

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## What is TWELVE INCHES... and what is Crucial you know before reading it

Twelve Inches is the actual distance between one's heart and one's brain. You will find publications saying that the distance is 18" instead. It is a debatable number, but when God gave me the concept of this book, He named it Twelve Inches. I was told that the publisher would most probably change the name of the book (that is what usually happens,) but I wasn't surprised when I found out that the name would remain. Later on, as I studied the significance of the number Twelve in the Bible, I was even more excited about the name of the book. The number Twelve can be found in 187 places in God's Word. Revelation alone has 22 occurrences of the number. The meaning of Twelve, which is considered a perfect number, is that it symbolizes God's power and Authority, as well as serving as a perfect governmental foundation. I would suggest you take a moment to read more about the number Twelve in the Bible in the following link:  
<http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/12.html>

As you read in the introduction of the book, I had my personal "Aha" moment when I read John 10:10, while realizing that I did not have the abundant life that Christ promised His followers. As I started asking God to reveal what was preventing me from living in great faith, God started revealing those issues that I address in this book. However, I want to ensure that all readers realize that this is NOT a self-help book, and therefore my first concern is to ensure that all readers understand that the only way we can effectively build and maintain a strong Twelve-Inch Bridge is with the help of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to take it for granted that all readers know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, and therefore, if you are not sure whether you have given your heart to Christ, or if you don't know what it means to be born again... or if you have never been told about Jesus, before you do anything else, I urge you to read the following article that I wrote about Jesus. I pray it will speak to your heart... and, if you don't know Him as your Lord and Savior, you will make that decision today.

# By His Stripes I am Healed!

## Read Isaiah 53

**Key Verses:** “But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (vs. 5-6 - KJV)

Tears stream down my face as I watch the Son of God, my dear Savior and Lord hanging on that cross after breathing His last. The blood-thirsty crowd that had been screaming in excitement has fallen silent after the earthquake that assailed the earth. The only sound I hear is the desperate cry of Mary, Jesus’ mother, played by a friend in the last performance of the Atlanta Passion Play. Her desperate cry pierces my soul as I am transported to the day I understood what Christ had done for me. I have watched this scene several times, but the effect has not always been the same. The realization of its meaning has intensified through the years as I learn new facets of God’s grace. I’m amazed. I’m in awe. My soul is silent, my heart is crushed. The popular song becomes true before my eyes as I grasp to comprehend: “Amazing love, how could it be? That you my King would die for me?”

Easter is my soul’s favorite holiday.

Don’t get me wrong: I do love Christmas! The Savior is born. The Light of the world is come: Emanuel - God with us. Not to mention, since I have little children, the magic that surrounds our lives during the Christmas season. It is a joyful time, filled with gifts, good will and God’s presence for those who truly have the Reason for the season.

Then there is Easter. I don’t know about you, but my faith is renewed on Easter Sunday. The climax of all I believe is remembered. Death has been conquered, the devil’s work has no longer power over me, Christ is risen! I do realize, however, that for so many people in this world, Easter is just one day in the year (maybe out of two), where they actually go to church. Pastors around the world start reminding their congregation one month in advance: “be positioned early,

park across the street, give up your seat. The church will be full”. I find it pretty sad: the very people who do not fully grasp the meaning of Easter are the first ones to rush to the pews on Easter morning. Worse yet, the majority of the people that celebrate Easter morning, still reject the Lamb that was slain as the sacrifice for their sins on Good Friday.

Therefore, my message today has two purposes. First - to provide enough evidence for those who still do not comprehend what the cross was all about. I pray you forward this devotional as an Easter gift to those in your life who need Jesus.

Second - if you are a born again Christian, to reignite the fire in your heart that you may enjoy the upcoming Easter Sunday in a new way. My purpose is to help remember and reinforce within you the Truth of the prophesized redeeming work of the cross.

Why did Jesus have to die?

