

## How to Enjoy the Bible Events Series

You hold in your hands one of the most remarkable Bible study materials ever written and published. This series was first published in English years ago and has been used by many thousands of people in the English-speaking world.

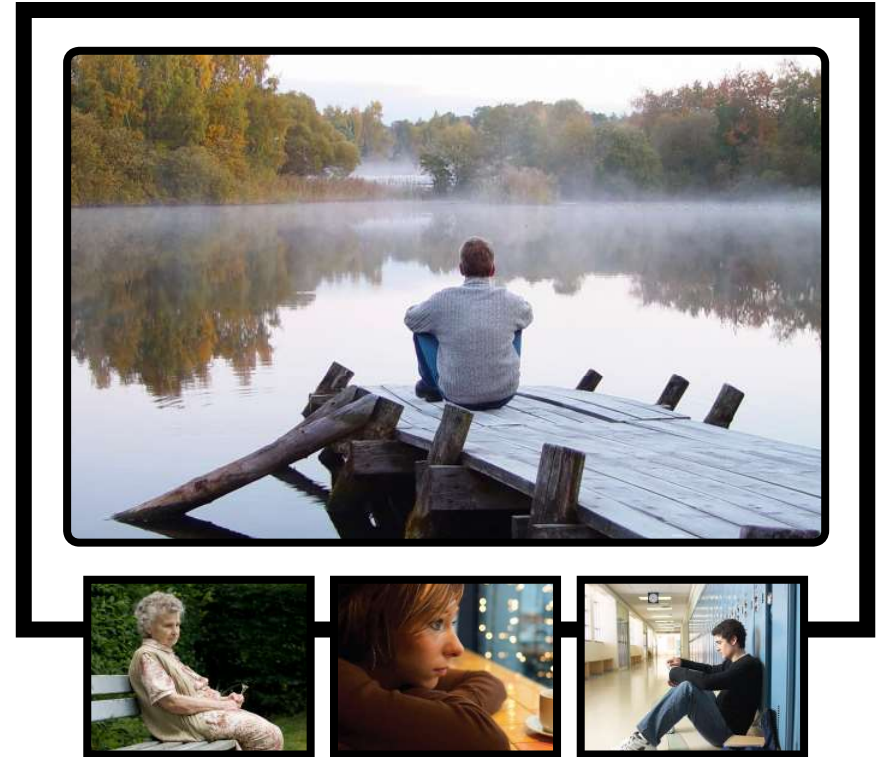
Now, with permission of the original publishers, the series is available in several languages as collections printed under many contemporary titles.

What makes this series so valuable is that each Bible event leads the reader or the group to discover the deepest truths of the Bible history for themselves. This is done through insightful multiple choice questions which draw the readers to enter into the story and find for themselves its meanings and implications and to apply the history to their own lives.

The series is best “taught” by persons who encourage the group to do most of the talking and thinking. The teacher best acts as a leader in which the group discovers its way through the Scriptural events. The teacher may help the group when he or she believes that valuable truths have been overlooked, but the first discoverers should be members of the group itself. This stirs tremendous interest on the part of the group. This also relieves the teacher of the responsibility, under older systems of teaching, to carefully master all the truths of the text and present them in a way that would hopefully interest and “teach” the group.

Almost all teachers report that their classes or groups show much more interest than before and that teaching this series is much easier than it was under the older systems of teaching.

In the same way, individuals who use these booklets for their own personal study find this investigative method much more interesting and meaningful. The reader is invited to sense the drama of each story in his or her own Bible, be it Catholic or Evangelical, and be led to discern the spiritual truths that are packed into each story.



# Overcoming LONELINESS

From the “Bible Events” Series

NATIONAL BIBLE READING  
CAMPAIGN



A Gateway to World Missions  
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*“Every Community on Earth Deserves a New Testament Church”*



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### National Bible Reading Campaign

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# *Overcoming* **LONELINESS**

Many of the world's loneliest people live in the midst of many people. In fact, moments of loneliness are common for everyone. However, loneliness for many is a constant and life-draining experience.

The Bible tells the stories of many people who suffered loneliness and illustrates the causes of such loneliness and also how it can be overcome. Six life stories are given for the help and inspiration of the group.

