

REALITY

By: ROBERT LEPINAY

Notes to Robert Lepinay:

Typically a book must have quantity of pages that are divisible by 4. This booklet is 36 pages plus a cover and back cover and inside cover and back cover, yielding 40 pages.

In order to insert the new text referenced in your last emails "Next Steps" and include "About the Author" at the end of the book, it is necessary to eliminate the first page of this booklet originally with title "Reality." The result is the current format where page "1" will print on the right hand page, which is the custom, as well as there will be no printing on the inside of the cover and back cover. Please advise if this result is okay with you.

Thank you.

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f O R E W O R D

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. I believe its simple message will have a lasting effect upon your life.

My name is Bobby Lepinay. Born in 1963, I am caught between two generations, the Baby Boomers and Baby Busters, or Generation X as they are otherwise called. I am a Christian—a *real* one. I love God deeply and enjoy a close relationship with Him. But to set your mind at ease, I am not like a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon whose intent is to pester you to death until you become a convert. Nor am I one of the guys who stand at local intersections waving a big black Bible, screaming at cars.

My purpose in writing this is not to shove anything down your throat. I simply want to communicate how God came into my life, *really and literally came in*, and changed me from the inside out.

God is real and He wants to come into your life. Not to turn you into some dull religious robot, but to give you such life and purpose that you will never understand how you could have existed without Him.

That is the message of this little book. God wants in. He came into my life. He can come into yours as well.

And now you must decide. You can either close this book and go back to life as usual, or you can take a few minutes to read something that just may make a huge difference in your life.

That is what you want, isn't it? Something that really *can* make a difference? You realize there has to be more to life than just being born, living a nice life, then dying. You want your life to mean something.

We all do.

I believe this booklet will prove helpful.

Sincerely,
Bobby Lepinay

A W A K E N E D

“Wait up!”

Impatient as always, my friend Jimmy had bolted out into the heavy traffic, leaving me behind. I waited for another break in the seemingly endless flow of cars.

Having spent the evening drinking and dancing at a popular local dance club, we had just run into some friends from school. We decided to meet in the parking lot across the freeway to smoke some pot that one of the guys had gotten that day. Though none of us were close friends, we knew each other well enough to party together.

Finally the traffic broke for a moment, and I made my break. Dashing at full speed and slightly woozy from the alcohol, I barely made it across before the traffic resumed. I was still running, trying to catch up to my friend Jimmy, when suddenly the ear-piercing screech of tires trying to grip pavement ripped through the cold night air.

The sound that followed—one ton of steel impacting a human body—will be etched in my memory forever.

Seized with panic, we began to run away, only to turn back as the realization of what had happened set in. Utter horror filled my heart as we arrived at the scene. On the road, his mangled face glistening in the moonlight, lay one of the guys from our group, a friend from high school named Tony Stansbury.

I had gotten to know Tony during my freshman year. He was a junior at the time and not exceptionally bright, so we had ended up in the same English Lit class where he sat in front of me at the back of the room. We both played football; he was on the varsity and I was on the freshman team. We made the most of an incredibly boring class by talking about our first love, football, while acting like we were listening. Tony was a really nice guy and one of the few varsity players who even associated with a freshman like myself.

Now here he was, only two years later, his mutilated body lying motionless in a pool of blood less than twenty feet from me.

I felt myself getting sick. Overwhelmed with nausea and still winded from running, I hunched over, gazing at the horrific display that lay before

me. As I replayed the scene in my mind, suddenly it occurred to me: Two seconds difference, a slight misstep, and that would be me—partying my brains out one minute, then launched out into eternity the next. *Then what?*

It was as if a hand had reached up out of the pavement and slapped me across the face with the reality of death.

What had happened to Tony's soul? More importantly. . . what would happen to *mine*?

* * *

Time passed, and as always, the impact from my experience faded, and with it, the soberness I felt from seeing death face to face. My senior year was filled with even harder partying than ever, as I gradually let go of whatever conscience had held me back. When not at school, playing sports, or out with my friends or my girlfriend, I would lock myself in my room and listen to Lynyrd Skynyrd, Led Zeppelin, and my other favorite bands of that time.

My room was my refuge, the only place in my home where I could have peace and be left alone. Though I loved my family and knew they loved me, it seemed we couldn't talk anymore without it ending up in arguing and fighting. I felt continually nagged. They felt disrespected. The constant tension either drove me to my room or out of the house.

Yet somehow I managed to make decent

grades and scored pretty well on my ACT test. Summer was coming, the last vestige of freedom.

