

UNLOCKING THE BIBLE STORY  
VOLUME 1

*Colin S. Smith*

Moody Publishers  
Chicago

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1

# Life

GENESIS 1:1–2:25

*Who is God  
and why does  
it matter?*

*Who am I and  
why am I here?*

# 1Life

GENESIS 1:1–2:25



## DISCOVER

how God is directly involved in every home, job, and marriage.



## LEARN

why your life has unique value and how you cannot know yourself until you know God.



## WORSHIP

as you consider the good gifts God has poured into your life.

**I**MAGINE yourself at a theater for the first performance of a new play. The curtain goes up, but the stage is empty. Then the author walks on and introduces himself to the audience. He tells you who he is, why he wrote the play, and what it is about. The author does not present an argument for his own existence. When he walks onto the stage, he simply introduces himself and begins to speak about himself and his work.

## THE AUTHOR TAKES THE STAGE

The Bible begins with God walking onto the stage and introducing Himself.

*In the beginning God...(GENESIS 1:1)*

This is His story, and so right at the beginning God introduces Himself to us. As we follow the Bible story, we will discover more about who He is and what He has done, but the first thing God wants us to know is that He is here. He also wants us to know what He has done.

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (1:1)*

The Author wants us to know that what we are about to see is entirely His work. This is of great importance because the Creator has the rights of the owner. We live in a world of trademarks, registered service marks, and patents. If I say, “Have it your way,” you will immediately think about Burger King. If I say, “Just do it,” you immediately think about Nike. The slogan is owned by its creators.

A creator always has the rights of ownership, and God owns all that He has made. If your life were an accident arising from millennia of human history, then you would be a free agent, accountable to nobody but yourself. But if you were created, then your Creator has the full rights of ownership over your life. One or the other of these things must be true, but both of them cannot be true. Either

1. you are an accident of history and therefore completely at liberty to do whatever you please with your life—to indulge it or trash it or end it—and if that is the case your life is ultimately meaningless; or,
2. you are a created being, and if that is the case, your Creator has absolute rights of ownership over your life.

God introduces Himself as our Creator and therefore our owner. You are not your own. Your life is a trust given to you from God. You are not worthless or aimless; God chose to bring you into being. He did it on purpose, and you will discover that purpose as you get to know the One who created you.

## UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

If we do not know our Creator, we will not understand ourselves. When people start believing that they are meaningless accidents, human life becomes cheap. And if human life is cheap, it becomes disposable when it is inconvenient. First the unborn, then the handicapped, then the elderly or others who are a drain on the economy become nuisances and even expendable. Then come those who are the “wrong color,” the “wrong race,” or the “wrong religion.”

The most monstrous evils of our time have been built on the assumption that human life is an accident. The future direction of our society will in large part be determined by whether we choose to believe that we are accidents of history or the special creation of almighty God.

When we open the Bible, we are confronted by God. He is the Creator, and He has the absolute rights of ownership over all things.

After God tells us who He is, He explains two things that He wants us to know about ourselves: (1) We are made in His image, and (2) we are absolutely dependent on Him.

## THE IMAGE OF GOD

*Then God said, “Let us make man in our image.” (1:26)*

Did you notice the plural pronoun there? God says, “Let *us* make man.” This is a fascinating hint about the nature of God to be revealed more fully later.

After five days of creation, the crowning moment has come. It is almost as if God has a conversation with Himself. “Let’s do it! Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness.” An image is a reflection, and so God is telling us that He made us in such a way that we would be able to reflect something of His own nature and glory.

“Man” is used as a generic term here; it includes male and female. We are specifically told “God created man in his own image, . . . male and female he created them” (v. 27).

This image of God is what distinguishes people from the animals. The animals were made by God, but none of them was made like God. That is why no man or woman should ever be treated as an animal or behave as an animal. The difference between man and the animal kingdom is of enormous significance.

Early on in the Bible story, we will discover the devil taking on the form of an animal. At the center of the Bible story, we will find God taking on the form of a man. The Son of God is the image of God, and so when He took flesh, it was in the form of a man, because man was made in the image of God.