## First Bible Event

**Loneliness and Depression****1 Kings 19:1-18****Great Bible Truths:**

- Lack of faith in God leads to self-pity and depression
- Fear of others causes cowardice, withdrawal and loneliness
- The Lord never gives up on those who are His

Loneliness and depression are closely linked. The sense of loneliness can bring a feeling of depression. Depression, brought on for many different reasons, also isolates us from others and ends in a sense of deep loneliness. These have been the human experience from the beginning and many life stories illustrate it. Elijah was a great and powerful prophet of God, the worker of miracles and a courageous preacher. In spite of his accomplishments, the threat of Jezebel, a wicked queen of Israel, to take his life, drove him to despair. This led him to a deep depression and to his escape, not only from the queen but from society itself. The tender care of God of this defeated man should encourage everyone.

**Elijah, the Discouraged Man of God**

Read again 1 Kings 19:1-5

## 1. What was the main reason Elijah ran to the desert?

- He was running to save his skin.
- He would have to pay for killing the queen's pagan prophets.
- He had lost his faith in God's power to save him.
- He knew the peril of a powerful woman's wrath.

## 2. How did Elijah react to his forced exile?

- He wished that he were dead.
- He thought he could now enjoy a vacation.
- He was completely exhausted.
- He was eager to preach again.
- He acknowledged complete defeat.

1 Kings 19:6-8

## 2. What did God send the angel to do for the defeated prophet?

- To condemn Elijah for his cowardice and lack of faith.
- To give Elijah food and water and encourage him to rest.
- To prepare Elijah to go to a place where he would have a fresh meeting with God.
- To make Elijah to feel ashamed of himself.

## 4. Why do you think God was so caring of Elijah?

- God doesn't give up on anybody who belongs to Him.
- God understands the weakness of people who are in depression.
- God loved Elijah even when he had lost faith in God's power.
- God had a plan to restore Elijah to strength and usefulness.
- God still had great plans for Elijah.

1 Kings 19:9-10

## 5. How does Elijah judge himself and his situation at this moment?

- He blames his troubles on his having been faithful to God.
- He believes that all of God's people, but him, have betrayed God.
- He cries that God's enemies are trying to kill him, reason enough to be depressed.
- He recognizes that he had failed God through his lack of faith and cowardice.
- He really believes that God Himself is to blame for his sorry situation.

## 6. What would you most want to tell Elijah?

- Shape up, man!
- I know exactly how you feel!
- Remember that God loves you and will not fail you.
- Never think you are the only person who loves and serves God.
- You are never alone; the Lord watches over you even in your moments of failure.

1 Kings 9:11-18

## 7. How would you interpret the signs God gave Elijah?

- Elijah had thought of God mainly as a worker of fantastic miracles.
- Elijah had overlooked the calm trustworthiness of God.
- Elijah had thought much more about himself and his situation than of God's power and care.

## 8. How did God answer Elijah's complaints?

- He said, "Elijah, I am through with you."
- He revealed to Elijah plans He had for Israel.
- He sent Elijah back to work.
- He assured Elijah that thousands of others were faithful to God.

## 9. What most contributes to your moments of depression and loneliness?

- My wavering faith in God
- My hasty judgment of others
- My physical exhaustion
- My fear of the situation in which I live

## 10. How can you best help people who are cranky, discouraged or depressed? What have you learned from Elijah's experience that might help you when you are falling into depression?



## Second Bible Event

## When Being Alone Can Bring a Blessing

### Revelation 1:9-19



#### Great Bible Truths:

- God sometimes must separate us from people so we can hear from Him and He from us.
- We are never alone; Jesus is always with us and puts His hand upon us.
- We should encourage others through writing when we cannot speak to them.

We are social creatures by nature and long to be with others. To be separated from others naturally brings a sense of loneliness that can become painful. Even so, being alone is not always a negative experience. Every person needs some time to be alone and to relax from social contact. Even more important, we need to experience the daily presence of God in our lives and this is best accomplished when we are alone with Him. He has given us the revelation of Himself in the Bible which He makes alive through the work of His Holy Spirit. He also warms to our presence as we speak to him in prayer, as a child speaks to a parent. There are times when the Lord needs to set us apart from people for greater lengths of time just so He can speak to us. This was the experience of the Apostle John who was carried to prison on a desert island, far from the people he loved.

