

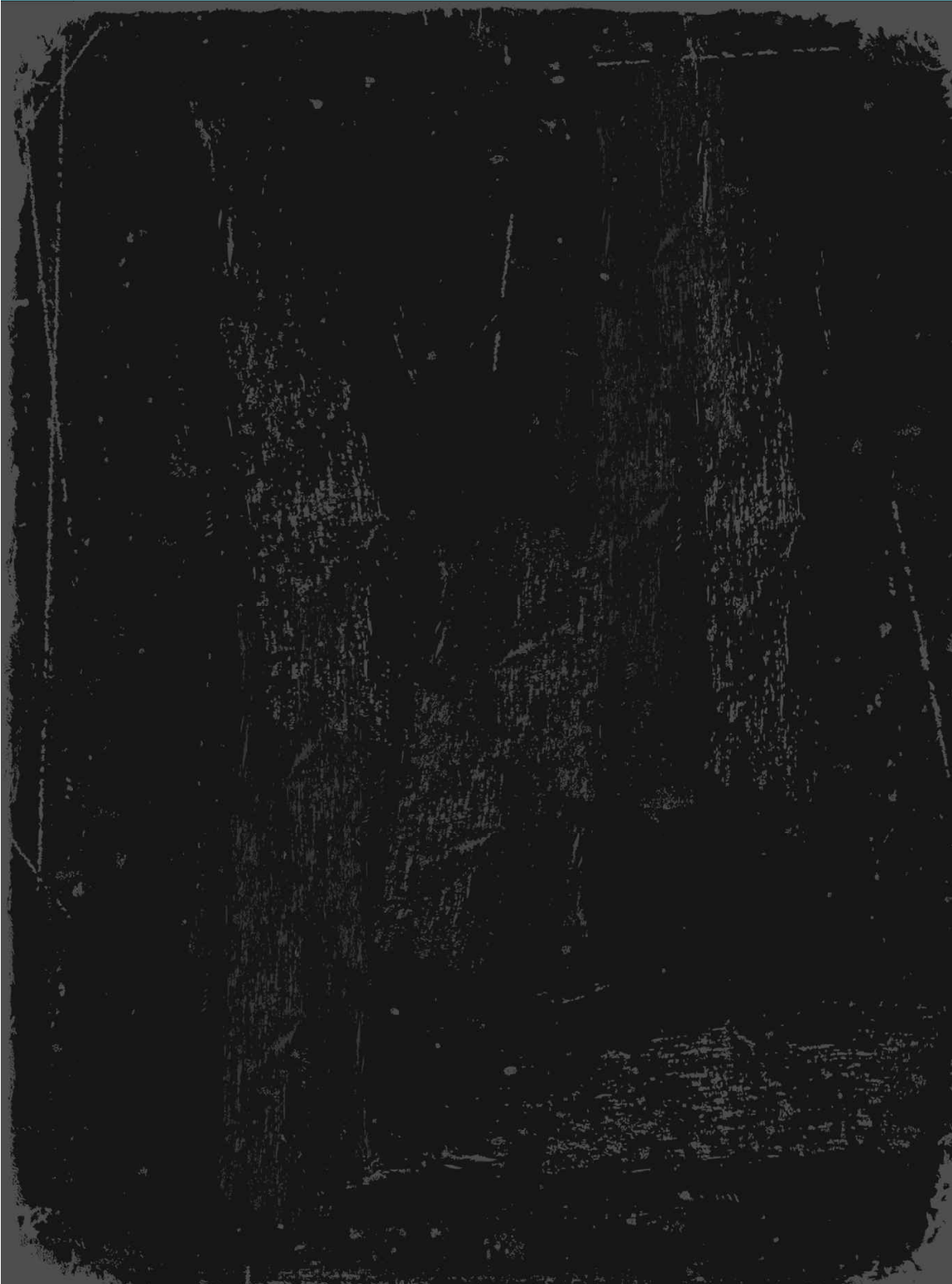
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**AWAKE
AND ALIVE**



AWAKE AND ALIVE

A 30-DAY CHALLENGE
TO REVIVE YOUR FAITH

MATT CHANDLER



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

Awake and Alive

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Note: Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

