Yes, have you read it?" Rich asked.

"Unfortunately, I have... sorry to say" her voice trailed off.

"Why do you say 'unfortunately'?" I asked her.

"Because it's hopeless. I was going along fine until I read about how great God is and how terrible I am. Reading that book made it clear that God is perfect and God's judgment is perfect. I am a sinner and by God's judgment I'm condemned."

Rich remembered something we had come across fairly early on our journey and, turning to it in the Bible, he read aloud:

*...for all have sinned and
fall short of the glory of God....*

Romans 3:23

“Yes, that says it all, doesn’t it?” Regretta moaned.

“No, it *doesn’t* say it all. Look, there’s more!”

Turning the page Rich continued to read:

For the wages of sin is death....

“Oh, it’s terrible! Just terrible!” Regretta interrupted.

“But listen to the rest of it. Go on, Rich,” I urged.

“Finish that verse.”

*...but the gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 6:23

Looking beyond us down the road, Regretta motioned, “Someone seems to be trying to get your attention. Do you know who it is?”

It was our Companion.

Rich called out, “Hey, where have you been?”

“Waiting for you to find Regretta.”

Our Companion started talking to the three of us as if he had been with us all along. “You are quite right. God is perfect and is the perfect judge. Every person in the world has failed miserably to meet God’s standard. Everyone is condemned — but that’s not the end of the message. God loved the world so much that he sent his Son, Jesus, in human form to live among people. He took on the burden of your sin so that you could be forgiven. Jesus’ death and resurrection gives you a way to approach God, so you can enter into his presence and have an entirely new life now and forever! God turned your terrible situation into something very different. Instead of being sad about your condemnation, you can accept what God has done for you through his Son and rejoice in the new life God has provided.”

Regretta sat quietly for a full minute before replying. “I never saw the whole picture before. That’s amazing! God is perfect and God’s judgment is still perfect, but he loved me enough to forgive me.” Then Regretta bowed her head and prayed, “Thank you, God, for sending Jesus for me — for loving me and cleansing me through the sacrifice of your Son. I accept your forgiveness, in Jesus’ name.”



Rich and I looked at each other, realizing that the very message that had helped Regretta see the truth about God was something we also needed to take to heart.

“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” I asked Rich.

“Yeah... we’ve been so wrapped up in details that we missed the heart of the message.”

We shook our heads, not sure what to do next.

“Accept the same forgiveness from God that Regretta has just accepted,” our Companion urged. “It’s true that God’s book helps you to see your shortcomings but not so that you will be condemned forever. God wants you to recognize your failures so you can go to him for help for forgiveness, and for comfort and strength to live in ways which please him. God loves you and wants you to enjoy what he has for you. You can’t enjoy anything from God when you’re feeling guilty and miserable.”

“That’s for sure,” Regretta piped up. “I feel so different, so new, as if a great burden has been lifted from me!”

“The guilt of living outside of God’s perfect plan is a great burden, Regretta,” our Companion declared. “Being freed from that guilt is a relief. It’s a start to a new life, the life God wants you to live.”

Then our Companion turned to Rich and me.

“Are you ready to start again?”

We readily agreed, sensing our own burdens being lifted when we received the forgiveness we needed to follow God’s path.

“Rich and I are on a journey,” I explained to Regretta. “We are searching the Bible to find out what God wants us to know, and our Companion is the guide. Unfortunately, somewhere along the way we took a wrong turn. But now we can continue our search.”

“What about me?” Regretta asked. “I’m searching for the same thing. Can I go with you?”

“Of course! Come along!”

*Since we live by the Spirit,
let us keep in step
with the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:25

Rich, Regretta, and I continued on the journey with our Companion. We were determined to read God’s book as if our very lives depended on it, not in a detached way, as if intellectual stimulation alone were sufficient.

