

# **KNOW GOD'S LOVE**



Indianapolis, Indiana



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# INTRODUCTION

In 2001, an elderly couple living in Cheltenham, England, decided to sell an old painting that had been hanging on a wall in their house for decades. They figured it was worth a few hundred dollars, so they wrapped it in a blanket and took it to Christie's auction house. The painting turned out to be a masterpiece by seventeenth-century French artist Nicolas Poussin. Sale price at the auction was six hundred thousand dollars.\*

How could someone have something so great for so long and not know of its true value? Maybe you've heard a lot about God's love but haven't truly experienced it. In this book, you will discover the power of God's redemption, the splendor of his creation, the covenant that binds us together, and the commitment of the Father to you that only comes in the form of unconditional love.

Just as the lives of this elderly couple were changed forever, God's love and the value it brings to your life will change you forever. Don't wait decades to discover his great love for you. After all, you are not promised even tomorrow. Know God's love beyond the stories you have heard. Experience him in your life today.

**NOTE**

\* Telegraph, "Painting Wrapped in Rug Was a £.25m Poussin," <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1312310/Painting-wrapped-in-rug-was-a-.25m-Poussin.html> (accessed March 26, 2010).



# RESCUE

Galatians 4:4–5

## GETTING STARTED

When I was seventeen years old, I almost drowned. It was easily the scariest few minutes of my life.

It all started when I was with a group of friends hanging out at a wharf by a river. We were playing around and someone challenged me to a contest. Two things you should know about me—the first is that I rarely turn down a contest. Call it arrogance or pride, but I will not back down from a competition no matter what. Unfortunately, the second thing is that I rarely win contests, and true to my patterns, I

lost this one. The penalty for this loss was that I had to be thrown off the wharf into the river.

Although I was completely dressed when they threw me in, they let me take my shoes off, so you can understand how upset I was when I came out of the water and saw them floating in the river twenty-five yards away. Someone had thrown them in, and even though I had all my clothes on and couldn't really swim, I dove back into the water to retrieve my shoes.

This experience is the closest I've ever come to dying. By the time I reached my shoes, the current had taken me out further than I'd ever been before. I panicked! I was fighting to swim against the current and ran out of energy. Within seconds, I was calling for help but no one was responding. It was a pretty terrifying experience. Eventually my muscles gave out and I sunk. In total desperation, I started praying for God to help me. In the end, it was a person I barely knew who rescued me by pulling me out of the water as I was sinking. Although it was a terrible experience, I never forgot what it meant to be rescued.

## DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

Look up the following Psalms and write out the rescue that God extends to us all. The first one is done for you.

Scripture	The Rescue
Psalms 25:20	<u>He rescues us from shame.</u>
Psalms 91:14	_____
Psalms 31:2	_____
Psalms 69:18	_____
Psalms 22:8	_____

In the Bible, rescue is everywhere. The Bible uses another word we do not use much today called *redemption*. But really, redemption is a simple thing; it is when someone or something of worth is reclaimed. Redemption is about rescue—a rescue that not only saves you physically but restores value and worth to you.



Or think about it this way: In your city, you probably have a redemption center. This is a plant that recycles materials such as cans, bottles, and paper. Instead of throwing these items away, we can reclaim their usefulness or worth by redeeming.

When someone was redeemed in the Bible, it usually meant that a person was being rescued from slavery. In the Bible, there were slaves in almost every country. The only way for slaves to gain their freedom was if they were redeemed. Usually, the people being redeemed were not able to do it themselves, but they were rescued at someone else's expense.

In Galatians 4, we have a great picture of how God set out to rescue the world from brokenness through Jesus. In order to get the whole picture, we have to understand what was going on in the culture of the first century. When Paul starts talking about redemption, the early Christians would have thought of the greatest rescue in Jewish history called the exodus.

