

Chapter 1 (From the outside in)

Romans 10:14 *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”*

God is good. God is just. I have no right to add anything to the conversation. God has a wonderful plan. What business do I have in trying to make Christianity better? God knows! Jesus knows! Most certainly the Spirit knows! I am human. What do I know? Yet, I have an opinion. My goodness, I have an opinion! Throughout the centuries many people have had an opinion on Christianity. Wars have been fought and people have been fired directly because of their view on God. Who has a right to add any insight into God's kingdom?

I'm sitting here stunned. There is a Christian book that changed me. I was 33 yrs. old and had just found Jesus. Ok, let's be honest, he found me. I had just begun the process of going through my divorce. One day, dating would be an option. Yet, for now, I bought this book called “I kissed dating goodbye” by Joshua Harris. It changed me. It blew everything out of the water that I had believed about the world of people. It challenged me to trust and wait for God to act when it comes to finding a mate. Joshua astounded my ways of thinking.

God wanted to work on me. I was important to someone, namely God. That blew my mind. Mr. Harris asked me to focus on being the best “me.” Why am I stunned right now? It's because 20 years later, I just saw the news that Joshua quit his marriage, ministry, and faith altogether. I had spent so many years not knowing God. From the outside, All the Christians on the inside looked crazy. Now that I'm inside, yes many of you are crazy. God spent so long trying to get me in. Why on earth would anyone want out?

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Why would Joshua denounce his faith? His book has done so much good for Christianity. He basically is renouncing the whole thing: Christianity does not work. There was a comment by him in his resignation from the faith that caught my eye. He said that he can't tell what Christianity should be. It would have been hard for him to call himself a Christian. I, for one after all these years would agree. Yet, throw out my faith?

I am not saying he is not a Christian. No, I am saying that I too, find it hard to claim Christian status. This is not my denunciation of Christianity. I love being a work in progress Christian. I just wish I could represent Jesus far better than I do. In many ways I have no right saying I am a Christ follower. Do I look like Jesus' day in and day out: heavens no! Yet, I yearn to be. Every day I try to be. Sure, I am ashamed of my non-Christian ways it times. We all do. Denounce my faith? No!

It's like this. People, please I'm begging you to listen. For a time, we all try and base our faith on the actions of people within the church. That is a terrible idea. I struggle with this but we must be true to God. People do not make the church Christian. The Father, Jesus (the Son), and the Holy Spirit do. Church after church and ministry after ministry have fallen distinctly because we put way too much stock in people.

John 6:44 *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day."*

God draws us to himself. Jesus said so. Yet, we build human ministry and human buildings to glorify people. Oh, we say it's to glorify God, but we all know the pride we carry. I knew a Pastor that told me he has influence for Christ on the city finance board. This church was one of the biggest businesses in town. We are so keen on dissecting the Bible by the meaning of

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every single word. Why not dissect his words? Why mention business at all. Why mention being on the board or that we were one of the biggest. Pride and being human is why. Pride in a human built institution.

Imagine Jesus saying God's kingdom is the biggest between religions. Jesus is more powerful sitting on the throne overseeing the church finance committee. That's not our Jesus, is it? Yet, it's a human thing to do. Put stock in people far more than it was intended. I can see the heat rising. Christians getting mad at me for twisting the words. He can influence people on the board. Oh, really? Did he? No, the church lost money soon after that declaration. To furth the point, he is gone now because they had to cut back. It's a business far more than an influencing machine.

I have often joked about that situation. That Pastor was a skin flint with money. No ministry was worthy unless he deemed it fundable. There had to be worth in his eyes. They had set up a six-page process to present a new ministry to the pastors. Six pages! That process was not a process to present but to dissuade people from applying. Anyways, I'm betting one day, at home, he got a letter from the church. They let him go because there was not enough funding. He had signed it himself. I bet he fired himself without even noticing. It was all about the money.