Our Companion helped us to see new things every day. In the poetry, we saw expressions of our deepest feelings. In the narratives, we saw people with the same challenges we faced. We saw in the prophecies appeals for a freshness we had not yet experienced. We saw in the life of God’s Son Jesus Christ far more than we knew how to embrace. We continued to be amazed by God’s book. But at the same time we found more questions. We became increasingly dependent on our Companion for help as we read. He constantly reminded us that we needed our hearts to be touched.



“God’s Word has so much life and love and joy in it that I can’t contain myself!”



Then we met Zoë, whose very name means *Life*. The name suited her. Zoë was full of life! It was hard to keep our eyes focused on her because she seemed to bounce from place to place with one bubbly expression after another.

“Could you calm down long enough for us to get acquainted with you?” I asked.

“Calm down? Why would I want to do that?” Zoë replied with a skip and a hop.

“Is that a Bible under your arm?” Regretta asked.

“Yes! It’s God’s Word, and it has so much life and love and joy in it that I can’t contain myself!”

“We have been reading it and seeing many

wonderful things in it, too,” Regretta informed her.

“Seeing is just the beginning! There’s so much more!” Zoë gushed.

Rich had been watching Zoë as she bounded and leaped around us. He was very puzzled. “What have you discovered? Why do you say that ‘seeing is just the beginning?’”

Zoë broke into a brilliant smile and said, “Your Companion has been encouraging you to let what you read take root in your hearts, right?”

“Yes, but how did you know that?” Regretta asked.

“Because that is part of his job description. He instructs you in God’s book, and he also creates a

personal connection for God's new life to flow into you." Zoë seemed to dance above the ground as she spoke. Seeing our bewilderment, she sat down with her copy of the Bible and began to read aloud:

*We have not received
the spirit of the world but
the Spirit who is from God,
that we may understand what
God has freely given us.*

1 Corinthians 2:12

*The mind of sinful man
is death, but the mind
controlled by the Spirit
is life and peace.*

Romans 8:6

*And if the Spirit of him
who raised Jesus from the dead
is living in you,
he who raised Christ
from the dead will also give
life to your mortal bodies
through his Spirit,
who lives in you.*

Romans 8:11

"This is just the beginning, because there's so much more!" Zoë enthused. Then turning to our Companion, she asked, "Don't you think it's time that they meet the others?"

He smiled and nodded.

"What others?" Rich asked.

Regretta and I were just as eager as Rich to hear the answer. Who were these "others"?

"Come along! They are waiting for us not far from here. In fact, we will arrive in time for Sabbath."

Zoë had barely finished her rather cryptic answer when Rich started in again, this time wondering aloud about *Sabbath*.

"Wait a minute," Rich began. "We read about the Sabbath in God's book, but as modern-day people we don't need that *holy day* any longer. Every day that we spend with God is special."

"Hmmm," Zoë paused, considering her words quite carefully. "Do modern-day people work and need rest?"

"Yeah..."

"Do modern-day people make mistakes and need God's forgiveness?"

"Oh, yeah!"

"Do modern-day people need reminders of God's love for them?"

"But that's why he sent Jesus," Rich replied.

"Yes, God sent his Son Jesus Christ so that through him we could have forgiveness, a fresh start, and a life without end... a life filled with reminders of God's love. The Sabbath, the day God set apart as holy, is *still* holy and meant to be a blessing. He knew we would get tired and need to rest. The seventh day is a special day God has given for our refreshment. It is a day we can 'be still' without feeling guilty; a day we can focus entirely on our relationship with God."

“But that’s what we’ve been doing all week,”
I declared.

“You won’t always be able to get away from the world’s distractions to concentrate fully on God. He knows that! So he set aside the seventh day, from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. After having such a refreshing time with God, you can return to your work with renewed zeal and share what he has given you with those around you.”

“I never thought of the Sabbath as being a blessing, but it certainly could be just that,”
Rich admitted.

“And since our week has been filled with many special times with God and with one another, this will be a wonderful Sabbath Day!”
Regretta beamed.

