

# THE CASE FOR CHRIST

## EMBRACE THE TRUTH OF CHRIST

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### OPEN:

- ❖ Lee Strobel, author of “The Case for Christ,” was doing a Q & A session at a church in Canada.
  - An atheist reporter stood up and asked Strobel what he thought of Charles Templeton’s book, “Farewell to God, My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith.”
  - Strobel had not heard of the book or of the man. Intrigued by the title he bought the book and read it.
  - He was surprised to find out that Templeton was once a Christian evangelist and pulpit partner of Billy Graham.
  - In fact, he and Graham were best friends in the 1940s and 1950s. Many people thought it was Templeton who would emerge as the generation’s biggest evangelist (he was a gifted and eloquent speaker).
  - He preached to stadium crowds of up to 30,000 people.
  - But at a liberal seminary, he lost his faith. He even tried to talk Graham out of believing the Bible but Graham stood strong.
  - Templeton, the agnostic, went on to become Canada’s most notorious critic of Christianity.
  - Strobel tracked Templeton down and the 83-year-old man agreed to an interview.
    - ✓ They sat in the living room of Templeton’s Toronto home and Strobel asked him why he no longer believed in God.

- ✓ Templeton raised questions that bother many people: Why would a loving God allow pain and suffering? How could a good God send people to hell? How can Jesus be the only way to God?
- ✓ Strobel said a couple hours into the interview, Templeton's tone changed...from critical and negative to thoughtful and reflective.
- ✓ Templeton begin to praise different aspects of Jesus; He was the greatest human being who ever lived...He was a moral genius. He was the wisest person I've ever encountered in all my readings.
- Strobel was surprised. He said, "it sounds like you really care about Him?" Templeton replied, "Well, yes, He was the most important thing in my life." I know it may sound strange, but I have to say...I adore Him! Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus. In my opinion, He is the most important human being who ever existed.
- ✓ Then Templeton uttered the words Strobel never expected to hear from him. As tears flooded Templeton's eyes, he said, "and if I may put it this way – I...miss...Him!" And he broke down weeping.
- Strobel wasn't sure what was going on in the heart and mind of this hardened agnostic who wrote the book, "Farewell to God."
- ✓ He was crying over missing Jesus. Strobel tried to get him to elaborate, but he seemed embarrassed.
- ✓ Finally, with a wave of his hand, he said, "enough of that." And he changed the subject.
- Charles Templeton had walked away from his faith, but like the prodigal son, something/someone was calling him back home.
- ❖ Can you relate? Maybe you have wondered far from God?
  - ✓ God has not responded like you thought He should.
  - ✓ The Christian life seems too demanding; you feel like giving up.

- ✓ You stay so busy, you seldom have time to think about God or whether Christianity even makes sense.
- ✓ Perhaps God brought you here today because you need to get back to Him.
- ❖ Over these last couple Sundays we considered eyewitness accounts, historical, scientific and circumstantial evidence and have concluded Jesus of Nazareth lived, died, and lived again.
  - His teachings are more than just good ideas from a wise man...He is the Son of God who paid sins debt, conquered death and opened the door into eternal life.

## 1) THE WAY HOME. *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

**John 3:13 (NLT)** - No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven.

- Jesus has the unique ability to tell us how to get to Heaven because He lived there before He came to earth.
  - ✓ He was with the Father, involved in creation (sustaining the Universe, Colossians 1) and is a part of the salvation of mankind.
- What does Jesus tell us? **John 14:1-6**
  - ✓ Can you relate to Thomas? Unsettled, unsure, thoughts of losing Jesus brought on anxiety.
- Clearly, the way back to God is through Jesus.

**1 Timothy 2:5-6 (NLT)** - <sup>5</sup> For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. <sup>6</sup> He gave His life to purchase freedom for everyone.

**1 Peter 3:18 (NLT)** - Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit.

- Jesus, the Perfect Son of God, paid sin's penalty by dying on the cross...He took upon Himself the wrath of God so we could experience the grace of God.

❖ So how does a person get on the path to Heaven?

## 2) THE PATH TO HEAVEN. *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

**John 1:12 (NLT)** - But to all who believed Him and accepted (received) Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

### a) BELIEVE. *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

- Look at the facts:
  - ✓ We have all messed up - the Bible calls this sin.

**Romans 3:23 (NKJV)** – For all have sinned; and fall short of God’s glorious standard.

- Lying, anger, lust, selfishness, greed, impatience...
- ✓ Our sins separate us from God who is holy and pure.

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)** – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

- ✓ God never gave up on us...but offered His Son in our place.

**Romans 5:8 (NLT)** – But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

- Do you believe that you are a sinner guilty before God?
- Do you believe that God sent His Perfect Son to pay your sin debt?
- Do you believe Jesus died, was buried and rose again?

### b) RECEIVE. *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

- Religions of the world are based on the “do” plan, you must do something (work your way into the good favor of God).
- Christianity is based on the “done” plan. Jesus has done for us on the cross what we could not do for ourselves.

- He paid the death penalty that we deserve for our rebellion and wrong doing, so we could be reconciled with God.
- You don't have to make yourself worthy, you're not worthy...you cannot earn salvation.

**Ephesians 2:8** – ...saved by God's grace through faith and not by your works...

- ✓ The step of faith is you acknowledging your sin, admitting your wrong doing and receiving God's gift of forgiveness by putting your trust in Jesus who gives you eternal life.
- What happens next is a miracle.

c) **BECOME.** (PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)

- God accepts you as a child of His...your sins are forgiven and the righteousness of Jesus covers you.
- Once far from God you are now brought near...

**Ephesians 2:13 (NLT)** - But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to Him through the blood of Christ.

Scripture says: **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)** - This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

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❖ Believe + Receive = Become

**CLOSE:** You must come up with your own conclusions. No one can cast the ballot for you.

- If Christ is who He said He is then your eternity hinges on how you respond to Him.
- ✓ Jesus said: **John 8:24b (NLT)** - ...for unless you believe that I am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.

- ❖ In Lee Strobel's second book, "The Case for Faith", he answered Templeton's 8 objections to Christianity.

He mailed the manuscript of the book, along with a note that said, "Chuck, I hope you'll take heart what **Proverbs 2:3-5 says:** <sup>3</sup> Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. <sup>4</sup> Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. <sup>5</sup> Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God.

- ✓ Templeton's wife, Madeleine, later wrote to Strobel and said Chuck's Alzheimer's had gotten worse, he had cancer and was blind in one eye.
- ✓ But she read him the manuscript and said he really appreciate it.
- Strobel never knew if Templeton came back to Jesus before his death, but Madelaine did tell a newspaper columnist that right before Chuck died, he said all excitedly, "Can you see them? Can you see them? Angels are coming to take me home."
  - ✓ We can only hope Templeton found his way back to Christ.
- ❖ Where are you today? Isn't it time you come home to God?
  - ✓ Believe and receive Christ as your Savior and you can become His child.

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**Message Notes**  
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