* * *

In the following fall, I enrolled at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, my hometown college. Like most people I knew, my plans were to get my degree, then land a good job in the prosperous oil industry of the area. I figured I would get financially secure, then, after sowing all my “wild oats,” get married, buy a nice home, have kids, and one day travel the world.

But that was down the road. I was ready to hit college full steam, and though I intended to take studying more seriously, I was just as intent

on doing some serious partying. I got into Kappa Alpha, a fraternity that was known for the best keg parties on campus. Lots of girls were always somewhere around, and you could always count on some guys having good pot to smoke.

“Unlimited beer, girls, and good pot - what more could any guy want?” I thought. To top it off, I had just begun to date one of the more popular girls on campus. Already possessing a good-sized ego, my head was now the size of a watermelon!

Now if you were to ask me if I was happy, I would have no doubt told you I was.

But something within was wrong.

It was this vague sense of emptiness that I just couldn't shake. I would party with my friends

like I always had, but it just didn't seem as fun anymore. The frat parties began to seem hollow and empty as well. Even the dates I had with my new girlfriend didn't give me the sense of fulfillment they once had.

“What on earth is wrong with me?” I asked myself. It was as if the life and vitality had been sucked out of everything.

But rather than answers, the only thing that filled me was an ever-deepening awareness of this hollowness and emptiness within me.

* * *

Centuries ago, a wise philosopher stated:

“Within the heart of every man exists a ‘God-shaped’ vacuum that none but God can fill.”

I had begun to sense this inner emptiness, and the more I tried to fill it, the stronger it became.

“I just need a break,” I reasoned, “a vacation of some kind to clear the cobwebs. Then I’ll be back to my normal self.”

Though fun and relaxation temporarily relieved things, the emptiness always came back.

“Good grief,” I remembered thinking, “is this all there is to life? Make some money, have some fun and then you die.?”

Everything had begun to seem vain, a “mere chasing after the wind,” as the writer of Ecclesiastes put it. You enjoy life’s events for a moment, then they’re gone, never to return. What was the meaning of it all?

Now, at this point, some might say that I was suffering from depression. Hogwash! All too often we slap the label of “depression” on people who are just beginning to awaken to this “inner hole” that exists within each of us. We thirst for meaning, for something bigger and more lasting than the fleeting experiences of this short life. To call it “depression” is like putting a band-aid on a gaping, gushing wound. It prevents us from ever getting truly healed.

My real problem was that I was looking for life and fulfillment from that which can never truly satisfy the human heart. Vacations—

girlfriends—fun times—good jobs—all leave us wanting. Even the good and noble things of life, such as marriage and having children, fail to fully satisfy that deep yearning within each of us for something more. Their fulfillment is partial at best. We are left lacking, restless within, thirsting for more.

Our hearts were created for something much more enduring, much more lasting. More “eternal,” if you will. God and God alone can satisfy the vacuum that exists within the human heart. The more we strive to fill it with things other than God, the more restless we become.

Thus driving home from class one day, I found myself abruptly turning into the parking lot of a church located near the edge of campus. I went in and found the church empty except for one old lady who was praying.

Having grown up in a somewhat religious family, I had a respect for God and religion, but I had never really sensed the warmth and closeness of God as a personal Being who could be known and felt. Rather, he was this big, impersonal God way up in heaven somewhere, largely detached from my everyday life.

I would try to pay my respects to God whenever I could by saying a prayer before going to sleep or by going to church every so often, but in the day-to-day workings of my life, God didn't really have a whole lot to do with *how* I ran my life. I was in control, and at convenient interludes I would stop and check in to make sure I was O.K. with the Big Man Upstairs.

As I walked around the church, I began to look at all the stained-glass windows showing the "Stations of the Cross." I pondered each one,

leading to the crucifixion and ascension of Christ, wondering what it all really meant.

Why is this so important? I wondered. And what on earth does it have to do with my life in the here and now?

As I stood, still pondering, a sense of reverence washed over me. I felt in that moment that God was there and could somehow hear me. Under my breath, I muttered the words: “God, I really want to know You.”

That was it. Seven little words that gave God the permission He needed to begin working in my life.

I promptly left and didn't think about it again. Christmas holidays were here and my main goal was to party on a daily basis.

SET UP

The next day I went to purchase my holiday stash of marijuana from my supplier, an older cousin, not realizing what I was about to step into.

God had set me up!

As we sampled what I was about to buy, she began to tell me about things a friend had been telling her. Things about God, and about the soon-to-come return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

At first I didn't want to talk about it. But as I continued to listen, I realized that instead of getting more high, I was getting more sober.