“The others are preparing for Sabbath. Being with them will help you understand that you not only have your own life in God’s Spirit, but you also have a *shared* life with others who live through him.”

“This sounds so exciting!” Regretta exclaimed.
“Let’s hurry, because we don’t want to miss a moment!”

We picked up the pace, thrilled that we could now experience in person more of what we had read about in God’s book.

Zoë was right. We did not have to travel very far to reach the others. In fact, we could hear the happy sounds of singing before we got there.

HE IS WITH EVERYONE WHO HAS ACCEPTED
GOD'S GIFT OF FORGIVENESS AND NEW LIFE



W “Welcome!” we were greeted at the door. “We’re so glad that you have come to be with us! My name is Shep. Come on in, brothers and sisters!”

“Why are you calling us brothers and sisters?” Rich asked. “We don’t even know anyone here.”

Regretta reminded him, “Maybe it’s like what we read in the Bible — we are a kind of family because of the new life we have together in God.”

“Yes! God is our Father. Therefore we are God’s children,” Shep kindly explained. “And that makes us spiritual brothers and sisters. Our Father loves us equally and lavishes us with his many blessings, as if each of us is his *only* child.”

“We’ve read about this in God’s book, but up until now it was hard to picture, since there are so few of us,” I commented.

“You will discover, just as Zoë has probably been telling you already, that here we put into practice what has been so beautifully described in the Bible. We share God’s gifts for the benefit of all, even those who have not yet accepted new life from him.”

“This is so wonderful!” Regretta said with joyful tears streaming down her face. “It’s even more than I had imagined. I feel a warmth in my heart, a strong flame where there had been only a flicker before.”

“The Holy Spirit has a strengthened presence when you are among God’s people,” Zoë said as she handed Regretta a cloth to dry her eyes.

“Yes, and the Person of Jesus Christ becomes more recognizable, too,” Shep added. “This evening and tomorrow you’ll have opportunities to find that out for yourselves. Now, please join us as we worship the Lord.”

Regretta, Rich, and I took seats among our new-found family. Several people stood by the piano in the front and sang about their love for Jesus. As I looked around, I noticed that our Companion knew everyone there. I smiled as I realized he is with everyone who has accepted God’s gift of forgiveness and new life.

THE BODY IS A UNIT, THOUGH IT IS MADE UP OF MANY PARTS; AND THOUGH ALL ITS PARTS ARE MANY, THEY FORM ONE BODY. SO IT IS WITH CHRIST. NOW YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND EACH ONE IS A PART OF IT.

I CORINTHIANS 12:12, 27

JUST AS EACH OF US HAS ONE BODY WITH MANY MEMBERS, AND THESE MEMBERS DO NOT ALL HAVE THE SAME FUNCTION, SO IN CHRIST WE WHO ARE MANY FORM ONE BODY, AND EACH MEMBER BELONGS TO ALL THE OTHERS.

ROMANS 12:4-5

...TO PREPARE GOD'S PEOPLE FOR WORKS OF SERVICE, SO THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST MAY BE BUILT UP UNTIL WE ALL REACH UNITY IN THE FAITH AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD AND BECOME MATURE, ATTAINING TO THE WHOLE MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS 4:12-13

...YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE BELONGING TO GOD, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT.

I PETER 2:9

Then Shep began teaching from God's book. I watched as our Companion seemed to be everywhere at once, guiding each person in that room. He was standing with Shep by the lectern, and yet at the same instant kneeling to comfort an elderly woman in a wheelchair, as well as gently nudging a youngster who was sitting with some other children near the back.

As I glanced at the faces of those gathered, I suddenly realized we had all experienced remarkable changes in our lives. Our stories were not identical. I knew that because I had gotten so well acquainted with Rich and Regretta. Nevertheless, everyone there that night could declare with equal sincerity that they experienced God's love and life in an up-close and personal way. It was a turning point for me. Evidently, my traveling companions were also coming to that same wonderful realization.