We all know what dissuaded Joshua Harris from Christianity. It was the farce the Christian world has become. There is more interest in business committees than prayer. Admit it. You know it's true. That same Pastor in that church got a call from a lady that was having trouble in her home with spirits. She was not a Christian but she knew were to call. He asked me to go. Why didn't he answer the call himself? We all know why. The board meeting was probably the same night.

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I am not going to spend this whole book bashing Christians. No, I don't want to. It sickens me just thinking about Christian abuse. That goes both ways. Bad Christians abuse the good name of God. Bashing ministry without having legitimate answers is also abusing the good name of God. Let's find a way. Let's build the church right. So, sometimes we have to talk about what's wrong to make it better. There are also times when an insight or tweak could help. Let's try and do that in this book.

Yet, I sit here with a heavy heart. The Joshua Harris story has crushed me. Joshua, don't throw out marriage and the Christian baby with the bath water. Change the water, not the baby. Still, I am disappointed in the Christian world. For all the good God set up, we have made it more human than holy. With that said, I have no right to judge. I am as dirty as they come. There is very little holiness in my name. So, what right do I have to make suggestions? To speak on behalf of God?

I'm going to comment on three reasons why I have no right to talk about the things of God. Within those reasons is an unquenchable desire to talk. So, I'm going to speak. Yet, I need to remember first of all that ***I am not God***. The rule of thumb is wisdom. This wisdom states: that God is God and we are not him. Once you get that then the rest of it falls into perspective. However, what men and women think is a different story. I'd like to believe that my opinion matters even if I am not God.

There are reasons to believe that God uses people to spread the word concerning him. Just ask Paul and Moses to name a few. Yet, those greats of the Bible would shy away from saying they know God completely. Clearly, Moses did not want to be a spokesman for God. In a roundabout way Paul was forced to. I believe God drew them out to speak within certain circles.

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I am drawn to speak too. To speak to those on the inside of the church? I believe grace gives me an avenue to open my mouth. I may not get it right. I will make mistakes. Isn't that the beauty of grace. It's the mistakes forgiver. With men there is little grace. Anything we say or do that makes men look less holy is frowned upon. There are grace preachers but not grace givers. Humans certainly would not let me talk in the name of God without their consent. I do; however, feel inspired by God to speak. I have lived outside and inside church circles. There is so much to say.

Martin Luther was ordained by God to speak. We consider him one of the greats in Christian history. Was he considered great in his day? Know your history. The church tried to shut him up. He lived much of his life with a death threat hanging over his head. What drove him to take a chance? To mar his own name? Ruin his chances of human glory? I could just see him sitting there staring at the hammer. "If I do this then they will all know" he whispered as he picked it up. The weight of Christianity hung in the balance of a hammer, a pen, and some parchment. Then he made the long trek to the doors of the Wittenberg Castle church.

Imagine a quiet church. It's expected that you only to speak on rare occasions. The silence was probably deafening on the inside of that church. In the movie *Indiana Jones and the last crusade*, Indy finds a symbol on the floor of a library. He takes up a metal stand and hammers it on the floor to break through. Every hit was exactly at the same time that the curator was stamping a book. It's hilarious. I can see it now in the Wittenberg castle. As the monks dotted their "I's", Martin Luther pounded the nail through his 95 theses into the door. That sound must have echoed.

I have my hammer in the form of a computer. Social media is my door. What drives me to hammer? I am driven by 1 Chronicles 22:19:

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“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Therefore, arise and build the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy articles of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the Lord.”

I am driven by John 16:13:

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

I am driven by 1 Corinthians 2:10:

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

Finally, I am driven by Romans 10:14:

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

The modern church will say I have no right. I get it. I am not pretty enough. Not well behaved enough. I have no right to speak according to them. Sure, I have a degree in theology, but not a masters. Yet, here I am hammering and there you are reading me. Both of us hearing me hammer too. Martin Luther was Spirit driven in my mind. May the Spirit of God compel you. He was compelled as am I. To hate the church? Heavens no! It's to hammer home the words that God has been repeating to his children for thousands of years. Love people more than you love the church!