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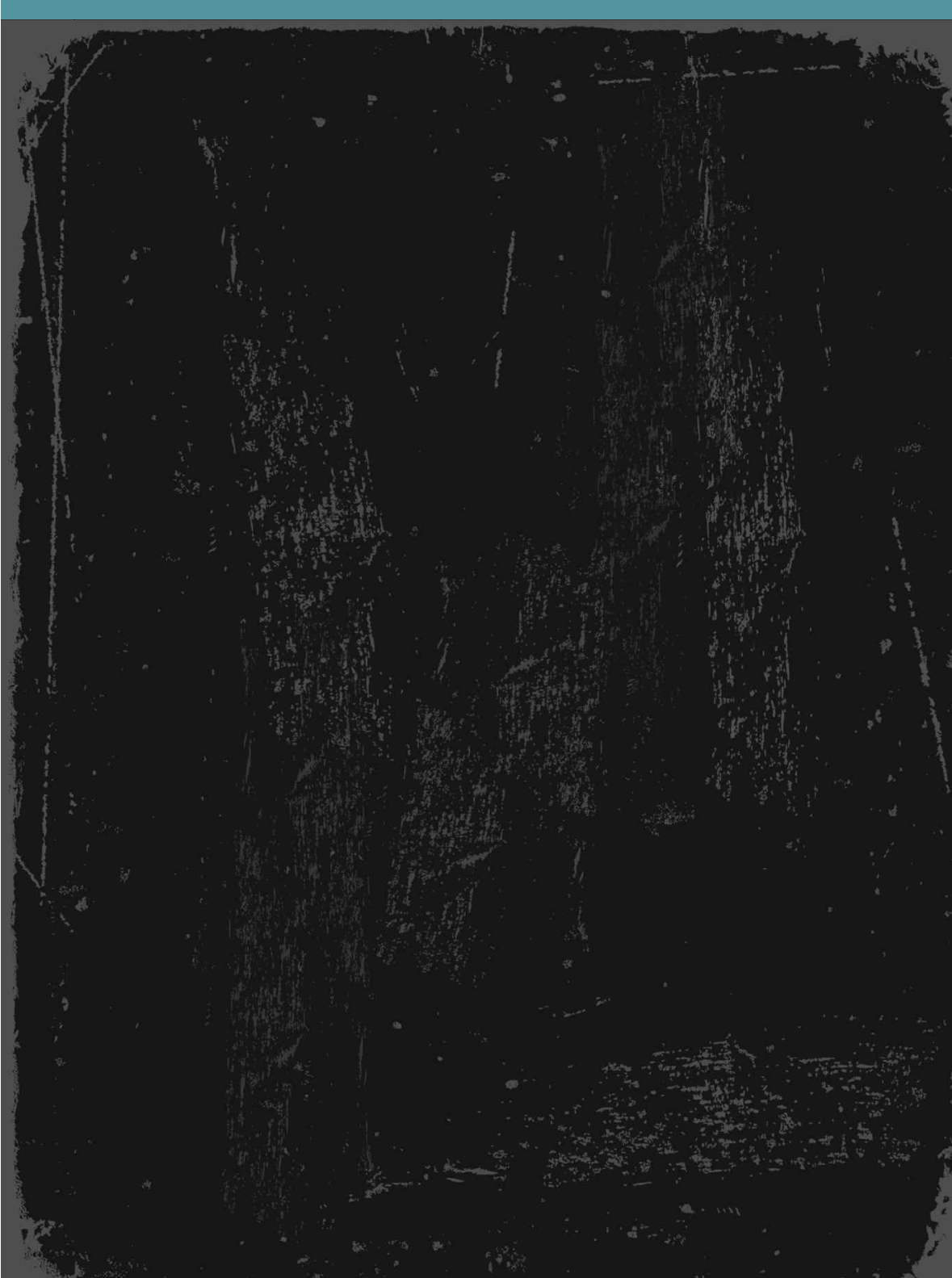
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**TO THOSE WHO HUNGER AND
THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS:
YOU WILL BE FILLED.**



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INTRODUCTION

AWAKE TO A LIFE OF WHOLEHEARTED FAITH

JUNE 17 IS A big day for me every year. It's the anniversary of surrendering my life fully to King Jesus. At the time of this writing, I have just celebrated thirty-three years of His grace steadily pulling me forward. There have been seasons of great joy and awareness of His presence, and others of great hardship where I've cried out with King David, "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?" (Psalm 13:1).

I write all this not knowing what season you are in as you pick up this book. I know you must be hungry to know Him and grow in your love for Him. Why else would you spend your hard-earned money on a devotional with this title? I'm glad you picked this up.

