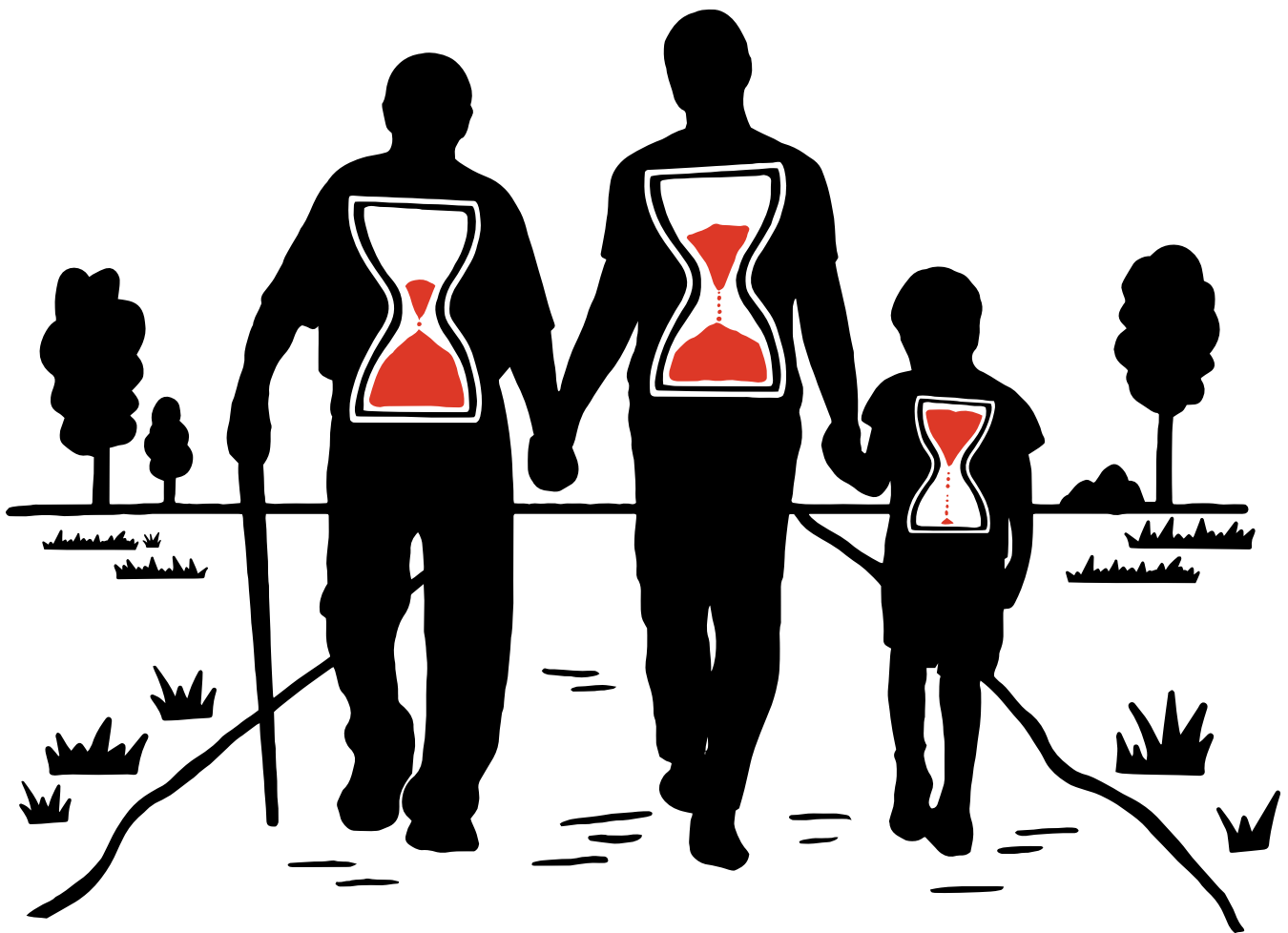


LIVE WELL

A CONVERSATION



By Bryce Kurfees
Illustrations by David Basye

WELCOME

Welcome!

My intent for this booklet is for you to stop and to evaluate whether the Creator-God exists and loves you, specifically you. Were you created with profound value and purpose, or merely the result of random evolution's luck and devoid of meaning and hope?

You might be an atheist or an agnostic, incarcerated or Apple's CEO, impoverished or a wealthy celebrity, a factory worker or the president of The People's Republic of China, regardless, what we all have in common is our humanity, our brief life and our eventual death. So, why are we alive, and what's next? Can we know? Does it matter?

Billie Clair's death was my catalyst to wonder about life and death and to want to have this conversation with you.

KAREN'S WEDDING



Only my sister and I are alive. Life is fragile.

Karen's wedding was bittersweet for our family. She married Buck, my brilliant, funny, beloved brother-in-law, and we were blessed to have my mom, Billie Clair, with us. But after battling cancer for six years and barely able to walk down the aisle, my mom died three months later at 51.