After an evening of studying God's book together, praying together, praising God together, and seeking God's direction together, Rich said, "You know what I think of all of this togetherness? The new life we have in God is meant to be a *shared* experience."

"You're absolutely right about that, Rich. We shouldn't live this new life as isolated human beings." Regretta heartily agreed.

Shep had overheard our conversation and joined in. "What things might we not have much of on our own, but more than enough when we share?"

"How about prayers?" I suggested.

"That's good," Regretta immediately affirmed. "You know, we always seem to get farther in knowing what God wants us to do when we pray together instead of individually."

"What else?" prompted Shep.

"Well, there's money," Rich said with a little embarrassment. "We can do more good with more money."

“Okay. And what about all those spiritual gifts we were reading about? If we use the understanding God has given us of his book to teach others, or the kindness God has put in our hearts to ease someone else’s grief, then we will be doing much more together than we could possibly accomplish alone,” Regretta smiled as she thought aloud.

“After all,” Zoë pointed out, “it’s all about sharing the blessings God gives!”

W We spent Sabbath morning still very much together — in Bible study, prayer, and praise. We exalted the Lord and sought his will together.

“As great as our individual lives are with God, this shared life as God’s people is important, too!” I rejoiced.

“Amen!” Zoë chimed in.

Then Shep announced, “This afternoon we will be gathering outside by the lake for a baptism. Later, as Sabbath is ending, we will return here to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. These are both very special events in the life of our church family, so I want to spend a few minutes sharing what God’s book has to say about them.”

Rich motioned me aside. “Have you heard about these ceremonies before?”

“It sounds important. I want to find out more about it all — don’t you?”

“Yes I do,” he replied as we started out.

YOU ARE ALL [CHILDREN] OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS, FOR ALL OF YOU WHO WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE CLOTHED YOURSELVES WITH CHRIST.
GALATIANS 3:26-27

THEREFORE GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND TEACHING THEM TO OBEY EVERYTHING I [CHRIST JESUS] HAVE COMMANDED YOU. AND SURELY I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE VERY END OF THE AGE.
MATTHEW 28:19-20

...HAVING BEEN BURIED WITH HIM [CHRIST JESUS] IN BAPTISM AND RAISED WITH HIM THROUGH YOUR FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.
COLOSSIANS 2:12

WHILE THEY WERE EATING, JESUS TOOK BREAD, GAVE THANKS AND BROKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO HIS DISCIPLES, SAYING, “TAKE AND EAT; THIS IS MY BODY.” THEN HE TOOK THE CUP, GAVE THANKS AND OFFERED IT TO THEM, SAYING, “DRINK FROM IT, ALL OF YOU. THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT, WHICH IS POURED OUT FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”
MATTHEW 26:26-28

IS NOT THE CUP OF THANKSGIVING FOR WHICH WE GIVE THANKS A PARTICIPATION IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? AND IS NOT THE BREAD THAT WE BREAK A PARTICIPATION IN THE BODY OF CHRIST? FOR WHENEVER YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK THIS CUP, YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD’S DEATH UNTIL HE COMES.
I CORINTHIANS 10:16 AND II:26

So in the bright sunlight, we walked over to the edge of a small lake. Shep and a brother named Deak walked into the lake until the water was well above their waists. Shep spoke loudly enough for all of us to hear: "We come into this water, recognizing that we are no longer what we used to be, nor are we yet what we are meant to be. God sent his Son Jesus Christ to live among humanity, to suffer and to die for the wrongs *we* had done, and to be raised to life again so that everyone who believes in him may share in that new life now and forever. Baptism is an outward sign of that believing in Jesus: we are buried with him in death, *symbolically* buried in the water, and then we are raised out of the water to live a new way of life, empowered by God."

Shep motioned to a young woman standing at the lake's edge and she stepped into the water. When she reached Shep and Deak, Shep said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The woman was tipped back down into the water and brought up again. She was thoroughly drenched, yet radiant. She praised God aloud as she returned to dry ground. Then a few more believers were baptized in the lake.