Here's my prayer for you during the next thirty days: I am praying that you

**YOU HAVE BEEN
MADE FOR
A LIFE THAT
REALLY IS *LIFE*.**

move more deeply into life with Jesus. When I say “life with Jesus,” I mean *life*, life. The abundant life that Jesus promised in John 10:10. The fullness of life you were made for. It’s waiting for you. *He* is waiting for you. You have been made for a life that really is *life*. And I’m convinced that when you purpose to embrace a life of pursuing Jesus, God will wake you up to discover a new intimacy with Him. That’s what you’re going to find in these pages: an invitation to know God intimately in such a way that your life is transformed.

For each day of this thirty-day challenge, we’ll start with Scripture. By way of confession: I have been reading my Bible, Christian books, and devotionals for more than three decades, and



**ASK GOD TO OPEN
THE EYES OF YOUR
HEART AS YOU
READ THE LIVING
AND ACTIVE
WORD OF GOD.**



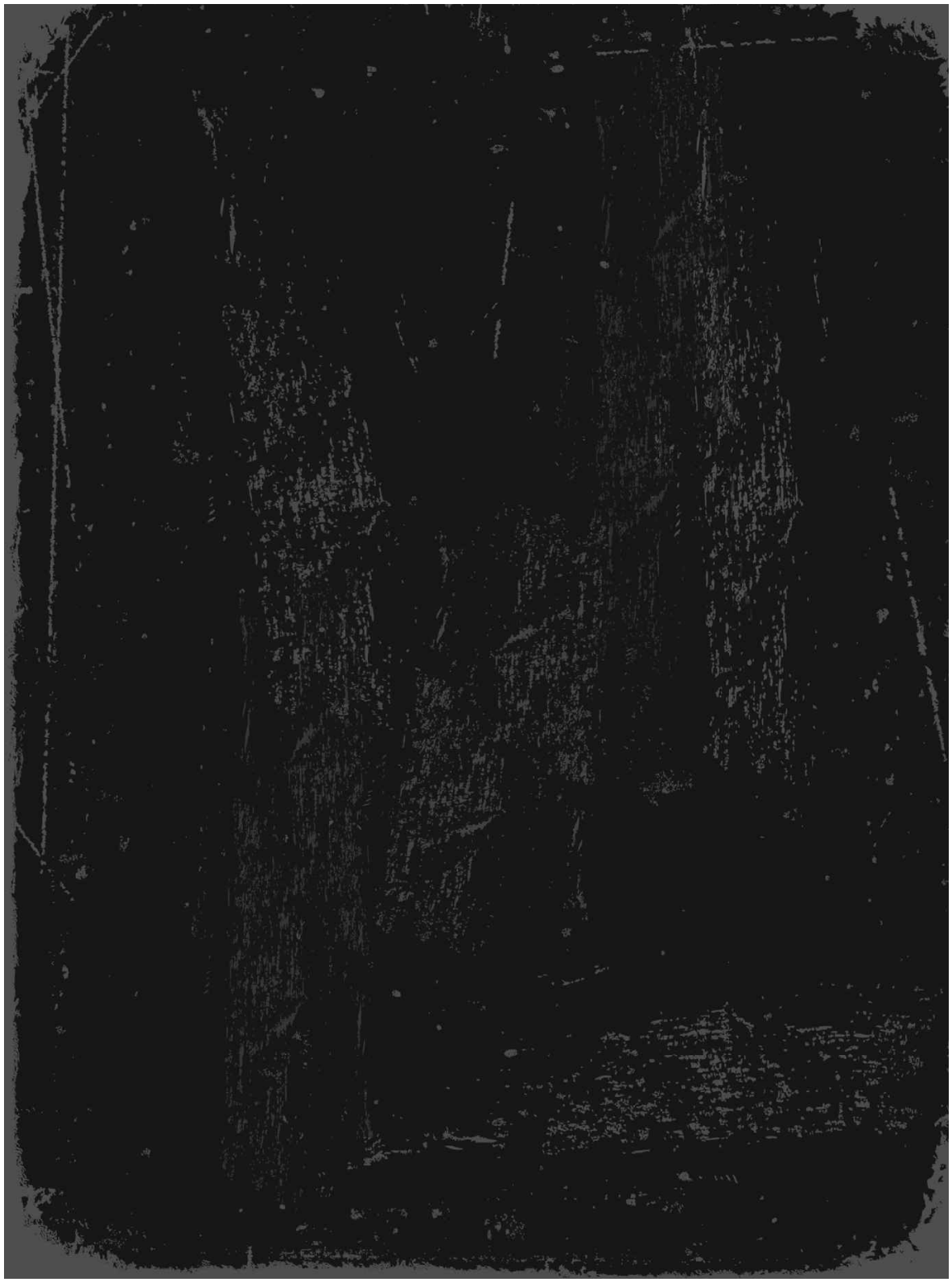
I am often tempted to skip through the scriptures to get to the author’s insights. Do me a favor, please: Don’t do that! And be sure to ask God to open the eyes of your heart (Ephesians 1:18) as you read the living and active Word of God. Maybe some of these verses will be new to you, but I suspect that most of them will be familiar. Ask God to open your eyes to the power of His living Word.