Men and women who believe that they are simply developed animals have missed the most fundamental thing that God says about them. We are made in the image of God!

## THE KISS OF LIFE

Man is made in the image of God, but he must always remember that he is not God. In fact, man is rather fragile. God made the first man from the dust of the ground, so we should not be surprised if there are similarities to the animals at a biological level. But there is more to man than chemical or biological life.

*The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (2:7)*

God formed a corpse, and a skeletal frame lay lifeless on the ground. Then God breathed His own breath into this biodegradable corpse. He gave man the kiss of life, and the lifeless corpse became a living, self-conscious being.

God is always doing what He did that day. “He [God] . . . gives all men life and breath and everything else” (Acts 17:25). God sustains you one breath at a time. So if you want to sin against God intentionally, try to do it without breathing! It would be a sad thing to draw breath from God and use the energy of that breath to grieve His heart.

Here is the second key to knowing and understanding yourself: You are absolutely dependent upon God. If you can grasp those two truths—you are made in His image and dependent on Him—you will discover a great dignity and at the same time a profound humility.

God gave Adam four special gifts that made his life wonderfully rich. They were God's presence, a place, a purpose, and a partner.

## TAKING A WALK WITH GOD

God is Spirit. That means that God is invisible to the human eye. Yet right at the beginning of the Bible we read about “the *sound* of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (3:8; italics added).

God revealed Himself in a beautiful garden called Eden. We call each revelation a *theophany*, and that means an appearance of God in visible form. The Old Testament has many examples of this, and they are very important. In the earliest theophanies, God did for Adam and Eve in a visible way what He does for all His people in an invisible way.

God is eternal and invisible, and He wants to establish a relationship with the man and the woman so that they may know Him and enjoy Him. Later in the Bible story, we will see that God became a man, so it should not seem strange that in the Old Testament He should appear in a visible form. These theophanies show us the intense desire in the heart of God to establish fellowship with man.

It is almost as if the Son of God could not wait to come. He burst out of heaven, entering human time and space, and came to earth so that He could walk with the first man and woman in the garden.

Notice that “they *heard* the sound of the LORD God as He was walking in the garden.” They heard the cracking of twigs and the rustling of leaves. They walked with the Son of God in Eden as surely as Peter, James, and John would walk with the Son of God in Galilee.

Adam and Eve walked with God. They asked questions and enjoyed conversation. Can you begin to imagine what this would be like? God was interested in what Adam had done in the day. He was listening to whatever was on Eve's mind. God spoke with them. The man and the woman were walking in fellowship with God.

We will see in the next chapter that this fellowship between God and man was broken, and that it has remained broken throughout the generations of human history.

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VOLUME 2

*Colin S. Smith*

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Chicago

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1

# Suffering

JOB 1

*What does God  
have to say  
about the  
suffering of  
His people?*

# 1 Suffering

JOB 1



## DISCOVER

the story behind the story  
of suffering.



## LEARN

how you can defeat Satan's  
purpose by your response  
to pain.



## WORSHIP

as you see what Jesus Christ  
accomplished in His suffering.

**G**ENESIS is the first book in the Bible, but Job is the oldest. The story comes from the time of Abraham or before, and the book of Job may well be one of the oldest books in the world. It is also one of the most important, because it deals with some of the deepest questions you will ever face in your life.

Job is the first of the Bible's wisdom books, that is books that deal with the skills we need for navigating our way through life. It also contains one of the most dramatic and compelling stories in the Bible.

When God chose to speak to us about suffering, He did not give us a book of philosophy. When we are in deep personal pain, we do not have a great deal of interest in theory or arguments. God speaks to us through a real-life experience of a man who suffered and records for us his thoughts and his struggles. As you enter Job's struggles, God will speak into your pain. Wherever you look in human history, pain is still pain, and God is still God.

## THE GREATEST MAN IN THE EAST

Job was an outstanding man in every way. We are told that he was "blameless" and "upright" (1:1). This did not mean that he was perfect, but it did mean that if people were looking for anything to stick on him, they wouldn't find it. The same word is used in the New Testament for Christian leaders. They are to be "blameless" (Titus 1:6). No leaders are perfect but they must be above reproach. That was true of Job. He "feared God" and he "shunned evil" (Job 1:1). That means

that he experienced the same temptations that all the rest of us do, but he had learned to push them off. He shunned evil, and the reason he was able to do this was because he feared God. Indeed, “he was the greatest man in the East” (v.3).