#### The Lonely Apostle John

Read Revelation 1:9

1. What do you think was the most difficult thing for John in this imprisonment?

- To have to suffer for being faithful to Christ and preaching God's message
- To find himself, at his advanced age, on a desert island without the hope of seeing his friends again
- The shame of being a prisoner
- The discomfort of prison life and the lack of decent food
- To be separated from his spiritual brothers

Revelation 1:10

2. What happened to John on the Lord's day?

- He was preaching in the prison chapel.
- He was completely alone with God.
- He was filled with the Spirit of God.
- He received a remarkable message from the Lord.
- He was given release from prison.

Revelation 1:11-16

3. Why do you believe Jesus permitted John to be arrested and sent to the lonely island prison?

- He thought John was tired and needed a rest.
- He was punishing John.
- He would give John a glorious vision of him that he would not have in the comfort of Christian society.
- He needed to have John to Himself in order to give him a series of visions.
- Being alone sometimes has its advantages.

Revelation 1:17-20

4. What is most impressive to you about this experience?

- The first thing Jesus said, in his great glory, was for John not to be afraid of him.
- Jesus touched the lonely John with his hand.
- Jesus identified himself simply as being the First and the Last.
- Jesus reminded John that he had the power over life and death.

5. Jesus commanded John to write the vision. What is so significant about this in your mind?

- Through writing, John could communicate God's message to people John could not see or visit.
- What John wrote would be of blessing to people throughout the centuries.
- The island prison was just the place needed for John to dedicate himself to writing.
- Though John could no longer preach, his writing would touch the lives of millions.
- Writing is an important form of communication when we are unable to speak to people.

6. How does John's experience help you in your life?

- To realize that I am never alone; Jesus is always with me.
- Being alone gives me special opportunities to hear from the Lord and speak to Him.
- Preaching and teaching are not the only ways I can tell others about God.
- There are people I cannot visit who need a letter from me.



## Third Bible Event

## Abused and Alone

### Read Genesis 16:1-16



#### Great Bible Truths:

- Important actions taken that reflect doubt in God's promises result in sorrow and personal tragedy.
- Humility is a balm that enables people to live together in spite of serious errors in life.
- God moves to rescue us from great sorrow, but He cannot save us from all the consequences of sin.

It is bad enough to lose friends. It is much worse when friends seem to turn on you and your supporters become your opponents. That brings a measure of loneliness that is heavy indeed. Nevertheless, it does happen and how we respond to it determines whether our life will bring joy and meaning or if we are given new hope and meaning from God Himself. Hagar was a woman who was greatly abused, in part due to her own attitude. God's plan for her, however, gave Hagar's life great meaning.

#### Hagar, Alone With Child

Read again Genesis 16:1-4

1. Who do you believe was most guilty of creating the family conflict over Hagar?

- Sarah, who thought to use Hagar, her maid, as a surrogate mother and who urged Abraham to take Hagar to mother his child
- Abraham, who thought this was acceptable by the laws of their time, should have foreseen the bitterness and sorrow that would result
- Hagar who submitted herself to this arrangement and who came to despise Sarah when she, Hagar, became pregnant
- Both Sarah and Abraham who became impatient and did not trust God to fulfill His promise that they would have a son
- God, who permitted all this to happen

Genesis 16:5-7

2. Which of the three would you most like to scold?

- Hagar, whose prideful attitude stirred up a hornet's nest
- Sarah, who started the whole thing and now wanted to get rid of Hagar and her child
- Abraham, who so easily took Hagar, getting her pregnant, now washed his hands of the whole thing

Genesis 16:8-12

3. Where did the Lord's angel find Hagar? How do you imagine Hagar felt out in the desert, alone, hated at home, and facing probable death with her unborn child? What did the angel command Hagar to do?

4. Why do you think the angel commanded Hagar to do this?

- It was the only way Hagar and her child could survive.
- He wanted Hagar to get even with Sarah.
- Hagar needed to learn humility and to be submission in attitude and fact.
- Hagar's child would be special and would need the guidance of Abraham.
- God's plans are mysterious and greater than we can imagine. (Note: in Genesis 17:20, God told Abram his son with Hagar would be the father of a great nation with 12 rulers.)