After the daily scripture, I’ll share my thoughts that I hope and pray will help you make connections between the scripture and the challenge you’ll be encouraged to embrace that day. I’ll invite you to reflect on what you’ve read, and then I’ll offer you the challenge.

I really believe that if you give yourself to this experience, God will transform you from the inside out. My sincere hope is that these words will help you discover a strong foundation that equips you to experience a vibrant life of intimacy with God.

Let's do this.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.



DAY 1 WAKE UP

When anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

EPHESIANS 5:13–14

IT WAS THREE in the morning. I was home from college, in the living room, when my little sister came running and screaming out of her bedroom. She was screaming the kind of scream that invoked pure terror in everyone else in the house. And I couldn’t wake her up, despite my tackling her onto the couch. My system was flooded with adrenaline, and all the hairs on my body were standing up. She seemed to be both asleep and awake, and I was unable to snap her out of her terror.

When we sleep, our minds are moving back and forth, throughout the night, between REM cycles. And in the transition between them, weird things can happen. Somebody might sit up and start speaking. Someone else might start walking around the house.

Another person will go to the kitchen and make a sandwich. For my sister, whether it was a dark force, a repressed memory, or just some natural occurrence, in that space between being awake and being asleep, she was filled with the kind of terror that made her scream bloody murder. And all I could do was pin her to the couch.

In the fifth chapter of his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul was concerned that the church, twelve to fifteen years after Jesus' death and resurrection, was asleep. In fact, they were so sleepy they looked almost dead. In Ephesians 5:13–14, Paul was referencing Isaiah 60:1 when he wrote: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.”

Twelve to fifteen years earlier, the gospel had hit Ephesus hard. In fact, it slammed the city so hard that there had been a socio-economic impact when people who were being transformed by Christ stopped doing economic activities that had been moneymakers for the local economy: witchcraft, temple prostitution, cultic sexual perversion, the making of idols, and more. (We'll talk a bit more about this as we go.) And in this letter Paul was saying, in essence, “Some of you have been lulled to sleep.” The believers who made the decision years ago to forsake wealth for the sake of following Jesus had gotten sleepy. Like . . . *dead* sleepy.

There are two kinds of parents when waking up kids to go to school. There's that parent who comes into the room and scratches their kid's back, cooing, “Hey, sweetie. I know it's early; I know. We need you to get up, babe. You got this. We just gotta get you dressed.” Then there's that other parent who barks, “I need you up, *now!* I've got things I'm working on, so get up because I got stuff to do!” Well, when Paul was writing to the church in Ephesus, in an


attempt to wake them up, he was not bringing gentle, scratch-your-back Jesus. It was more, “Hey! The house is on fire! Get up! You’re going to die! Get out *now!*”

This letter to the church in Ephesus wasn’t for unbelievers. Paul wasn’t inviting them to wake up and come to life. No, this message was for followers of Christ. It’s for followers of Christ today as well. And what I believe God wants to do in you is wake you up. Whether you’ve been snoozing or are knocked out cold, God is waking you up by His Spirit.


So my sister Heather was on the couch, screaming in her sleep. I was screaming, too, out of my own terror and also to wake her, but I couldn’t get my voice to work. I’d never seen her like this before, and I was filled with fear because she wouldn’t wake up and she wouldn’t stop screaming. But I guess this must’ve been happening for a while, and my mom knew what was going on that night. Suddenly, I heard my mom’s door open. She walked over to Heather, gently said her name, and Heather woke up.

Have you fallen asleep? Maybe you’re mad at God because of something that happened to you. Maybe you feel like God betrayed you. Or maybe *nothing* happened to you, but you got really sluggish along the way and fell asleep. There might’ve been some soft music and cozy chairs that hypnotized you. If you’re half asleep, I want you to have the courage to name it.

Let’s wake up. Don’t let the deceiver trick you. Let’s get going and wake up!