Rich said, "I believe our journey to this place has prepared me for this step of faith."

Regretta added, "I believe this is what God wants me to do, too."

I looked at them both and knew that I also wanted everyone to know about my faith in God.

"Shep, may I be baptized also?" We all said it like a chorus. Regretta went first, then I took my turn, and Rich went last. Each of us was baptized that day. It was wonderful!

That evening, as the sun was painting the sky with beautiful golden colors, we gathered again.

Regretta asked,

“What is all that on the table?”

Rich quietly answered,

“It must be the bread and ‘cup’

Shep told us about earlier.”

Everyone began singing a song

we had learned that day.

We gathered around the table

where there was a plate of

unleavened bread and small

cups of grape juice. The bread was

broken up, and the plate was passed

around the circle until everyone

had been served a piece of the

cracker-like bread.

Together we ate the dry morsels and remembered Jesus Christ's death.

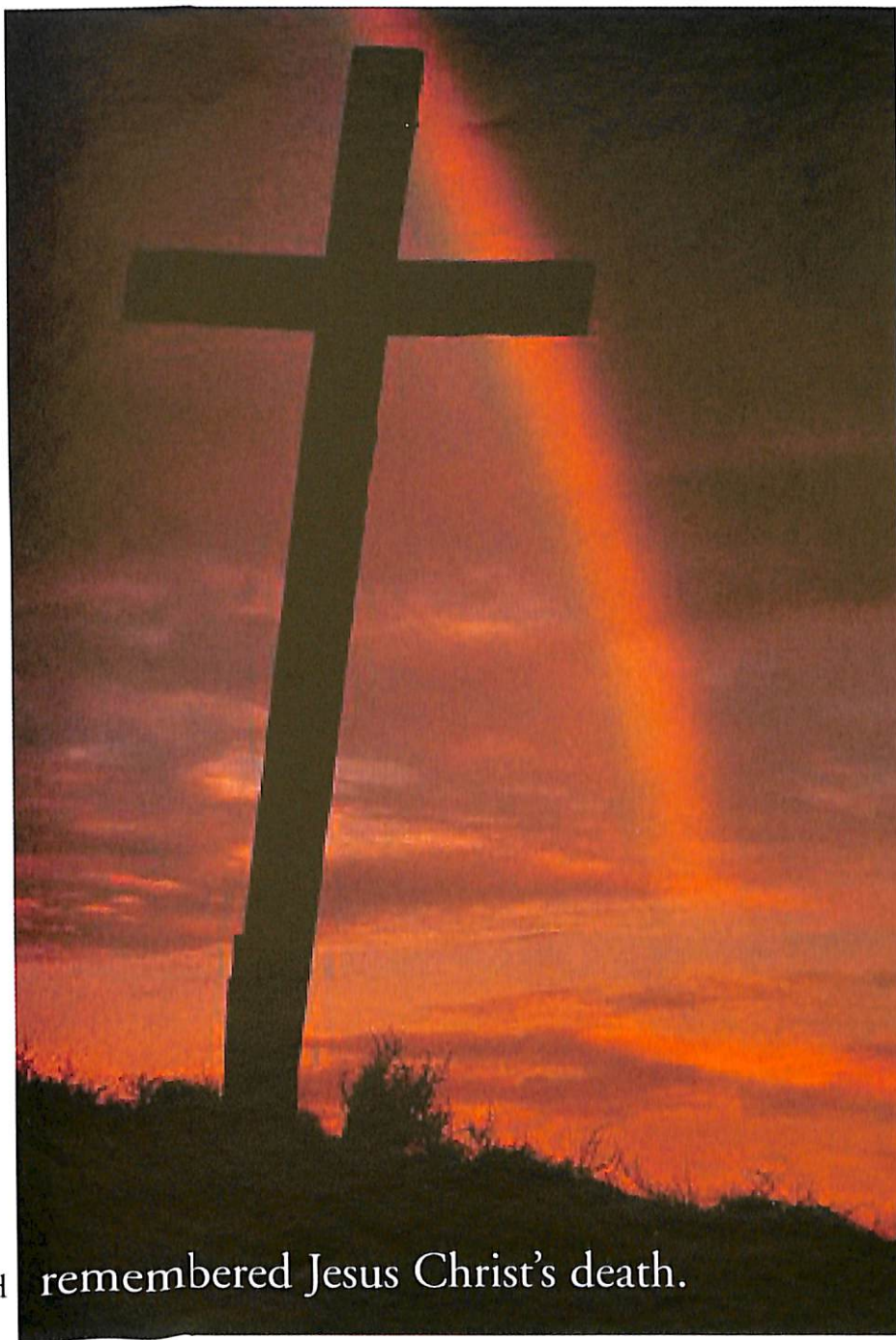
Then the small cups of juice were passed around.