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It's Malachi 3:7 "*From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'"* How indeed modern Christianity? Luther believed it was in 95 Theses. I do agree Martin, this can't go on.

That leads me to the second reason. ***I was not born Christian.*** I come from the outside in. What do I really know? I was never raised in the family of God. I come from tainted lines. My family knew very little about the ways of church. The ways of Christianity. My Bible was found in my toy box as a little boy. The little red one from the Gideons. I doubt my mom or dad had ever opened it before me. A prayer was never uttered or offered. The words Jesus Christ was said for different reasons in my house.

Just think of where David came from. Was it a godly line? Was this boy predestined for leadership or kingship? His own father hid him in the back of the lot. Placing him within the sheep. That seems so fitting. Sure, Jewish people were sheep herders. Many were. Did it ever occur to you that countless people were not? Who were the leaders? Who made the pots, spears, and food? Not everyone tended sheep. I doubt sheep herders were high up the chain of command. Fascinating, a leader hidden among the sheep.

Joseph had warned his brothers to not tell Pharaoh they were sheep herders. That line of work was considered repulsive to them. It's odd that they told him anyways. Those brothers were a proud family. They couldn't resist telling pharaoh who they were. So, pharaoh places them off in the distance in Goshen. How humiliating that must have been considering Joseph was so high up in the kingdom. It just goes to show that people place people where they want them.

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David was placed. Joseph's brothers were placed. Jesus was placed in a strategic place: a dirty manger. It's an animal's trough. Why are shepherds the first witnesses? Everything about God comes from "just off" places and "just off" people. Moses did. David did. In 2 Samuel we find the story of the descendant of Saul named Mephibosheth. This boy was lame in his feet and was hidden from David's kingship. Is he a rightful heir? This boy was hidden because they knew that leaders make sure old leaders have nobody to assume the throne. So, Mephibosheth was hidden.

I am so passionate about that boy. He was lame. He came from royalty lines but he was hidden. Might as well be hidden among the sheep. Who would look there? The great part is David. He inquires if there is any family left from King Saul's line. To kill them? No, it was to elevate Mephibosheth to a position in the kingdom. A seat at the king's table. I will dig more into this point in further chapters, but today's Christian leadership does not offer the lame to come to the table of authority. The people placed just out of clean Christian homes don't generally get the job. I have never felt right about my place at the Christian table. Nobody on earth wants me there. I do believe God does.

Thirdly, *I am not an in-house pastor*. I am not a PK kid. Certainly, I am not good stock. I know sin better than I know holiness. Unfortunately, I like the unsaved. They are my friends. Don't get me wrong. I love my Christian friends dearly. Yet, I live with a divided heart. I yearn for heaven but I know hell all too well. In church circles that is a problem. Only the clean get the jobs. They are asked all the right questions to make sure the dirt does not soil the church carpet. I know, I've seen it plenty of times.

Trust me, I get Paul's words in 1&2 Timothy. Yet, there is this nagging feeling deep within me. Show me (in a group of ten) how many pastors would pass that test. I knew a lady

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who was given a list of requirements for a church pastoral position. She believed she hit about 6 out of ten. That's probably pretty good. Yet, the rest of this story disturbs me. I'm sure Paul would be disturbed too.

This gal had a mentor guiding her through the hiring process. She came to him one day all upset. She knew that there were 4 criteria she did not hold. The mentor reassured her that all was fine. He stated that everyone struggles with a few of the ten. It went further. He also mentioned that we all don't believe everything the same way. That does not make you a bad pastor. He told her to lie until they change the rules. She did.

I fear that is all too common. Lie to keep the job. As a pastor, that has got to be a slippery slope. Imagine praying for the Holy Spirit to guide the congregation while you lied to get the job. Holy! I know I am not an in-house pastor directly because I'm not holy enough. Yet, God said David was not holy enough to build him a house. Was Solomon? Pastors play the "look at my holiness" game in public. They create holy criteria for the hiring process. Then they omit certain unholy things they do? There is no way this practice is cool with God.