The second thing that we learn about Job is that he was wealthy. He had been highly successful and God had blessed him. In those days, wealth was measured in livestock. We are told that he had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred donkeys (v. 3). His total net worth was pretty impressive.

We are also told that Job had seven sons and three daughters (v. 2), and it seems that they may have represented the one shadow on his horizon. The one thing that we are told about them is that their lives were an endless round of parties. “His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes” (v. 4). Their whole lifestyle seems to have been built around the pursuit of pleasure. If you had asked them what they were living for, they would have said, “We live for the weekend. We get our work done, and then we all have a blast.”

Job did not like what they were doing. In fact after the parties were over, he used to offer a sacrifice for each of his children. He did this “thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts’” (v. 5).

If you had spoken to Job’s sons or daughters, you would have thought them to be fine, upright people, but Job was worried that what they said and what they thought were two different things. He was worried about what was in their hearts, and it would not have surprised him if, when the wine had loosened some of their inhibitions, they had cursed God.

So here is a man who was wonderfully blessed, but had one nagging fear that haunted his mind. He felt that what was going on in his family was not pleasing to God.

## CATASTROPHE

Then one day everything in Job’s life changed. The day was like any other—until a terrified servant broke through the door of the house with desperate news. “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabbeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped” (vv. 14–15).

Job did not have time to take this appalling news in, because while the servant was still speaking, another messenger came with the news that the sheep and other servants had been killed in what was probably something like a lightning storm.

“The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” (v. 16).

While he was still speaking, a third messenger arrived with news that three raiding parties of Chaldeans had swept down from the hills and taken off the camels. Then a fourth messenger arrived with the worst news of all. Job’s sons and daughters had been eating and drinking at one of their parties, and suddenly the house was hit by a mighty wind that swept in from the desert. The house collapsed on them, and all of them were dead (v. 19).

In one day this man lost every familiar landmark of his life. His business was destroyed, his wealth was plundered, and his entire family tragically killed. It all happened in one day. By any standards, this is a catalog of unspeakable suffering.

## GOD’S PEOPLE WILL SUFFER

Bad things happen to good people. Sometimes terrible things happen to wonderful people, and God allows it to be so. The Scripture tells us Job was “the greatest man among all the people of the East” (v. 3). So the story of Job clearly teaches us that the pursuit of a godly life will not put us beyond suffering.

Many Christians have an instinctive feeling that if we pursue a life of worship and service, it would be a reasonable expectation that God would keep us from significant suffering in our lives. But there is no such deal on the table. The book of Job makes that very clear. Christian faith does not inoculate us against suffering in a fallen world. That is why it is an absolute travesty of the gospel to suggest that if people come to Jesus, all their problems will be over. God does not immunize His people against suffering.

At the heart of the Bible story, we learn that the greatest and most godly person who ever lived suffered more than any other. He was rejected by His family. He wept at the graveside of one of His dearest friends. He was betrayed and suffered injustice, and then He was crucified. When He calls us to walk in His footsteps, that includes following Him into the mystery that He experienced, of the suffering God allows in the life of a godly man or woman.

When you suffer, you will probably ask the question “Why?” Jesus did. But you should not ask the question “Why is this happening to me?” That question betrays a mind-set that says, “It may be appropriate that this should happen to other people but not to me.” Your faith in Christ does not and will not ever give you immunity from suffering. The apostle Peter wrote us, “Do not be surprised at the

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# Fulfillment

MATTHEW 1

*Who is Jesus*

*and why did*

*He come?*

# 1 Fulfillment

MATTHEW 1



## DISCOVER

God's "To Do list" and how it was done.



## LEARN

why Christ cannot be ranked alongside Moses or Mohammed.



## WORSHIP

as you see how Jesus answers the questions raised by the Old Testament.