We drank together, remembering the blood of Jesus Christ in which we found forgiveness and new life.

Several people prayed. Someone sang a song of praise to God.

It was truly humbling to participate in this service.

I even caught a glimpse of Rich wiping away a tear.



That was how it all began.

Now I am filled with peace knowing that because of what God has done for me through Jesus, I am a new creation. The dark days are gone and everything is new. Our Companion showed each of us a way out of our darkness, and the light of God shines in our hearts.

Rich moved away a few years later and is an active member in another church near his relatives. With the exception of one cousin, for whom we continue to pray, everyone in Rich's family has found new life in God.

Regretta discovered her greatest joy was teaching young children. She worked in the town's elementary school and in our church's own Sabbath School. She died last year, but left behind a great legacy of young people whose love for Jesus Christ makes a difference in everything they do.

Today I'm considered one of the older members in the church. I delight in encouraging others to take that same journey. I tell them about my own experience: about the moment God broke through my fog and made himself known to me through his book; about the Companion who guided me as I read it; about meeting Rich and Regretta and Zoë.

Of course, everyone here who has experienced the new life already knows Zoë. She is *still* the same! Like Zoë keeps saying...

"This is just the beginning!!"

Seventh Day Baptists are people who appreciate God's Word and enjoy spending time with God and with one another. Our "Statement of Belief" will give you a good idea of what we as a people believe. Each section has Scripture references, parts of the Bible, which are directly related to a specific area of our faith. We invite you to take some time to read these and see for yourself how God has revealed His plan for our lives, giving us pictures of Himself and instructions about relating to Him and to others around us.

SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST STATEMENT OF BELIEF

INTRODUCTION

Seventh Day Baptists consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. Therefore we encourage the unhindered study and open discussion of Scripture. We uphold the individual's freedom of conscience in seeking to determine and obey the will of God. The following statement is not intended to be exhaustive, but is an expression of our common belief, which is derived from our understanding of Scripture.

*See 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:2;
Ephesians 4:3-6, 15;
Romans 10:17;
2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I. GOD

We believe in one God, infinite and perfect, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe who exists eternally in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and desires to share His love in a personal relationship with everyone.

*See 1 Timothy 1:17;
Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:27;
1 John 1:5; Genesis 1:1-2;
Acts 17:24-25, 28; Psalm 90:1-2;
Matthew 28:19; John 3:16;
Isaiah 57:15; 2 Peter 3:9*

THE FATHER

We believe in God the Father, who is sovereign over all, and is loving and just as He forgives the repentant and condemns the unrepentant.

*See 1 Corinthians 8:6;
Ephesians 4:6; Ezekiel 33:11;
2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; John 5:24;
John 3:16-18*

THE SON

We believe in God the Son, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He gave Himself on the cross as the complete and final sacrifice for sin. As our Risen Lord, He is the mediator between God the Father and mankind.