Charles Stanley gave a sermon once about hiring pastors. He said the thing that worried him the most was not the holiness questions. It was what they didn't ask. J Vernon McGee said about the same thing. He was bothered more that the men hiring him were not required to be as holy as him. Doesn't it take one to know one? This conflict is simple. Nobody is that holy, and if they say they are, they are liars. Just ask John in 1 John 1:10.

Hillsong has a song called "from the inside out." I totally agree. We need God to clean us from the inside out. We are the white washed tombs that Jesus spoke of. The dirty cups. I get it. Yet, I am dirty in the eyes of many church leaders. I am not clean stock. The only reason

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Franklin Graham is revered is because of his last name. He is not clean stock, just famous stock that happens to be a PK kid to boot.

Don't misunderstand me. Clean leaders are a good idea. Yet, finding men who claim they are clean is a bad idea. Pick good men and women for ministry. Not the ones who passed the cleanliness test. Choose those who passed the integrity test. One description does describe Jesus disciples: not clean. For the most part Jesus did pick good men. Besides Paul, the first Christian leaders came from outside religious circles. Think about that!

I come from the outside. I wanted in. I had no idea the mountain I would have to climb. Eventually I was met with a sheer rock face cliff. There is practically no way I could ascend to the holy ranks of the ministerial. This leads me back to "why bother." It's all about seeds. I may be dirty, unholy, and dead wrong. Most likely I am. God only ordains those who made an effort to be clean right? I make an effort. Lord knows I'm trying. Yet, here I am back where I started on the outside looking in. I'm positive I'm in the right place for God to use me. See Paul, Moses, and Martin Luther for reference. Clearly, I am not one of the chosen greats. I am however chosen from the outside as they were.

Do I think I have answers to church? It's yes and no. I really believe that I have good suggestions. There was an investigation at an Ontario retirement home. A nurse had killed eight people. She was an angel of mercy in her eyes. Out of that investigation came 91 suggestions. Theses that could make the retirement community better. I am not Martin Luther. I don't claim any prophetic status. It's not like that. I do though, have an opinion as one coming from the outside in.

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How often do divorced people say “I did not know it was that bad until I left.” What they are really saying is that it’s clearer on the outside looking in. People also report that getting involved gives them clarity. Experiencing something gives you knowledge. How many people in social media think they know the Christian church? There is plenty of chatter from the outside. Yet, they have never set a foot inside. There is opinion, words, guesses, and assumptions. I have sat inside the congregation to the board room. I have witnessed how church works from all angles. I know what church looks like on the inside. I equally know what it looks like from the outside too.

I saw a protester holding a sign on twitter about a woman’s march. It said “what is the truth?” Are we really all the way back there? Is society the Pontus Pilate of the 21st century? Fake news is all we seem to have now. Just rate things. Describe things. Yes, the things that we have never tasted, done, or experienced. Yet, we claim to know. How many of us believe with all our heart that something we know very little about is true or false? Come on, we all do it!

In school I was so sure. My professor said that the homeless were misunderstood. I was so sure that they were lazy bums. Yet, how did I know? A discussion in that class humbled me. The professor showed me that many of the homeless are the mentality challenged. I suppose they were the rejected and dirty. That hit me with a ton of bricks. Why was I so sure I knew? I had them pegged straight up. In a way I was willing to put them right where they were. Yet, I didn’t know, did I? So, I’m writing this book hopefully from a certain angle. I have viewed Christianity from the outside, inside, and from the lens of the unsaved.

My books are like a journal to me. I begin with an idea. Along the way I learn. Hopefully you will learn too. From me? It just might not be like that. It comes back the seeds. What if the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg door were more than just Theses. What if they were seeds,

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suggestions, or views? The truth? I think Martin Luther saw in his mind what many of his fellow Christians saw in the church. He could see those Theses so clearly. His view was from the inside, outside, and through the lens of those around him.