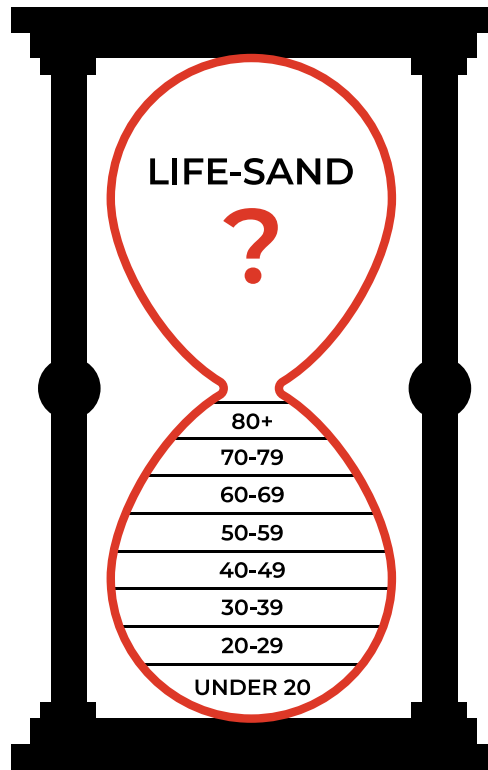
At age 73, my athletic and fit dad, and my best friend, felt discomfort in his throat and died from esophageal cancer ten months later.

Buck, a top student-athlete at Centre College, a Harvard MBA with honors, and likely the most beloved man I've known, succumbed to depression taking his life at age 50.

I assumed our family would enjoy a long life together.

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

LIFE-SAND



Stephen Covey, author of the worldwide bestselling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, taught that effective people begin with the end in mind, and the Bible advises us to number our days (Psalm 90:12). While we can't know our lifespan, we do know that death is certain. Therefore, it's wise to live with our end in mind.

Time is like sand flowing through an hourglass, and we don't know how much sand we have.

My parents planned to travel the world and enjoy grandparenthood after my dad retired, and I envisioned spending decades with them and my brother-in-law.

To manage my time effectively, I created a process called AB Mapping to understand where I am, where I want to be and when, and how to get there. Try it. On a piece of paper, write "A=Today (Date)" on the left and "B=Death" on the right. Draw an arrow from A to B and label it "Map." Under "A," list your current reality, and under "B," write how you want to be remembered. Below "Map," write the concrete actions you need to take in the coming months to move toward your desired outcome. Revisit this process often to stay on course. Encourage others to create their AB Map and regularly discuss your progress.

Finally, **in the hourglass drawing, color in the layers up to your current age.** It's remarkable how much life has already passed. Too often we take time for granted rather than as a gift. David Cassidy's (1970's celebrity) last four words to his daughter before passing were: "So much wasted time." John Mellencamp sings in his duet with Bruce Springsteen, "Wasted Days": "How many summers still remain? How many days are lost in vain? Who's counting out these last remaining years? How many minutes do we have here?"

Live well.

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

MIRACLE OF LIFE



Our planet hurtles through space at 66,000 miles per hour on a 580+ million-mile orbit, spinning at 1,000 miles per hour. It's perfectly positioned and tilted from the sun, which is 93 million miles away. Is it likely this reality is simply luck?

Additionally, the universe's physical laws and elements miraculously blend to enable life on Earth. **Charles Darwin, without electricity and modern technology, couldn't comprehend the complexity of a simple protein,** much less the ordered complexity of the human body, nature, and our universe.

No one witnessed the universe's origin; our beliefs about life's origin rely on faith. What's the evidence and probability of a random origin versus created? Consider Jewish and Christian history and the eyewitness accounts of Jesus's miraculous birth, life, and resurrection. Is it all a farce? Philosopher Aldous Huxley stated: "Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored."

The Creator-God of the universe described Himself to Moses: "And he [God] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished....'" (Exodus 34:6-7, NIV) **God and Moses met and had a conversation. You, too, can have a relationship with God.**

To better know the Creator-God, search these verses*: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 11:7, Psalm 23:1-6, Psalm 86:5, Psalm 106:1, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 40:28-29, Isaiah 55:8-9, Isaiah 57:15-19, Nahum 1:7, Zephaniah 3:17, Matthew 3:16-17, John 1:1-5, John 5:18, Acts 17:24-28, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-4, James 2:19, 1 John 1:5, 1 John 1:9, and 1 John 4:7-12.