*See John 1:34; Hebrews 1:3;
John 1:14-18; Romans 1:3-4;
1 John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:24;
Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 John 2:1-2;
1 Corinthians 15:20-21;
1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6*

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who gives spiritual birth to believers, lives within them, and empowers them for witnessing and service. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, convicts of sin and instructs in righteousness.

*See John 14:16; 3:5-8; 14:17;
Romans 5:5; 2 Peter 1:20-21;
1 Corinthians 12:4-7;
John 16:7-11*

II. THE BIBLE

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ, in His life and teachings as recorded in the Bible, is the supreme interpreter of God's will for mankind.

See 2 Peter 1:20-21; Romans 3:2 Peter 3:1-2, 15-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Matthew 5:17-19; Psalm 119:105; John 20:30-31; Hebrews 1:1-2

III. MANKIND

We believe that mankind was created in the image of God and is therefore the noblest work of creation. We believe that human beings have moral responsibility and are created to enjoy both divine and human fellowship as children of God.

See Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 83: Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:44-48; 1 John 1:3; John 1:12

IV. SIN AND SALVATION

We believe that sin is disobedience to God and failure to live according to His will. Because of sin all people have separated themselves from God. We believe that because we are sinners, we are in need of a Savior. We believe that salvation from sin and death is the gift of God by redeeming love accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection, and is received only by repentance and faith in Him. We believe that all who repent of their sin and receive Christ as Savior will not be punished at the final judgment but enjoy eternal life.

See 1 John 3:4-5; Romans 3:23-25; Isaiah 59:2; 1 John 1:8-10; Romans 5:6-8; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 1:3; John 3:16-18, 36; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; Matthew 25:41-46; Romans 5:5

V. ETERNAL LIFE

We believe that Jesus rose from the dead and lives eternally with the Father, and that He will come again with power and great glory. We believe that eternal life begins in knowing God through a commitment to Jesus Christ. We believe that because He died and lives again, resurrection with spiritual and imperishable bodies is the gift of God to believers.

See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20; John 14:1-3; Matthew 24:30; Titus 2:13; John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; John 10:27-28; John 6:40

VI. THE CHURCH

We believe that the church of God is all believers gathered by the Holy Spirit and joined into one body, of which Christ is the Head. We believe that the local church is a community of believers organized in covenant relationship for worship, fellowship and service, practicing and proclaiming common convictions, while growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness.

See Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 14, 27; Romans 12:4-5; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:2

VII. BAPTISM

We believe that baptism of believers in obedience to Christ's command is a witness to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We believe in baptism by immersion as a symbol of death to sin, a pledge to a new life in Him.

*See Romans 6:3-4;
Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41;
Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:11;
Galatians 3:26-27*

VIII. THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that the Lord's Supper commemorates the suffering and death of our Redeemer until He comes, and is a symbol of union in Christ and a pledge of renewed allegiance to our risen Lord.

*See Mark 14:22-25;
Matthew 26:26-29;
1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-30*

IX. SABBATH

We believe that the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week, is sacred time, a gift of God to all people, instituted at creation, affirmed in the Ten Commandments and reaffirmed in the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles. We believe that the gift of Sabbath rest is an experience of God's eternal presence with His people. We believe that in obedience to God and in loving response to His grace in Christ, the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and celebration.

*See Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 16:23-30;
Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 5:17-19;
Mark 2:27-28; Luke 4:16;
Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:11-13;
17:2-3; 18:4-11; Ezekiel 20:19-20;
Hebrews 4:9-10; John 14:15;
Isaiah 58:13-14; Luke 23:56*

X. EVANGELISM

We believe that Jesus Christ commissions us to proclaim the Gospel, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach observance of all that He has commanded. We are called to be witnesses for Christ throughout the world and in all human relationships.