**HAVE YOU
FALLEN
ASLEEP?**



WAKE UP | 3



REFLECT

1. Remember where your journey with God began. When was the moment in your spiritual journey in which you felt most fully alive and awake?

2. Have you experienced a “wake-up” call from God in any area of your life? How have you experienced God’s Spirit shining light on an area of your life in such a way that it woke you up spiritually?



CHALLENGE

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul reminded them, “But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible” (5:13). Sleepy friend, that’s what God does. God shines light on the areas of our lives to which we’ve squeezed our eyes shut. God makes these places—our habits, neglect, sin, laziness—visible. Ask God to show you the areas of your life He wants to touch and transform. Today, ask Him to show you just one thing, and then record it someplace: a note on the mirror, in your phone, or in your journal.

DAY 2 KNOW EXTERNAL TRUTH

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

JOHN 14:1–6

IT WAS 1992. It was one of the most watched court cases in American history. Tom Cruise—I mean, Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee—is

defending Lance Corporal Harold Dawson and Private First-Class Louden Downey, who stand accused of the murder of a fellow marine, Private First-Class William Santiago. They are facing murder charges as well as a court martial. As the investigation progresses, it becomes clear that although Dawson and Downey are guilty, they are acting on an order given to them by a commanding officer—an order that they would not have been able to *not* obey.

**FACTS AND
TRUTH AREN'T
THE SAME.**

So Tom Cruise puts Colonel Nathan Jessup (Jack Nicholson) on the stand and grills him.

“Colonel Jessup, did you order the code red?”

The judge jumps in: “You don’t have to answer that question.”

Nicholson says, “I’ll answer the question. You want answers?”

Tom Cruise says, “I think I’m entitled to them.”

“You want answers?” Nicholson repeats.

“I want the truth!” Cruise demands.

Then Nicholson, from his bowels, roars, “You can’t handle the truth!”¹

It. Was. Epic.


Then they get into it. Go watch *A Few Good Men*. It holds up.

What I think ended up happening is that they were talking about facts under the banner of truth. You understand? Facts and truth aren’t the same. Facts are things we can see, touch, taste, smell, and hear. Truth is what sits beneath those things and orients us to reality. So facts may point to a specific time, place, or action, but truth is behind all those facts, saying, “This is what the universe is all about.”


There's another well-known court case where Jesus was arrested and taken to an authority named Pontius Pilate. Pilate didn't want to kill Jesus, but he lacked the courage to live a life of conviction. In John 18:37–38, Pilate said to Jesus, in essence, “You're a king.” Jesus answered, “You say that I'm a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me.” And Pilate asked, “What is truth?”

Do you see how they were missing each other? Pilate was jammed up on facts, and the Truth was standing right in front of him.

Before this, Jesus' disciples were already getting anxious at Jesus' talk about death, about being arrested. It had been disorienting. They didn't understand what He was saying to them. In John 14:1–4, Jesus said to His closest friends, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.”



**JESUS *IS* THE
TRUTH. IT'S
NOT SOMETHING
THAT HE *HAS*.**



I love Thomas's response. In verse 5, Thomas basically said, “We literally have no idea what You're talking about.”

And then Jesus answered him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (v. 6).

Jesus *is* the truth. It's not something that He *has*. He's not here to give you some facts. He has come because He is

reality. He's not just a good teacher. He's ultimate reality. He's not just a miracle worker; He is the truth. He sets boundaries for human flourishing, and then He invites us in. He makes a way for all our enemies to be vanquished—especially the enemy of sin that's inside of us. He isn't the facts of life. He *orders* the facts of life.

He is the truth, and He *is* what you and I most want. Right? We want to know the way. We want purpose. We want a life that's flourishing. And those are inseparably linked to Jesus as ultimate reality. Jesus is the eternal, unchanging truth, present from the time of creation, available to every individual who seeks it.



REFLECT

1. How does the distinction between *facts* and *truth* resonate with you? Does it make sense?

2. In your life, how have you known Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)?

CHALLENGE

This is another fun one. Jesus makes Himself known to His closest disciples as the way, the truth, and the life. I encourage you to choose one of the first three Gospels and read through it starting today, asking God to illumine these truths as you read: in Jesus' relationships, in His words, in His actions. You're not looking at the minutiae of facts about Jesus; you're recognizing Him for how He reveals Himself in larger ways as the way, as the truth, and as the life. Spend time getting to know Him. Consider recording in a journal what you notice as you read and pray.