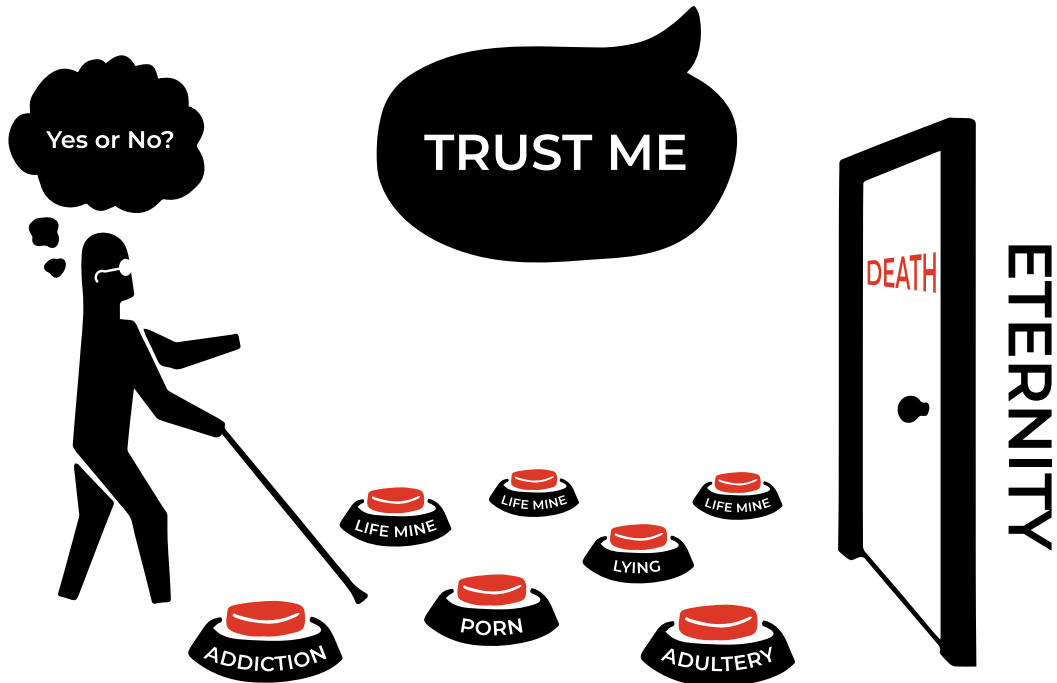
Human history reveals a brutal, murderous reality. There is an evil being, Satan, who opposes our loving Creator-God and all of creation, evidenced by death, disease, and destruction: "The thief [Satan] comes to steal, kill and destroy..." (John 10:10). Satan is not a cute character in a red suit with horns but is brilliant, beautiful, and brutal. He seeks to destroy us. To better understand him, search these verses: Genesis 3:1-5, Job 1:1-2:10, Matthew 4:1-25, Luke 4:1-8, John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 12:1-17, and Revelation 20:1-15.

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

***All verses in this booklet can be found at TruthLoveHope.org.**

HUMILITY

GOD



Consider these facts: (1) The universe has ordered complexity. (2) Jewish and Christian histories reveal God and are undeniable. (3) Humans are profoundly finite and mortal but with an inherent sense of eternity, morality and worship.

Being finite, we're like blind people navigating life's minefield. A wise blind person seeks guidance, while an arrogant one rejects help and suffers the consequences. King Solomon instructs us in Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy one is understanding." **Are you wise, or arrogant?**

Remember, Jesus is no longer a baby in a manger or an emaciated man on a cross, but He's awesome and worthy of both our humble worship and our grateful amazement that He wants a loving relationship with us. Hebrews 1:3 and Revelation 1:14-17 state:

The Son [Jesus] is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.... The hair on his [Jesus's] head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.... (NIV)

The Latin root for "humility" is "humus," meaning "earth" or "ground." God reminds Adam, after his disobedience, that he will return to the ground: "For dust you are, and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) **Recalling our origin and God's awesomeness helps us to humbly and wisely seek a relationship with Him.**

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

WHO? WHY? WHAT? WHERE? HOW? (W4H)



Write your answers to these questions:

Who are you?

Why are you alive?

Are you living an eternally successful life?

What happens when you die?

What's the evidence for your answers?

If our origin was from random evolution, then it's not only futile to search for answers to the above questions but also should cause fear and despair realizing that there's no eternal moral accountability and nothing ultimately matters. If there's no moral accountability, then Mother Theresa and Adolf Hitler shared the same fate: oblivion. Yet, our soul senses that Mother Theresa rightly deserved eternal reward and Hitler eternal torment.

Because of the universe's ordered complexity, Jewish and Christian history, the inability of scholars throughout history to disprove the Bible's truth, and humans' sense of God manifested in worship and morality, **it's reasonable to believe the Bible's Creator-God both exists and can relate with us.** Below are the Bible's answers to "Who am I?", "Why am I alive?", "What am I to do?", "Where am I going?", and "How am I to live?"

Who am I? Made in God's image, not random

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27, NIV) Humans are made in God's image! We have a spiritual sense of God, morality, and eternity. We have profound value. (Also search Genesis 2:7, Psalm 100:3, and Psalm 139:13-16.)

Why am I alive? For God's glory and praise, not mine

"Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made...the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise." (Isaiah 43:7, 21, NIV) We're created by God and for God for His glory and praise, not ours. When we humbly and gratefully acknowledge God as God and pursue a relationship with Him, our being is aligned, and we have peace. (Also search 1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, Revelation 4:11, and Revelation 14:7.)