*See Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8;
Matthew 28:18-20;
2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-6;
1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 6:14-20;
2 Corinthians 5:17-20*

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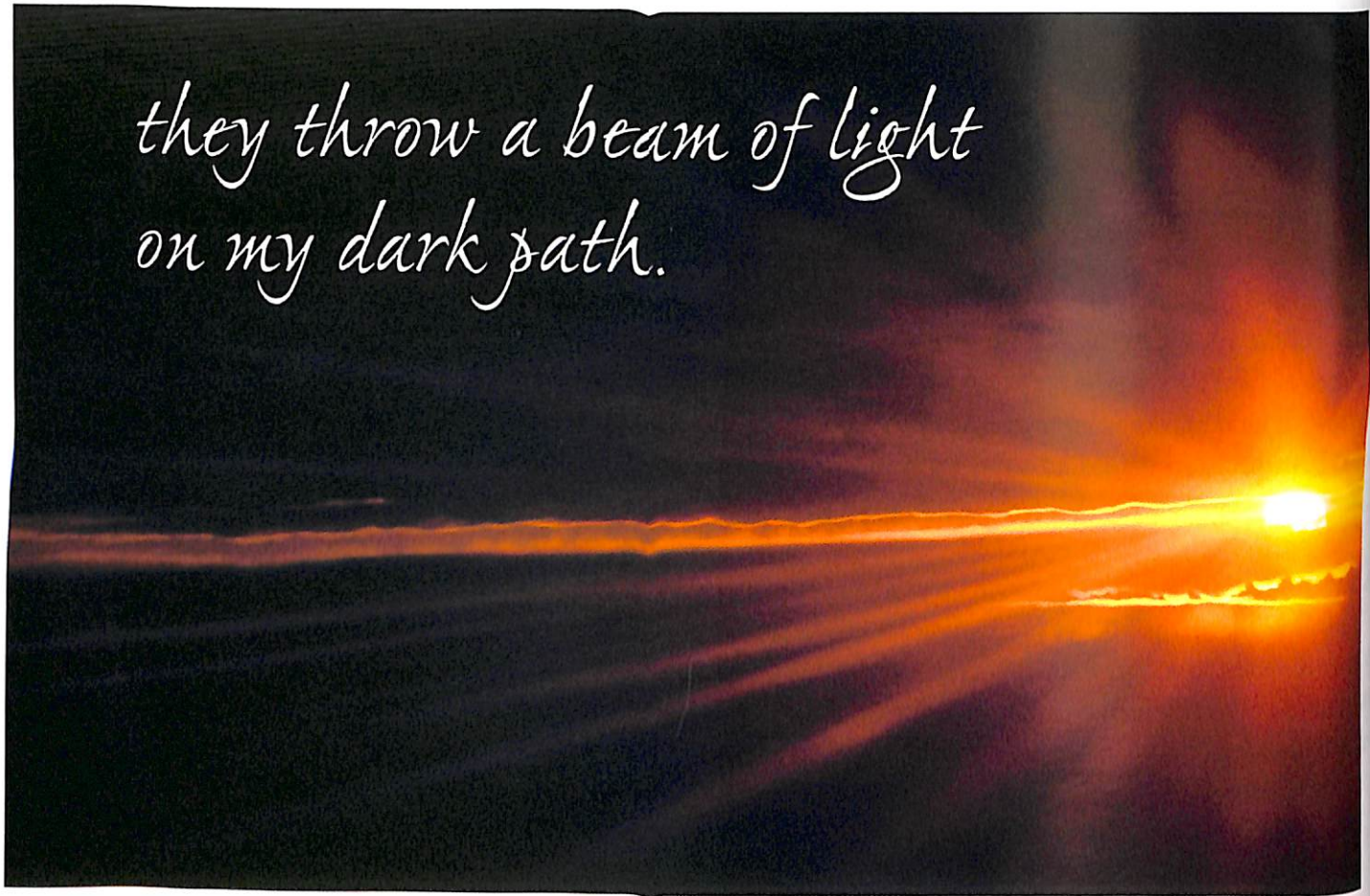
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By your words
I can see where I'm going;

they throw a beam of light
on my dark path.



Psalms 119:105 (The Message)