Genesis 16:13-16

5. What do you consider to be the most significant result of this family conflict?

- A slave girl met the Lord and learned that He loved her and would care for her and her child.
- The failure of Abraham and Sarah led to the centuries-old conflict among the descendants of Abraham by Hagar and his descendants by Sarah.
- A nation of people resulted from this conception.

6. How would you best summarize Hagar's experience of loneliness?

- She suffered a great deal because she was a slave, subject to the will of others.
- Her attitude of pridefulness stirred Sarah's bitter opposition.
- She vowed to get even with Sarah.
- She had to feel betrayed by Abram's seeming indifference to her suffering.
- When others turned against her, she discovered the Lord and His compassion for her and her son.

7. Personal: Have you ever felt like Hagar, betrayed by those on whom you depended? Have you ever been like Hagar, suffering harm from others because of your own attitude or words? Have you ever been like Abraham, creating situations that brought great pain to others?

8. Describe a situation in which you or others 'messed up' but in which God stepped in and did much to rescue the situation.





## Fourth Bible Event



## Just When You Think You Are Alone!

### Ruth 1:1-22

#### Great Bible Truths:

- God meets our greatest needs, even giving us very special friendships.
- To be a loyal friend is to be God's gift to somebody.
- Even otherwise faithful believers sometimes blame God for their misfortunes.

It should not overly surprise us when we lose a loved one or when a very good friend moves away. Life is uncertain at best, and such losses are common. Just when you think your loss is irreplaceable, God might provide you with a friend who is dearer yet. This is especially true if your life is closely in tune with God and others have observed God's special qualities in your life. When you lose a very special friend, others may see that empty space beside you and see it as an opportunity to be your friend. Many centuries ago, a woman became a widow in a strange land. She was comforted by her two grown sons, but tragedy was multiplied when they both died also. One of her idolatrous daughters-in-laws was so touched by this woman that she left her own parents and homeland to become Naomi's special friend and to love and serve Naomi's God as well.

#### The Surprising Friendship of Naomi and Ruth

Read again Ruth 1:1-9

1. When do you think Naomi felt her greatest sense of loss?

- When she left her home town, because of the famine and left all her relatives and friends to live in a distant pagan country.
- When her husband died, leaving her with only her sons in a foreign land.
- When both sons died, and only her pagan daughters-in-law were left with her.
- When she felt compelled to tell her daughter-in-laws to remain in their country and find someone else to marry.

Ruth 1:10-15

2. Why would Naomi urge her daughters-in-law to stay behind in Moab?

- She wanted to spare them the sorrow of leaving their relatives and all that was familiar to them.
- She knew that she could not supply them with husbands or support.
- She did not get along very well with them.
- She believed that God was against her and she didn't want to impose her sorrow on others.
- She loved the two young women and wanted the best for them.

3. Why do you think Orpha turned back to Moab?

- She took Naomi's words seriously.
- She didn't much care for Naomi.
- She may have considered the sadness her leaving would give to her own family.
- She hesitated to go to a strange land with different customs and a different religion.
- She was more concerned about herself than she was for Naomi.

4. What do you consider to be the most profound pledge of Ruth to Naomi?

- She would go with her and stay anywhere she decided to go.
- She would accept Naomi's people as her own.
- She would leave her pagan gods for the God of Naomi.
- She would stay even after Naomi's death and finally be buried with her.

5. How appropriate is Ruth's pledge as one to be made in a wedding? What does this Bible event say about the potential friendship between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law?

6. What do you suspect was the main reason Ruth made the decision to follow Naomi?

- Ruth did not get along with her relatives or the people in Moab.
- Ruth saw in Naomi and her family a faith and a quality of life unseen among the Moabites.
- Ruth was moved by Naomi's self-sacrificing love for her and for Orpha.
- Ruth wanted to know personally the God of Naomi and her family.
- Ruth had a typical tourist attitude and wanted to see the world.

7. How did Naomi feel when she got back to Bethlehem, her hometown?

- She thanked God for Ruth's loyalty.
- She complained that the Lord had afflicted her.
- The sympathy of her friends made her more self-pitying.
- She thanked God that she was safely back in her own land.
- She wondered how she and Ruth would be able to make a go of it.
- She meant it when she said in effect, "Just call me Mrs. Bitter!"