What am I to do? God's will, not mine

"Going a little farther, he [Jesus] fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'" (Matthew 26:39, NIV) Jesus's mission was to obey His Father for the Father's glory, which included torture and crucifixion for us. Like Jesus, we're to obey and bring God glory by loving Him, self and others (Mark 12:30-31). Obedience matters eternally: "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." (Hebrew 9:27, NIV.) (Also search Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Micah 6:8, Mathew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, Mark 12:28-31, John 14:21, John 17:4, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:21, James 1:26-2:1, and 1 John 2:17.)

Where am I going? Joyful eternity with God, or torment without God

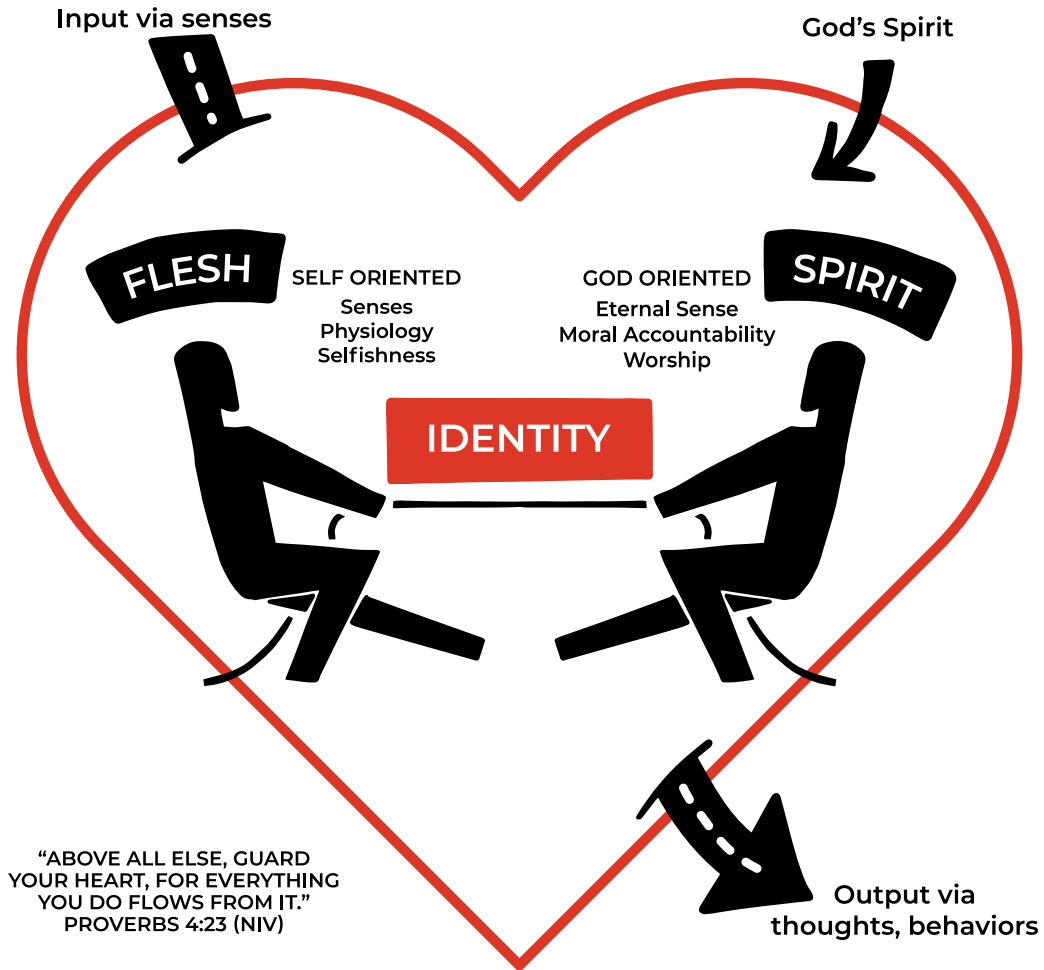
"Then they [people who reject Jesus] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous [people who obey Jesus] to eternal life." (Matthew 25:46, NIV) We sense eternity and that we'll give an account for how we lived (search Ecclesiastes 3:11, Hebrews 9:27). A successful life is hearing "Well done!" from God and living eternally with Him and other people in paradise (Matthew 25:31-46). (Search these verses: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, John 3:16-18, Romans 8:1-2, Romans 14:12, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, 2 Peter 3:7, 1 John 5:11-13, and Revelation 20-11-15.)

How am I to live? Led by God's Spirit, not self

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." (Romans 8:14, NIV) Humans are made in God's image; so, we have a unique spiritual connection to God evidenced by our moral sense and desire to worship. When I saw my mom lying in her coffin, clearly the spirit that animated vivacious "Billie Clair" was gone leaving only her shell. Humans can receive the Spirit of God into our soul by which we are adopted into God's eternal family and transformed into being more like Jesus. (See "Resources" at TruthLoveHope.org. Also, search Joshua 1:8-9, Proverbs 9:10, John 15:5-7, John 16:13-15, Acts 20:22-24, Romans 8, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 5:13-16, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 3:14-21, and Hebrews 11:6.)