**H**OW do you organize your day? Do you work to a tight schedule, or do you just take things as they come? At the start of most days, I write a “To Do list.” It gives direction and helps with setting priorities. Not that everything on my To Do list gets done! The reality is that a fair amount gets rolled onto the next day. What’s really discouraging is when the list is longer at the end of the day than it was at the beginning.

Some things on the To Do list are pretty simple: Make a call, write a letter, or follow through on a decision. Other things are more extensive: Write an essay or prepare a presentation. When the list is complete, it’s time to stop planning and start working.

The real joy of a To Do list comes later in the day, when you draw a heavy line through each item and mark it “Done.” There’s nothing quite like the satisfaction of knowing that everything you planned to do is complete.

## GOD’S “TO DO LIST”

In volumes 1 and 2 of *Unlocking the Bible Story*, we discovered God’s amazing promises. God told the prophets what He would do. You can think of the prophets as announcing God’s “To Do list.”

Of course, God’s To Do list does not arise from obligations that are laid on Him. Nobody can tell God what to do. God’s To Do list arises from commitments that He has made freely and voluntarily. God has promised to do certain things, and

because God is always faithful to His word, these things must be done. By the end of the Old Testament story, it's quite a list.

The New Testament opens by reminding us of the people to whom God made His greatest promises. Matthew arranged the genealogy of Jesus in three groups of fourteen generations, beginning with Abraham, David, and the exile, respectively. In this way, he focused readers on three points during the Old Testament genealogy where God's greatest promises were made. Matthew wanted us to know that the coming of Jesus was the fulfillment of all that God had promised to do.

*A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham. (MATTHEW 1:1)*

Jesus is introduced as “the son of Abraham.” Two thousand years before Jesus was born, God promised that His blessing would flow through Abraham to every nation. “I will bless you . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2–3).

Abraham wondered how this could be since he had no children. But God stepped in and caused Abraham and Sarah to have a child in their old age. The birth of Isaac was a miracle, but God's blessing did not come to the world through him. So the promise to Abraham remained on God's To Do list.

Jesus is also introduced as “the son of David.” God had spoken to David about a descendant who would build a house for God's name. God promised to establish that Son's throne and kingdom forever. Then God added, “I will be his father, and he will be my son” (2 Samuel 7:13–14).

David's son Solomon built a magnificent temple for the glory of God. But Solomon did not fulfill God's promise. His temple was eventually destroyed, and his kingdom certainly did not last forever. So this whole business of building a permanent house and establishing a throne was added to God's To Do list.

Matthew's third focal point in the genealogy is the Exile.

*There were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ. (v. 17)*

Some of God's greatest promises in the Old Testament are associated with the Exile. When His people faced their darkest hour, God promised that He would make a new covenant and give His people a new heart (see Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel

36). He promised to create a community of people who would live according to His Law, not out of obligation but because of an inner desire. These promises were made about six hundred years before the time of Jesus, and during those centuries they remained on God's To Do list.

Despite all that God had done for His people through the Old Testament story, God's greatest promises were still unfulfilled. God's blessing was still to come to the nations, the kingdom that would never end was still to be established, and the hearts of the people were still to be renewed. By the end of the Old Testament story, there was a long list of things to be done.

## GETTING GOD'S TO DO LIST DONE

Matthew then tells us how the birth of Jesus Christ came about (in verses 18 and following). Mary was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph did not know what to make of this until one night God spoke to him through a dream. He saw an angel, who told him not to be afraid. He was to call Mary's child Jesus because this child would "save his people from their sins" (v. 21). Then Matthew tells us,

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. (v. 22, EMPHASIS ADDED)*

In other words, when Jesus Christ came into the world, the things God had said He would do were done.

As you read through the Gospels, you find the same point repeated again and again. We are told about how Joseph took Mary and the child to Egypt when Herod was searching for the child with the intent of destroying Him. Matthew explains that this "fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son'" (Matthew 2:15). It was as if the event had been on God's To Do list, and now it was done.

Then the young family moved to a town called Nazareth. Matthew explains that this "fulfilled what was said through the prophets: 'He will be called a Nazarene'" (v. 23). Done!