Suddenly the air in the room became dark and heavy. I felt something sinister. Fear seized my heart and I became acutely aware of my separation from this Jesus I was being told about. A sense of aloneness and powerlessness settled upon me. I knew I was open prey to the evil presence I was so vividly sensing and had no understanding of. Something clearly did not want me hearing this.

After a few moments, I abruptly ended our conversation and left as quickly as I could. As I left, my cousin handed me the book her friend had given her to read. I got in my car as fast as I could, reeling from the strange experience I had just had.

“This stuff makes me uncomfortable,” I said to myself. “I don’t want to think about it anymore.”

But something was drawing me onward in my search.

That night I found myself picking up the book my cousin had given me. Before long, I was completely engrossed in things I had never really read or heard about before.

* * *

I was amazed by all the Bible had to say on the subject of Christ returning to earth! As I read, my cold, isolated heart began to thaw.

I put the book down and lay on my bed, thinking of about all I had read. If what I was reading was true, there was no way I could go on living as I had been. As I continued to think about it, I pictured Christ returning in awesome splendor, as the Bible said He would.

Suddenly, something within me changed. It was nothing earth-shaking. Just a slight change of heart.

I had begun to *want* this Jesus. I wanted to be on His side, to be one He would return for. I whispered these simple words, “Jesus, I want you.”

Love and affection, mixed with respect and awe, rose within my heart for Him. In a second of time, I crossed a threshold and passed to the other side. I suddenly knew that I would now be one He would be returning for. I had opened my heart to Christ, and He had come in.

No longer strangers by the barrier that had previously existed within my heart and mind, I felt His love—eternal love—flooding into my once isolated heart. Joy as I had never known before welled up within me, so much so that I began to giggle! The heaviness of sin from living life my

way lifted. I had never realized the weight and heaviness that living a life separated from God brings until it was now removed. My heart felt light as a feather! Later I would realize this was what Jesus meant when He said:

“Come unto Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

I had come to Jesus and my soul had finally found rest. My thirst for fulfillment and meaning was now satisfied. More importantly, my name had been written in heaven as one now worthy to go there through Jesus Christ. I had been declared by God as one now in right standing with Him through faith in His Son. There was now peace

between me and God. My sins had been forgiven and my heart had been cleansed. Something, or rather Someone powerful and pure had come into my life and set me free. I fell asleep with a deep sense of “fullness” and contentment. I was *really* happy!

* * *

CHANGED

I awoke the next morning not remembering the previous night's experience. But as I began to ready myself for the day, I noticed everything seemed different. It was as if dark glasses had been taken off and everything seemed wonderfully *alive*. And this sense of fulfillment-it was still there! Something really *had* happened to me, though I didn't fully understand what.

Was my heart really changed? And that easily? I began to check myself.

Desire for booze? Nope. Desire for pot? Not there. Anyone I disliked or hated? None.

This was amazing! This Jesus had completely removed the empty, cold heart from within me, and in its place had given me a new heart. I now wanted to be pure, to be right with God and to please Him.

I didn't fully know how it had happened; I just knew my desires were no longer the same. I no longer wanted to party. Instead, I just wanted to feel this "rightness" toward God forever! I loved Him now, not just in word, but with real affection. And not only did I love God, but I felt nothing but love and goodwill toward every person I could think of, including those who has hurt me in the past.

Jesus had once said:

“He whom the Son sets free
is free indeed.”

Truly, I had become a free person! Love and devotion filled my heart for my new-found Lord and God, Jesus Christ. Whereas before I had been pretty neutral, if not downright cold toward talk about Jesus and the rest of the stuff these Christian “Jesus freaks” talked about, all I wanted to do now was tell my friends about what had happened to me! I was no longer uncomfortable talking about Jesus or about God. Jesus had become *living* to me and was real as never before!

I was on His side now. And all I wanted was to be pure and to please Him from this point on. My friends at the time, as well as my parents, thought it was just a phase I was going through. “He’s just gotten ‘religious,’” I would overhear. “He’ll get over it soon enough.”

What they didn’t understand was that a Person, a real, living *Person* with thoughts, feel-

ings, and desires had come into me. Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit, had come into my life.

* * *

One by one my friends, though not all, came to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior as I shared with them what had happened to me. They saw the change, that it was not just some passing phase, and that if it could happen to Bobby Lepinay, there had to be something to it!

Time has since passed. I wish I could say those feelings I first experience stayed, but I'd be lying to you if I said they did. But that doesn't mean God isn't there. He's always with me and in me, for when God comes in, He comes in for good. He is my Father, and as such He will never leave me nor forsake me. His Spirit in me continues to urge me on to become more like His

Son Jesus.