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

HEART TUG-OF-WAR



We often condemn hypocrisy in others while being aware of our hypocrisy knowing we often don't do what we know is right. Externally, we can appear calm and righteous, but internally be a mess. Our 'heart', or soul, absorbs input through our senses, affecting our thoughts, emotions, and actions (Galatians 5-6, Proverbs 4:23). Dopamine, cortisol and other neurochemicals significantly influence our behavior; so, understanding our physiology is crucial for healthy living (see "Resources" at TruthLoveHope.org).

Galatians 5 depicts our soul's struggle between being God-oriented ('spirit') and being self-oriented ('flesh' = body, mind, emotions). Genesis 3 illustrates sin's process culminating in Eve's usurping God's authority (humanism's origin). Her dopamine flows as she engages with the temptation's pleasure without considering the consequences. (We've all experienced this process!) Then, Adam rejects God to please Eve. The human heart hardened towards God and became antagonistic, which is our legacy (search Jeremiah 17:9-10, Psalm 51:5, Matthew 15:19).

We have much control over our influences (e.g., music, internet, friends). Ultimately, we're responsible for our choices. What and who are you allowing into your soul? How are your friends influencing you? What choices can you make now to ensure a better you and a better life? How will you follow through with your decisions?

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

BAG OF ROCKS

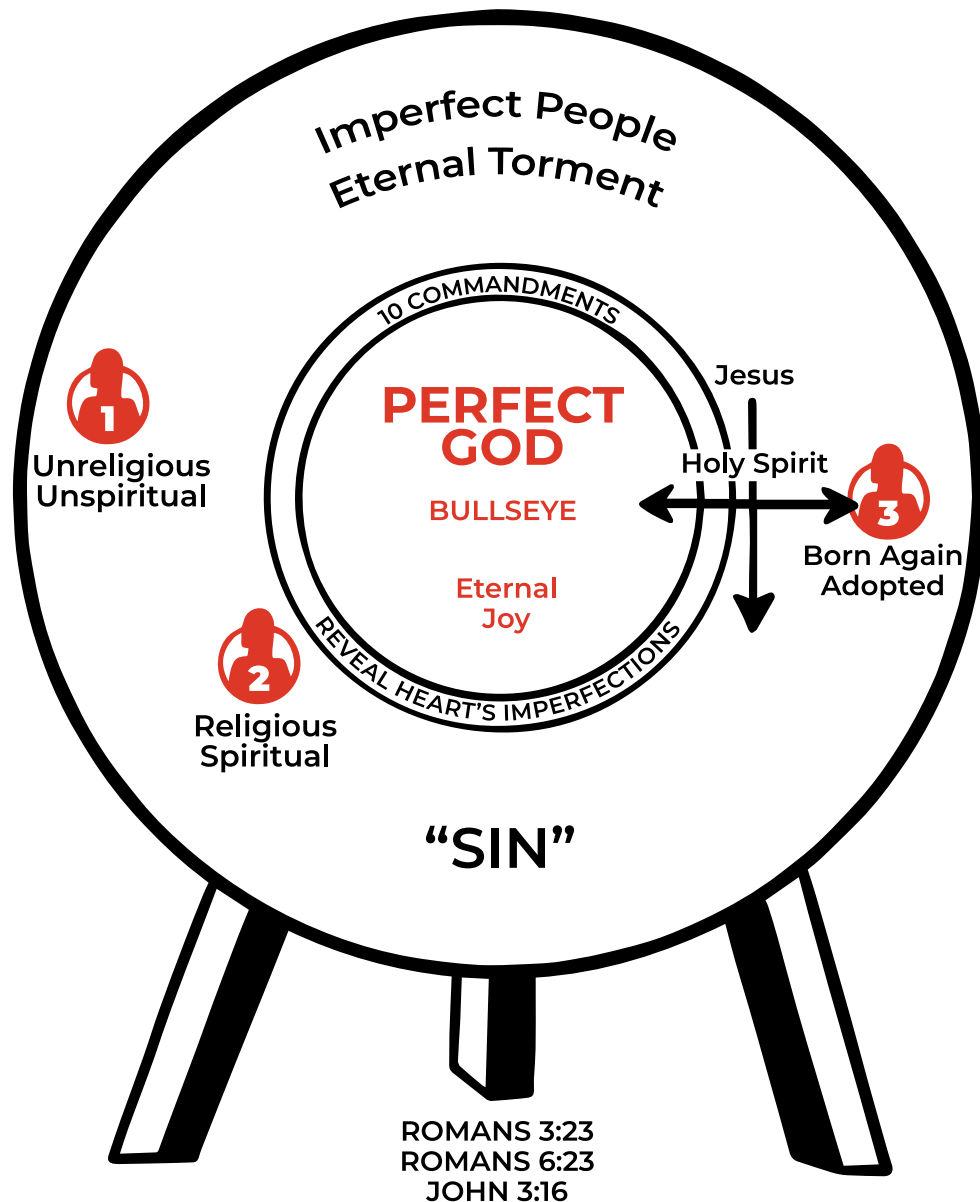


We all have shameful thoughts, behavior, and memories that are like rocks in a bag that we're always carrying with us. And it's exhausting.