8. What impresses you most about this Bible event?

- The touching loyalty between two people whose lives were thrown together
- The sacrifices real friends make for each other
- How God gets blamed for problems but is not praised for blessings
- How those of other faiths can be so impressed by the faith of believers
- How well a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law can get along

9. Personal: Do you have a friend so loyal to you as was Ruth to Naomi? Are you as loyal a friend to someone as Ruth was to Naomi? What is lacking on your part to have such a friendship? Who is learning about God from what they see in your life?



## Fifth Bible Event

## The Fellowship That Overcame Loneliness

### Acts 2:42-47



## Great Bible Truths:

- The faith and well-being of every Christian depends in large measure on their happy participation in a church similar to the first church.
- The first church, like churches today, was filled with members who were less than perfect but which learned to encourage and serve one another.
- The church belongs to Christ and its strength and blessing comes from the loyalty of each member to Christ and one another.

Soon after its beginning, the Church of Jesus Christ was subject to great opposition and persecution. Few of its members could be called “super Christians” but they withstood opposition and discouragement because of the mutual support they found and gave in the churches. In today’s world of materialism and growing immorality, Christians cannot prosper in their spiritual lives apart from their participation in churches characterized by love for Christ and between the members. No church is perfect and it serves no good to point out the weaknesses of others in the church. A divine solution to spiritual loneliness is to determine to be the best church member possible and then to live according to that determination for the blessing of others. Such a decision vanquishes loneliness because loving service is repaid by the love of many.

### Daily Life in the First Church

Read again Acts 2:42-43

1. What would you most enjoy if you were a member of the first church?
  - Getting to know the other members and hearing their stories of faith
  - Being taught every day by the Apostles
  - Eating with church friends every day
  - Having daily fellowship in home meetings and not just in the temple
  - Seeing the miracles performed by the Apostles
  - Having my needs prayed for and praying for the needs of the others
  
2. What is meant when it is said that the members “devoted themselves” to these activities?
  - They participated with a worshipful attitude.
  - They gave these activities the highest priority in their daily lives.
  - They participated to the degree they thought was convenient.
  
3. What do you think was the most remarkable characteristic of the relationship between the members?
  - They were almost always together.
  - They had everything in common.
  - They sold what they owned for the benefit of everyone.
  - They freely gave to others according to their needs.

4. What do you believe made it possible for the members to be so generous to one another?

- Most of them had personally seen Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit had filled the church.
- The Apostles inspired the church with their own selfless spirit.
- Such love is contagious.
- They thought that Jesus would come at any moment and the end would come.

5. Which of the following phrases best describe the life in the church?

- They met every day without fail in the courts of the temple.
- They met daily in many homes for teaching, fellowship and meals.
- They were filled with gladness and sincere love for one another.
- They built church buildings in every major neighborhood.
- They praised God in their worship and in times of testimony.
- They earned the admiration of all the people.

6. After the persecution scattered the church, the sharing of all possessions was no longer characteristic of the church. Even so, which of the following can and should be characteristics of church life today?

- Sincere praise of God should be a part of every meeting.
- The faithful teaching and preaching of God’s Word should be central to everything.
- We should not be surprised by miraculous acts of God in response to the church’s prayers.
- Care for the weak and poor would cause others to admire the church.
- Sincere prayer should be the common experience of the church.
- Meeting in many groups or homes should enable close and informal fellowship.
- Generous giving should be an evidence of our spiritual sincerity.
- Eating together frequently cements our fellowship and banishes loneliness.

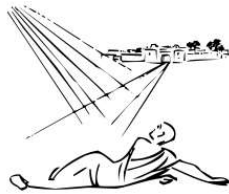
7. What can you do to enrich and improve your church?

- Be faithful in my attendance in both general worship and in small groups.
- Find ways to serve others in the church and do them.
- Pray for other members and let others know of my prayer needs.
- Give generously to the budget of the church and to needs in the membership.
- Encourage the pastor, deacons and other workers.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. What does this Bible event reveal to you about your participating in the life of your church and overcoming loneliness? What can you do to relieve the loneliness of members of the church who live alone or without family members who share their faith in Christ? How can you improve the spiritual fellowship between members of your immediate and larger family?