But the feelings change. At times they burn brightly, at other times they are but a dim flicker. But what has grown in the deeper places of my heart is a truer, purer love for the One who set me free. I want to serve Him. I want to please Him. I am committed to living for my Lord Jesus the best I know how for the rest of my life. Frankly, I don't care what people think of me, as long as they see Jesus in my life. They're not the ones I will have to stand before on Judgement Day. Jesus is. I would rather die than to turn my back on Jesus.

But that doesn't mean I am perfect. I continue to discover large pockets of pride and selfishness embedded in my personality, and I grieve at how unlike Christ I can often be. I fail my Lord at times, and I must go back to Him time and time

again to be continually renewed in His love and forgiveness. In this I am empowered and grow as a son to my loving Father in Heaven. He is my heavenly “Daddy,” and I want to make Him proud. I want to bless Him, then one day hear Him say, “*Well done!*”

Thus I am being perfected and refined. I am not the same person I was, nor am I the person I will be. But of this I am sure: I belong to Jesus now. If I am still alive when He returns, I know I will be one of the ones He is coming back for. And I know without any doubt that I will spend eternity in Heaven with Him.

* * *

As we come to the end of our brief journey together, perhaps you realize, as I did, that all is not right, that there is a “big hole in your chest,”

as I heard one guy put it. You realize a separation exists between you and God. The Bible says:

“He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

It cannot be anymore plain. What you are lacking is *life*, true life that only Christ can bring. The choice to receive this life that alone can satisfy the hunger and thirst within you is yours and yours alone.

Do you have Jesus Christ, God’s son, within your life?

Do not dismiss this point lightly, thinking religion or religious feelings cut it. You must be certain Christ is within you. The evidence will be a burning passion to know Jesus, to tell others

about Him, and to do the things that please Him, as well as avoid the things that don't. This is the mark of a person who truly has Jesus in their life, a "Christian."

Humble yourself and make this decision today. Even though it may be small and not really earth-shaking, something—or rather *Someone* wonderful will begin to work in your life, and you will become His possession, His person, one He will be returning for.

Read through the prayer on the following page, then think about it. When you are ready to sincerely make this commitment, read it to God and let Him know you mean it.

“Dear God, I realize that I am an empty person. I have lived a self-centered life, living my way without regard to Your laws and commandments. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, I have broken and violated these laws and commandments and have become a lawbreaker worthy of punishment. I have offended and often angered You by the things I have done, and I’m sorry.

I don’t deserve Your mercy, but rather Your judgment. My sins and my selfishness have cut me off from You, but I want to come back to You now. I look away from myself and look to Jesus, who took the judgment I deserved when He died 2,000 years ago. I’m asking You, dear God, to please forgive my sins for Jesus’ sake. I here and now leave my life of sin and choose to live a life that will please and honor You.

Jesus, I believe in You. I believe that you are alive and stand ready to enter my heart. I open my heart’s door to you right now and ask you to come in and take full control of all that I am and ever will be. Set me free, Jesus. Be my Lord and Master from this point on. I will obey You as You show me how.”

If you meant what you just prayed, you can expect God to begin to work in your life. He is now your Father and committed to you as His child, and though you do not yet realize it, you have passed through the door from death to life.

* * *

NEXT STEPS

Congratulations on starting a new journey as a follower of Christ! The Bible states in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that “If anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*.” You have been born again, filled with God’s Spirit! From this point on it’s OUT with the old, IN with the new!

The following steps are vital to you now growing in your new-found faith:

1. Get a Bible. I suggest the New Living Translation (NLT) for its ease of reading. You can find one on Amazon or get the Bible App for free. Just type in “You Version Bible.” Find a plan and stick to it.

2. Tell your family and friends about what has happened. This is a very important step. Jesus wants to reach your family and friends and give them eternal life as well.

3. Find a Bible-believing church that teaches from the Bible. Let the Pastor know what has happened to you and that you are a new Christian. Make attending church your highest priority.

4. Talk to God as you would conversing with any other person. This is the simplicity of what prayer is supposed to be like. A continual conversation with your Creator.

Again, thank you for taking the time to read this little booklet. My sincerest hope is that your life truly will be changed for eternity.

Bobby Lepinay

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bobby Lepinay is the Senior Pastor of CityBridge Church located in Pensacola, Florida. He and his wife Robin enjoy doing ministry together and especially enjoy teaching God's Word to His people. They live a life of simplicity and enjoy living near the beach