Before we vote, there is a moment when we have to choose. That choice comes from what we believe. Where does that belief come from? Years ago, I voted Liberal once. Why? I'm astounded that I did. Yet, at the time I was so sure. The Calgary Flames General Manager Brad Treliving has bought out 6 contracts in his tenure. When they were signed, he was so sure. In your church are ministry programs. Why are you doing them? What has failed over the years? Where you so sure when you created them? At this time in my life, I am sure it's time to speak.

I am not convinced that I'm right. Yet, I am convinced I see Christianity. Clearly? Time will answer that question. This book is going to look at the modern Christian way. Is it going Jesus' way or out of the way? Someone told me that my kids will be a good judge of who I should marry. They are on the outside but also in. I'm not going to judge or condemn this current church generation. They got here from another place in time. Their parents and former church leaders laid a path. Most of it was made with good intentions. This is not about judging, rather it's about observing a few things.

Just because I have sat in a church, studied theology, and prayed to God does not give me the right to know. Like I said only God really knows. There are men and women that claim God told them. I won't claim that either. Yet, I have seen things. I know a little. If you want your church and Christian life to grow then hear me out. Ponder what I will say. Even if you reject my ramblings as a madman, it's not time wasted.

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What if it looks like time wasted? It's not really. There is something to be learned in everything. The trouble begins when we stop learning. When we stop looking and investigating. I know several people that are on a spiritual journey. One of their main themes is reading it all. As a Christian, I am not so sure that reading the Koran is valuable. A book on seven reasons to believe God never existed might be worthless. What if they changed your mind? I am not interested in changing your mind or refuting the church. I believe were off course and need tinkering to get it back on track.

Ok, so, is it about safety? Just grow up in a Christian home. Hire only Christian kids? Go to Christian schools and do only Christian things. It's safe, smart, and worthy. Yet, Jesus, David, Moses, and Peter came from dirty lives. What were they really saying about Jesus being a carpenter's son? He is not worthy of knowing. Yet, our Jesus knows real life better than most of us. Why? Was it because he was God? Oh no, I think it goes way deeper. Why come down to earth if you're all powerful? Jesus experienced our lives in a half horse town with the worst mankind had to offer. That's God's way. Jesus knows the kingdom from both sides of the cross.

Nothing in the Christian life should be safe. If we were honest, we build church doors to keep the inside safe. Jesus went into a synagogue. He went out to the people. Listen carefully to his mention of dirty tombs and dirty cups. Who were these things resembling? It was the church leaders, not the dirty people outside. Even his own dirty disciples did not want him talking to prostitutes and Samaritans. I believe for the most part Jesus was alone in his view that God loves the whole world.

Just listen to me. Let it roll around inside your heart and mind. Maybe not all these ideas will matter much. Yet, if one sticks then I did my best. It does not matter if I'm right, worthy, or holy. It really doesn't. I've tasted your church message. I've listened to your holy words. Sat in

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your whitewashed buildings. If I was invited in then what did I experience? If I was drawn by God to believe then what do I think about that? Pastors told me to read the Bible but follow their lead. What happened? I tried to follow the Bible more than the pastors is what happened. That's where the conflict began.

I used to ridicule Christians as I drove past their institutions as a non-believer so many years ago. What was I thinking? If you want to draw in new believers you need to see yourself through my experiences with you. From the outside in. Let's have frank discussions about what was working in the past. What has the modern church changed? Maybe, church let evolution go too far. Do modern pastors believe that we have to let some parts of traditional Christianity slide? I know we have. Maybe an outsider can shed some light on that.

Come with me. I have been on both sides. I read an interesting book (in university) on the church. I thought it was trash. It bothered me so much that I read it again. There is always something to be gleaned from everything. Let's glean through my experiences and see if there is anything to be gained. To help modern Christianity find its place in the world. Right now, the world appears to have forgotten the church. Why? How many churches have forgotten those on the outside?