What rocks are in your bag? Are you tired of carrying them all day every day? Good news: you can empty your bag!

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

SIN



Critical questions: Are you carrying a bag of rocks you want to unload? Do you believe God loves you, wants a relationship with you, and can and will help you?

The concept of "sin" originates from an ancient term meaning "missed the goal or bullseye." God represents the perfect bullseye, and as imperfect beings who reject God (even if just once), we're considered "sinners" for missing perfection--God. **Our imperfections and God's perfection creates a gap between us, which is why Jesus came to earth and humanity: to bridge the gap and restore our relationship with God.**

Some people are distant from God and irreligious (Person 1 in the picture). Others are deeply religious (Person 2). But both groups have the same sin problem and are separated from God carrying their heavy bag of rocks they can't unload without God's help.

To become a new, spiritually empowered person, Person 3, humbly acknowledge to God that you're imperfect and need His help. Ask Jesus to save you from your sin and invite the Holy Spirit into your life. Tell God you love Him and that He's now your leader committing to follow Him daily. And thank Him for loving you.

You're on the clock. Why wait to empty your bag? Start your relationship with your Creator-God now. Consider these verses (NIV):

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." **(Romans 3:23)**

"For the wages of sin is death [eternal separation from God], but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." **(Romans 6:23)**

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." **(Romans 8:1)**

"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba Father.' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." **(Romans 8:15-16)**

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved [from eternal torment as punishment for rejecting God]." **(Romans 10:9)**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." **(John 3:16-17)**

"He who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." **(John 14:21)**

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" **(John 14:6)**

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" **(Acts 2:37-38)**

"If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness." **(1 John 1:9)**

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" **(2 Corinthians 5:17)**

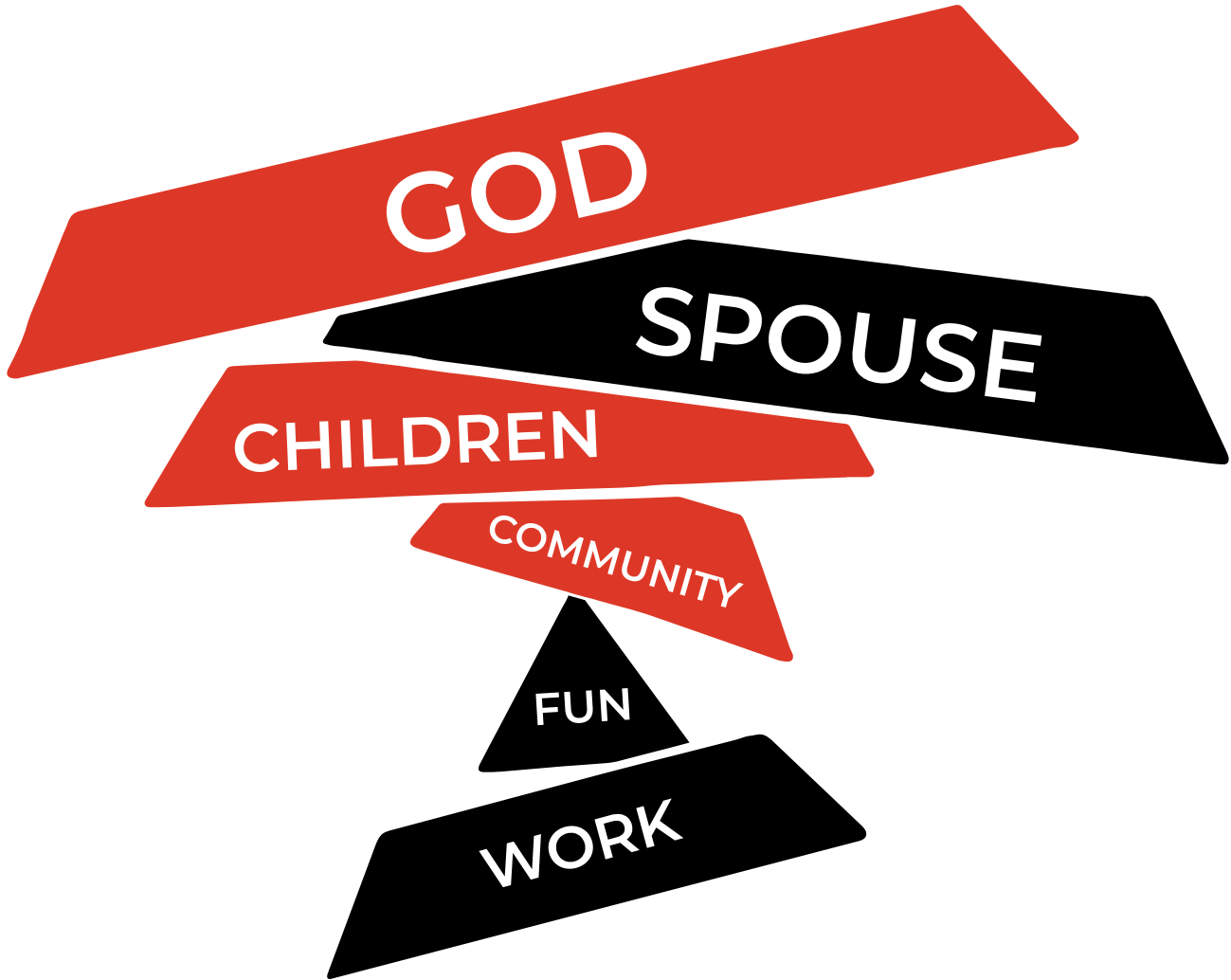
"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control...." **(Galatians 5:22-23)**