Most everyone in the Eastern world has heard that Jesus is the prophesized Messiah. According to the Wikipedia, 76% of Americans identified themselves as Christians in 2008. However, when asked if they were born-again Christians, only about 41 % of the same population commits to the group. That means that about 35% of even religious, church-going “Christians” have never experienced salvation and true redemption. Unfortunately, much to the fault of their home church or denomination, these people may even go to church on a weekly basis, but many are not taught that Salvation is obtained only through the work of the cross, and that no good deeds can ever substitute Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary. What many people don’t understand is that according to God’s Word, religion and church attendance will not get anyone to Heaven - that is what I plan to teach in this devotional.

## First Things First

All productive arguments must start on a common ground. I suggest that for the sake of this matter, our common ground will be that the Bible is the Holy Book, written by chosen men and inspired by God Himself. We shall also agree that the Bible is infallible and that it is not contradictory. It is the true Word of God.

## Sin and Death

With that being said, the Bible says in Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

There is not one single righteous person in the world (Romans 3:10 and Psalm 14:1-3). Sin was rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden and, as it separated the first man and woman from fellowship with the Lord, so it does today to you and me. A perfect God cannot have a relationship with rebellious, fallen men, thus the separation. No one can deny that we are all born with a sinful nature. Just watch a three year old lie to you. These are not necessarily taught behaviors. We are all born with the curse of sin and death that came forth with the Fall. However, we are also born with an intense longing to be back in fellowship with our Maker. Someone said that there is a "hole" in man's heart that is the exact size of God, and that we will try to fill that up with many things; possessions, people, good works, you name it, but until we surrender to God through His Son, all attempts to fill the hole are in vain. That statement was very true in my life. My "emptiness" only ended when I surrendered my life to Jesus.

## God's love

Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!"

The fall of men did not change God's love. He still longed for the crown of His creation to be near Him, worship Him and walk beside Him. But because sin had come into the world, that relationship was severed. Thus God, from before the foundation of the world, crafted His perfect plan in an effort to reconcile His children back to Him.

God's chosen people, Israel, was repeatedly told by prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, David, Zechariah and lastly by Malachi of the coming of the Messiah. His birth was prophesized in details, likewise with His trial, death and resurrection. On the chapter 53 of Isaiah, the prophet foretold the suffering and substitutionary sacrifice of Messiah 750 years before His birth! The amount of prophesy that was fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Christ is overwhelming! The likelihood of one single man fulfilling all prophesies fulfilled in Jesus is simply impossible.

### **Jesus - the unblemished Lamb of God**

“We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all”  
Isaiah 53:6

During the times of the Old Testament in order for God’s people to maintain fellowship with Him, they had to sacrifice a perfect male Lamb at Passover as a sacrifice to pay for their sins. On the day God’s people celebrated God’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies (where God’s presence dwelt) to present a sacrifice for the people’s sins. The animal presented as the sacrifice had to be an undefiled, perfect Lamb, without blemish. The ceremony was elaborate and the details were to be carefully followed. The blood could not be wasted and had to be sprinkled about the altar. The blood of the perfect, undefiled animal was accepted in lieu of sinners’ blood.

The problem of the sacrificial system was that it was limited. The sacrifice had to be repeated, as sin broke the fellowship between God and man time and again. A perfect sacrifice was needed - one that would, once and for all, satisfy the wrath of God and unify creation back with the Creator. Jesus was the prophesized perfect Lamb. He lived a sinless life, and willingly went to the cross to reconcile man with the Father.

“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.” V.5

## Pride

What keeps men and women from accepting Christ’s redemptive sacrifice? Unfortunately, for the most part, pride is the culprit. The same pride that caused God’s own people to demand His death. The Pharisees had the first opportunity to welcome the “Lord of Heaven”. They had the knowledge of Scripture first hand! They knew all ancient revelation, but failed to accept it as He came. He challenged their self-righteousness and called for holiness instead of mere outward expressions of faith, and so they rejected Him.