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, which is in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. Matthew reminds us that this was "to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah" (Matthew 4:14). Done!

**"This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled."**



Luke tells us about the first public event in the ministry of Jesus. He came into the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then Jesus rolled up the scroll, returned it to the attendant, and took His seat. Everyone in the synagogue stared intently; then Jesus announced, “Today this scripture is *fulfilled* in your hearing” (Luke 4:18–19, 21, emphasis added).

“What God has promised is now being done—by Me!” He had declared. No wonder the people were astonished at His teaching!

The theme of God’s promises being fulfilled runs throughout the Gospels. The detail is staggering. Even the enemies of Jesus, who had every interest in showing that He did not fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament, found themselves playing their part in demonstrating that He did!

When Judas betrayed Jesus, the chief priests gave him thirty pieces of silver, which he used to buy a field. Matthew reminds us that this fulfilled what God had spoken by Jeremiah the prophet (Matthew 27:9).

When Jesus was on the cross, the soldiers took His clothes and divided them between them. But Christ had a seamless robe, and they decided to draw lots and give it to the winner. John wrote that “this happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, ‘They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing’” (John 19:24).

Later, the soldiers came to break the legs of the three who were being crucified. They did this to hasten the process. They broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus, they found that He was already dead. So they did not break His legs but instead thrust a spear into His side. Again, John noted that, “These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken,’ and, as another scripture says, ‘They will look on the one they have pierced’” (19:36–37).

## THE PORTRAIT ON A DIFFERENT WALL

This theme of fulfillment is important for those who question whether Jesus really is the Savior God had promised from the beginning of time. Jesus Himself was in no doubt about it. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).

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1

# Wrath

ROMANS 1

*What is the  
wrath of God  
and how can  
I avoid it?*

# 1 Wrath

ROMANS 1



## DISCOVER

why God's wrath is an aspect of His love.



## LEARN

how Jesus absorbed the wrath of God for us.



## WORSHIP

because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

I HAVE been fascinated by a recent advertisement that asks, “What do you want the Internet to be?” The point of the ad is that the Internet can be used to support almost any purpose. You can use the Internet to sell things, to gather information, or as an opportunity for meeting people with similar interests. The Internet is whatever you want it to be. The only limitations are the limits of human ingenuity.

Many people think about God in the same way as they think about the Internet. They assume that, like the Internet, God is essentially a product of human ingenuity and that writings about Him have been developed by man and for man, to meet his spiritual need.

It would, of course, follow that old ideas about God would be as useless and as laughable as technology that is fifty years out of date. The Bible would be a book of mere historical interest, which may contain some useful insights but would have no more authority for us today than the writings of Plato or Alexander the Great.

If all religions were of human origin, it would also follow that no religion could claim that its teaching about God is “the truth” or that the teaching of another religion about God is false.

These assumptions have penetrated deep into our culture, with the result that for many people the fundamental question is no longer, “Who is God?” but, “What do you want God to be?”

Of course, there is something very attractive about this, because if each of us can choose what we want God to be, then we can decide that God will be in favor of everything we pursue and against everything we oppose. Such a god would be like a large-screen projection of ourselves—god created by us and in our own image.

As we have followed the Bible story, we have discovered that there is one fundamental problem with this whole approach: God Himself!

## THE GOD YOU CANNOT ALTER

The Bible story is all about the living God revealing Himself to us. The God of the Bible did not arise from the religious thoughts of Moses, Isaiah, and the other prophets. These men simply recorded the revelation that was given to them.

God broke into their lives, speaking directly to them in order to make Himself known. God revealed Himself to them so that, through the Scriptures, we may come to know Him.

When God introduces Himself to us in the Bible, He says, “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14). This is the first thing we need to know about God. He is not whoever we want Him to be: He is who He is. We cannot alter God.

I love the story of the woman who was extremely nervous about her wedding. She came to the rehearsal in a terrible state, worrying about where she should stand and the order in which things would happen.

The pastor tried to calm her fears and said to her, “Look, you don’t need to worry because it’s very simple. You walk down the aisle, you come up to the altar, and then we sing a hymn. It’s very easy. Down the aisle, up to the altar, sing the hymn. Got it?”