"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." **(1 John 4:9-10)**

Here's the most important question you'll ever be asked because it has eternal ramifications, and our death is certain: Are you Person 1, 2, or 3?

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

JUMBLLED LIFE

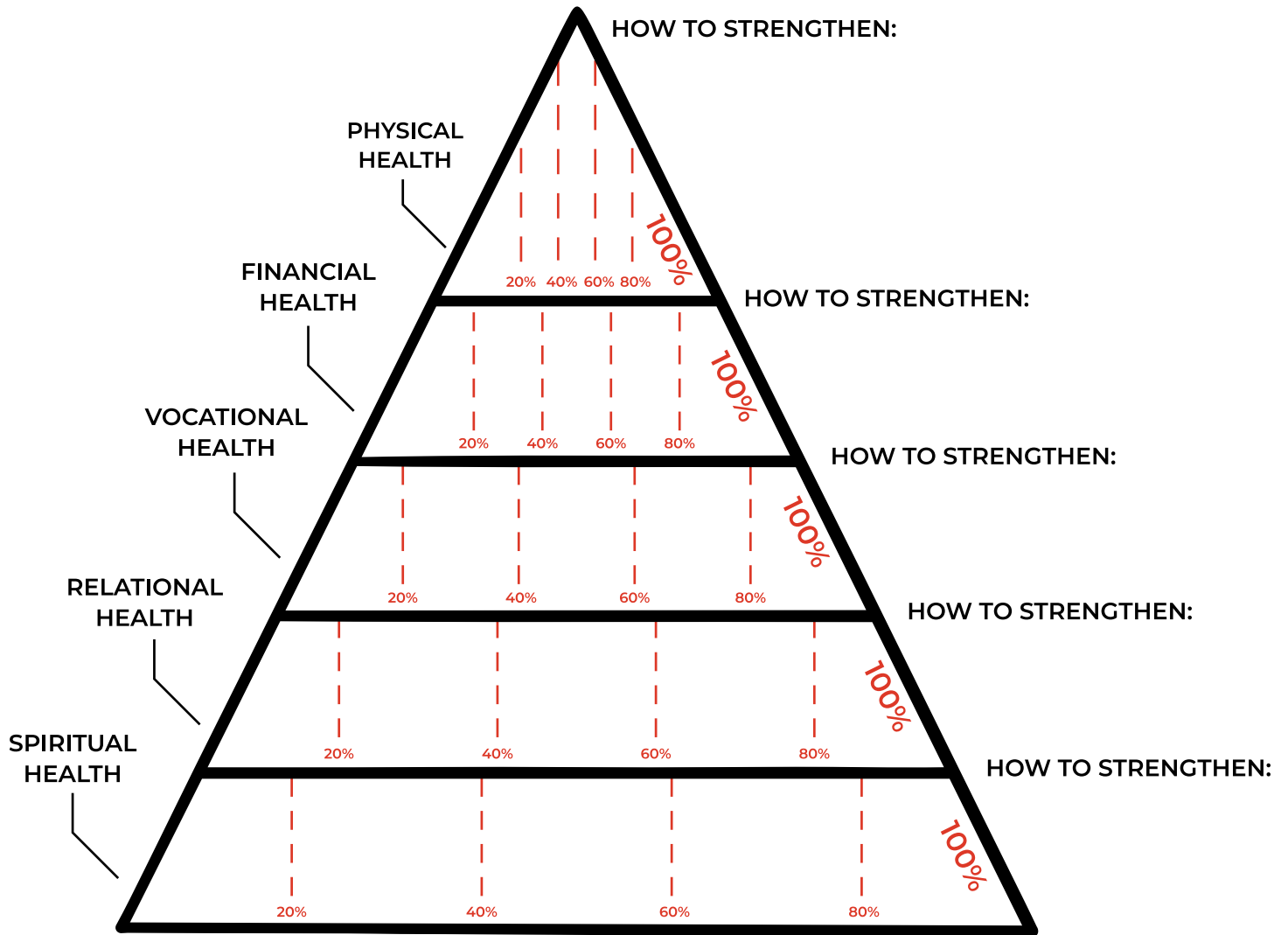


Apparently, while dating my wife, I was a skilled con man since she eventually agreed to marry me. But soon after our marriage, she realized what a selfish jerk I am. I'd work all week and then use "my" free time to do what I wanted like golf and tennis with my pals. I rarely considered her plans and desires. Frustration brewed. Something (someone...me) needed to change, or my marriage and life would eventually collapse.