Does that sound familiar? Just like in Jesus’ time, today, men and women applaud the outward expressions of religion and “goodness” and reject the holy and truly spiritual expression of God’s love: His death on the cross for our sins.

It is indeed sad to see how man's fabric has not changed since Jesus hung on the cross. People can argue for hours against the amazing revelation and perfect harmony in Bible prophesy, only because they will not give in to the truth of their condition as sinners. Many will go from one religion to another, change churches, in an attempt to justify their sinful behavior and discard the truth of who they really are before a Holy God.

## He could have called one thousand angels

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" Mat 26:52-54

Jesus was not wounded because of His position that questioned the Pharisees' true motives, neither did He succumb to the Romans because His disciples deserted Him. It is not true to say that the pride of the Jew, the scorn of the Greek and the power of the Roman crucified Him. He gave Himself - willingly. He knew why He had come. He came TO DIE. That was the ultimate reason He lived. But not only did He die, He resurrected from the dead, just as He said that He would (Matthew 16:21), thus defeating death forever. "Oh, death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting?" 1 Co 15:55. Not only did He resurrect, He promised to resurrect those of us who put their trust in Him: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live". John 11:25

## Can you do it on your own?

How good can you be? For how long?

You can't ever measure up to the goodness of God. Your sins made you an enemy of God and there is nothing you can do, no matter how hard you try, to save yourself. But the Great Judge has accepted the bail that Jesus paid for you. If you take it, He will set you free. Forever. He will write your name in the Lamb's Book of Life and he will never let you go: "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." John 10:28. Salvation is a free and eternal gift. If it were not so, God made a terrible mistake giving His Son up to die for you. If you could earn your own Salvation, Jesus' sacrifice was then a major mistake. We

know that this is not possible, since we have agreed that the Bible is the true and infallible Word of God.

Therefore, my friend, Salvation is yours to take, but God will not force you. He is knocking at your heart's door. I bet this is not the first time. He will not enter it as a thief, without being invited. You must accept Him and open the door. Jesus has the gift of eternal life in His nailed scarred hands and He is handing it to you today. But you must extend your hand and take it - a gift is not a gift unless you receive it.

## Is it that simple? Really?

Really!

Romans 10:13 says "whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!"

I have given you enough information to make it clear why Jesus' death and resurrection were the orchestrated work of redemption of a Father who longs to be reunited with you. He came for the whole world, but the world rejected Him. The question is, will you reject Him? Again? Or will you make this Easter a New Beginning, just as it was for the disciples who saw the resurrected Lord on that first Easter morning. I pray you accept Christ as your Savior today and that on Easter Sunday, when you go to church this year, you will joyfully and victoriously join the throng that sings: Halleluiah, Jesus is alive! Death has lost its victory, and the grave has been denied! Jesus lives forever, Halleluiah, Jesus is alive!"

## How do I do it?

Romans 10:9,10 "...If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

It is as simple as that. You have to pray a prayer that acknowledges that Jesus is indeed Lord, that you believe that God raised Him from the dead, ask Him to forgive you of your sins, accept His sacrifice for you, asking Him to save you. My prayer is that today is the day when you will surrender. Come to Christ. He is knocking!

Revelation 3:20a "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..."

If you believe what is written on this article... if the Holy Spirit is speaking to you right now, you can pray and receive Him as your Savior. You can say a Prayer similar to this... or even repeat these words, believing in your heart:

“Lord, I do believe that Jesus died on that cross to pay my sin debt in full. I do believe that He rose from the dead and is alive today. I ask You, Lord to save me and forgive my sins, not based on anything I’ve done, but because of what Christ did for me on the cross. I trust You will guide me and teach me Your ways. I surrender my all to You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen!”

*PS: If you prayed this prayer, will you email me and let me know? I will send you some information that will help you and guide you as you start your new life with Christ. Email: [pholbrook@soaringwithHim.com](mailto:pholbrook@soaringwithHim.com).*