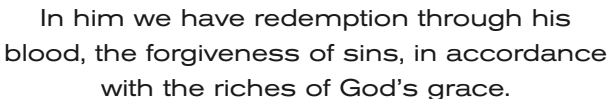
The exodus was the story of Israel's freedom from Egyptian slavery. For over four hundred years, the whole nation of Israel had been enslaved by Pharaoh; they were forced to do back-breaking work their whole lives. At the right time, God sent a person named Moses to free Israel by standing up to Pharaoh on behalf of God. Moses asked Pharaoh to let God's people go, Pharaoh refused, and so God sent a series of ten plagues on

the land of Egypt, each more terrible than the last. A few examples are that the Nile River turned to blood, locusts swarmed in and ate all the crops, and famine killed their livestock. Each plague hurt this country that depended on its land and crops for day-to-day survival. Even after all this, Pharaoh still would not release Israel from slavery. The thing that finally got Pharaoh's attention was the last plague. God sent an angel to kill the first-born son of every household in Egypt. The only exception was made for those who sacrificed a lamb, and put its blood on the doorposts of their house. The blood was to be a wall, a protection to keep any harm from coming to those inside the house it covered. Although it was a horrible event, it is this final plague that leads to the release of the Israelites from captivity.

In the exodus, blood led to freedom.

The reason this story would have had so much meaning in the early church is because it paralleled what Jesus did, not for any one people or country but for the whole world. Galatians 4 talks about how we were all slaves, not to a country or person but to sin. Nothing we could do or say would free us from being a broken people, and so, like in the exodus story, God sent someone to rescue us from our slavery. The only difference was that the someone was his own son, Jesus.

## EMBRACING THE TRUTH



In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

—Ephesians 1:7

Knowing what redemption means in the Bible is to know that God rescued you through his son Jesus. But rescue came at a huge price. It came by the cross. Jesus' blood leads to freedom. You didn't do anything to deserve it, and you can't pay it back. It was a decision Jesus chose to make, and it was one that was motivated by love.

To understand and live as someone who's been redeemed is to live as someone rescued by the cross.

The point of redemption is freedom. I have to stop living like a slave, or the old person, and learn how to live as the new person.

List out some old habits that still have a way of holding you captive.

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These things have a way of robbing you of your true value, self-worth, and freedom. For what seems to be pleasurable in the moment is only trapping and enslaving you to a life of bondage. Jesus proclaims in John 10:10 that the “thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full.”

God’s love for us comes with a stamp of redemption. That redemption allows us to live life to the fullest. Look at that list again and be redeemed through God’s love.

## **CONNECTING THE TRUTH**

Redemption is to make something acceptable in spite of its negative qualities or aspects. We are born with a sinful nature. God redeems us unto him. He sent his son to pay for the sins of humanity with his death on the cross. When we receive this redemption, it wipes the slate clean and gives us a new and fresh start. God did this out of his great love for us.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Rom. 5:8–9).

The redeeming power of God’s love restores us to the person we were really created to be. This is the life God always intended for us to have, once we were free from the bondage of sin. The world has it backwards: We think sin is exciting and God is dull. But every instinct that we have is put there by God himself, so only God himself can fully satisfy it. Redemption restores our relationship with God, which is far more exciting and interesting and addictive than any pleasure that we have been sinning to get. Look up the following Scripture verses and write out the redemptive qualities you find there.

<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Redemptive Qualities</b>
2 Corinthians 5:17	_____
1 John 1:9	_____
Psalms 103:12	_____
1 Peter 5:10	_____
Psalms 49:15	_____
Titus 2:13-14	_____

### **BRINGING IT HOME**

Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name;  
you are mine.

—Isaiah 43:1

Are you living like a slave or like someone who's been rescued? What evidence do you see in your life?

Do you see worth in yourself to be rescued?

If Jesus went to the lengths he did to rescue you, how does that affect the following interactions with others:

- How you treat others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How you give?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How you view those you don't like?

- How you view the poor?
- How you view other races?
- How you view the opposite sex?
- How you view the unpopular?
- How you view those who have hurt you?