Do you know the feeling?

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

PRIORITY PYRAMID



Since my life and marriage were deteriorating, I sat down and prayed for help. Immediately, I saw this Priority Pyramid. Your life's priorities might be different than mine, but below is my reasoning.

To have a stable life I need to ensure God is my foundational, priority relationship from whom flows wisdom and power for managing life's other key areas.

Next is my relationship with people beginning with my wife and then our children and others. People matter because we're made in God's image and eternal.

Work (vocation) is next since we are made to be creative workers, like God. God made Adam and Eve gardeners prior to their sin. Ideally, we do work that fits our unique wiring (e.g. personality, aptitude) and gives our life POP: power of purpose. (See my "8 P Propeller" at TruthLoveHope.org.)

Work creates cash flow (income less expenses) enabling us to purchase assets (e.g. house, car, investments) sometimes with debt (e.g. mortgage). Finances are integral to our daily life.

Finally, I need to stay healthy.

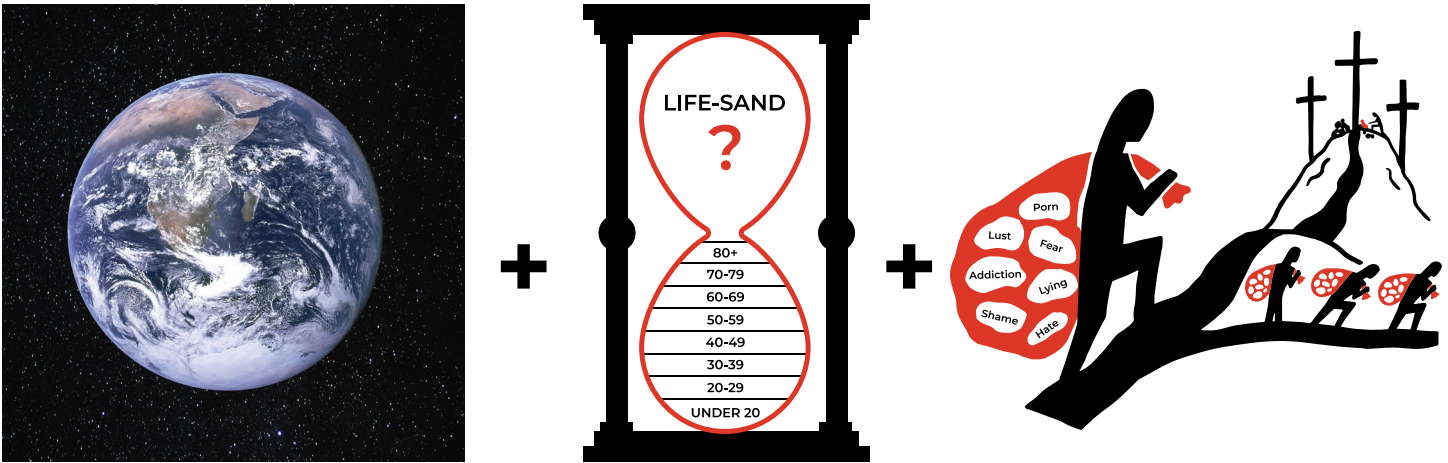
If we jumble the layers or only focus on two or three, our pyramid becomes unstable. For example, **men typically focus on work, finances, and health neglecting God and relationships until there's a crisis.** We invest more time being physically fit than spiritually fit.

Using the Priority Pyramid picture, color in each of the five layers to the percent you believe it's solid and strong (e.g. Physical Health 70%, Relational 30%). What does your completed Priority Pyramid look like? Stable? Top heavy? Which layers are strong, and which are weak needing attention? How solid is your foundation?

On the right side of the Pyramid, after evaluating each layer's strength, write how you can strengthen that area. Finally, consider discussing your Pyramid with others and how you can help one another live stronger lives.

YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

WHAT'S NEXT?



= **GOD** >

Since your life-sand is constantly flowing, consider the following:

Who are you?

Why are you alive?

Are you carrying a heavy bag of rocks? If so, do you want to empty it?

Are you living an eternally successful life?

Where are you going after your death?

Do you believe in God? If not, why do you choose hopeless nihilism and anarchical chaos? If you do believe in God, do you know He loves you and wants a relationship with you? Do you want a relationship with Him?

What's the evidence?

SUMMARIZE YOUR THOUGHTS: _____

The **Truth** is God **Loves** you, so you have **Hope!**

“Then you will know the **truth**, and the **truth** will set you free.”

John 8:32 (NIV)

“This is how God showed his **love** among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is **love**: not that we **loved** God, but that he **loved** us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

I John 4:9-10 (NIV)

“May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

I encourage you to keep this conversation going by gathering others to discuss this booklet and by going to TruthLoveHope.org for additional resources and to connect with me.



TruthLoveHope.org