“Yes,” she said, “I think I can remember that.”

The following day, when the music for her entrance to the church began, she looked straight at her future husband and as she started her procession was heard to say, “aisle, altar, hymn, aisle, altar, hymn. . . . I’ll alter him.”

Some folks have married with that idea and it is usually the road to disaster, because while you may be able to make the Internet whatever you want it to be, you cannot make a person whatever you want him (or her) to be. Sooner or later that person will say, “Either accept me for who I am, or leave me alone, but I cannot be whatever you want.”

If that is true of us, it is certainly true of God. We can't alter Him. It matters very little what we want God to be. The important thing is that we discover who He is.

## THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU

In our journey through the Bible story, we have discovered repeatedly that God is love. That means that God is absolutely committed to seek the good of all that He has made.

The Bible also tells us that God is holy. This means that God is absolutely opposed to anything that would destroy the objects of His love. God's holiness is a dimension of His love. You cannot love a person without, at the same time, hating that which would destroy him or her.

I will never forget being with a family who was caring for a son dying of cancer. One evening, the boy's mother said to me, "I hate this cancer." She said it with some venom, and understandably so. It was destroying her son, and she hated what was destroying the object of her love.

I think of another lady whose husband is an alcoholic. Over the years, alcohol has destroyed his life, and progressively it has destroyed every area of their marriage. She has remained loyal to him at great personal cost. One day she said to me, "I love him, but I hate what he has become." Her hatred of what destroyed her husband and of what he has become is a component of her love. Indeed, the day she stops hating what he has become would be the day she stops loving him.

Love and hate are often found together as natural partners in the Bible. "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil" (Romans 12:9). These are two sides of the same coin. If we do not hate what is evil, then there is no sincerity in our claim to love. The opposite of love is not hatred but indifference. True love hates all that destroys the one who is loved.

## THE GOD WHO HATES WHATEVER DESTROYS YOU

God loves the world, and that means that He hates all that destroys the world. He is absolutely opposed to anything that would destroy the objects of His love. He hates what sin has done to us precisely because He loves us.

This is why God cannot and will not leave the world as it is. To do so would be a denial of love. God loves the world—that is why He relentlessly opposes all evil. God hates evil; He cannot be indifferent to it.

## THE GOD WHO IS NEVER FRUSTRATED

God's relentless opposition to evil is good news, provided that He is able to overcome its destructive power. So we can be thankful that God is sovereign. This means that He is absolutely in control of all things. God is in a class of His own. There is no fact that He does not know, no place where He is not present, no task that He cannot accomplish, and no permission that He needs to seek.

The problem for the lady whose husband is an alcoholic is that she does not have the power to overcome what is destroying him. Her love is therefore frustrated. She has tried everything she can to separate the person she loves from the thing that is destroying him, but she can't do it. God is able to do all things. He is able to recover the people He loves from the people we have become. His love will not be frustrated.

God is absolutely committed to seek the good of the objects of His love. He is resolutely opposed to anything that would destroy those who are the objects of His love. He is completely in control of all things. God says, "I am who I am." He is love, He is holy, and He is sovereign.

This is not what some people would like God to be, but it is who He is, whether we like it or not. And we should be truly thankful. A god who did not love us would offer us no hope. A god who was not resolutely opposed to evil would be irrelevant, and a god who could not destroy evil would be useless in a world that suffers under the curse of its power.

## WHAT MAKES GOD ANGRY?

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. (ROMANS 1:18)*

This wrath of God is not some kind of flaring rage, and we should not think of God losing control and lashing out in random acts of frustration. God's wrath is "a holy response to the unholy, a just reaction to the unjust, a pure rejection of the impure," wrote Stuart Briscoe.<sup>1</sup> God's wrath is His strong and settled opposition to all that is evil.

It is not in God's nature to be angry. God is love: That is His nature, and there has never been and never will be a time when He is not love. But God's anger is different. The Bible never says that God is wrath. In fact, God is slow to anger (Psalm 103:8). The Bible story demonstrates His great patience and tolerance