## Sixth Bible Event

**Turned to Faith and Fellowship****Read Acts 9:1-22****Great Bible Truths:**

- A negative response to Jesus Christ results in isolation and separation from people.
- Christians are called to speak tenderly of Christ to those who are doubtful, confused and discouraged.
- The Lord has great and mighty purposes for people who do not yet even believe in Him.

Even very friendly people acknowledge built-in limitations in their ability to relate well to other people. This is due to the root of pride that governs people and in some measure limits everyone. Our ability to relate well to others and to enjoy their company and they to enjoy ours depends on the sharp curtailment of pride which expresses itself differently in each one of us. For many, pride is expressed in fear, timidity and withdrawal from others. Other people act aggressively because of their pride and are quick to offend. While many people try to lessen the power of pride in their lives, the Bible teaches that only God can really break its power and give us a liberty that opens us up to people and attracts them to us.

Saul was already a man of great intellect and personal power before he knew Christ. His deep pride prompted him to fear the new Christian movement and hate it with all his heart. It enabled him to arrest and kill Christians without the least hesitation. It made him a fearful enemy of Christianity and his hateful emotions ran so deeply that even his associates could not experience real friendship with him. Saul required a fundamental operation of his soul, in which his pride would be broken and by which Jesus Christ could change him from the inside out.

**Saul, Converted From Isolation to Remarkable Fellowship**

Read again Acts 9:1-2

1. How would you describe Saul's relationship with people at this moment in his life?

- His hatred would make him a good person to stay away from.
- He was useful to the enemies of the church, but this did not mean they enjoyed his presence.
- Saul's hatred revealed an emptiness in his life of anything that was peaceful and beautiful.
- Saul had only a sense of anger and hatred for those who belonged to "the Way" as Christians were first called.

Acts 9:3-9

2. What seems strangest to you about Saul's initial experience with Christ?

- That Jesus did not kill him on the spot
- How his blindness made him childlike and he had to be led by the hand
- That only he of all the travelers saw the Lord
- His total loss of appetite for food or drink
- The thoughts he must have had on realizing that his whole life had been a mistake.
- His probable sense of shame to realize what he had done to Christ and Christ's people
- His absolute sense of isolation for three days
- His wondering what would happen to him next

Acts 9:10-18

3. What do you think might have been Ananias's greatest doubt about his being sent to see Saul?

- That of all the Christians in town, the Lord would have called him to go to Saul?
- Why he was asked to risk his life, going to see this arch-enemy of Christianity
- That the Lord had waited three full days before talking to him about Saul
- That the Lord had already made the appointment with Saul, telling him that Ananias would see him
- That the Lord gave him the name and address of the man he was to visit

4. What is the most remarkable thing that the Lord told Ananias about Saul in your opinion?

- That the Lord does not identify Saul as an enemy but instead as a man who is praying
- That the Lord said he was giving Saul a great calling to carry the Lord's name to nations and kings
- That he who had brought great suffering on the church would himself experience much suffering for Christ's sake

5. What do you see as being the most tender act of Ananias in his visit to Saul?

- He comforted him from the first moment, calling him "Brother Saul."
- He went straight to Saul and put his hands on him.
- He told Saul that what Saul had done to the church was unimportant.
- He was used of God that Saul might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- He baptized Saul.

Acts 9:19-25

6. What evidence is there that Saul was losing his sense of loneliness and separation from people?

- He started eating again.
- He spent time with the very disciples he had come to arrest.
- He went to the synagogue and courageously preached that Jesus is the Son of God.
- He danced in the street as King David had done centuries before.
- His negative and hateful spirit was gone.

7. What relationship is there between rejecting Christ and experiencing personal loneliness?

How do you think repentance and faith in Christ works to dispel loneliness?

8. Personal: How do you compare yourself now with Saul?

- Like Saul, I have negative feelings about Christianity.
- Like Saul, I am beginning to realize that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord of all.
- Like Saul, I understand that my loneliness has been a result of my doubts, fears and egocentrism.
- Like Saul, I understand that the Lord calls me and forgives me, making me His own.
- Like Saul, I believe that God has important purposes for my life.

