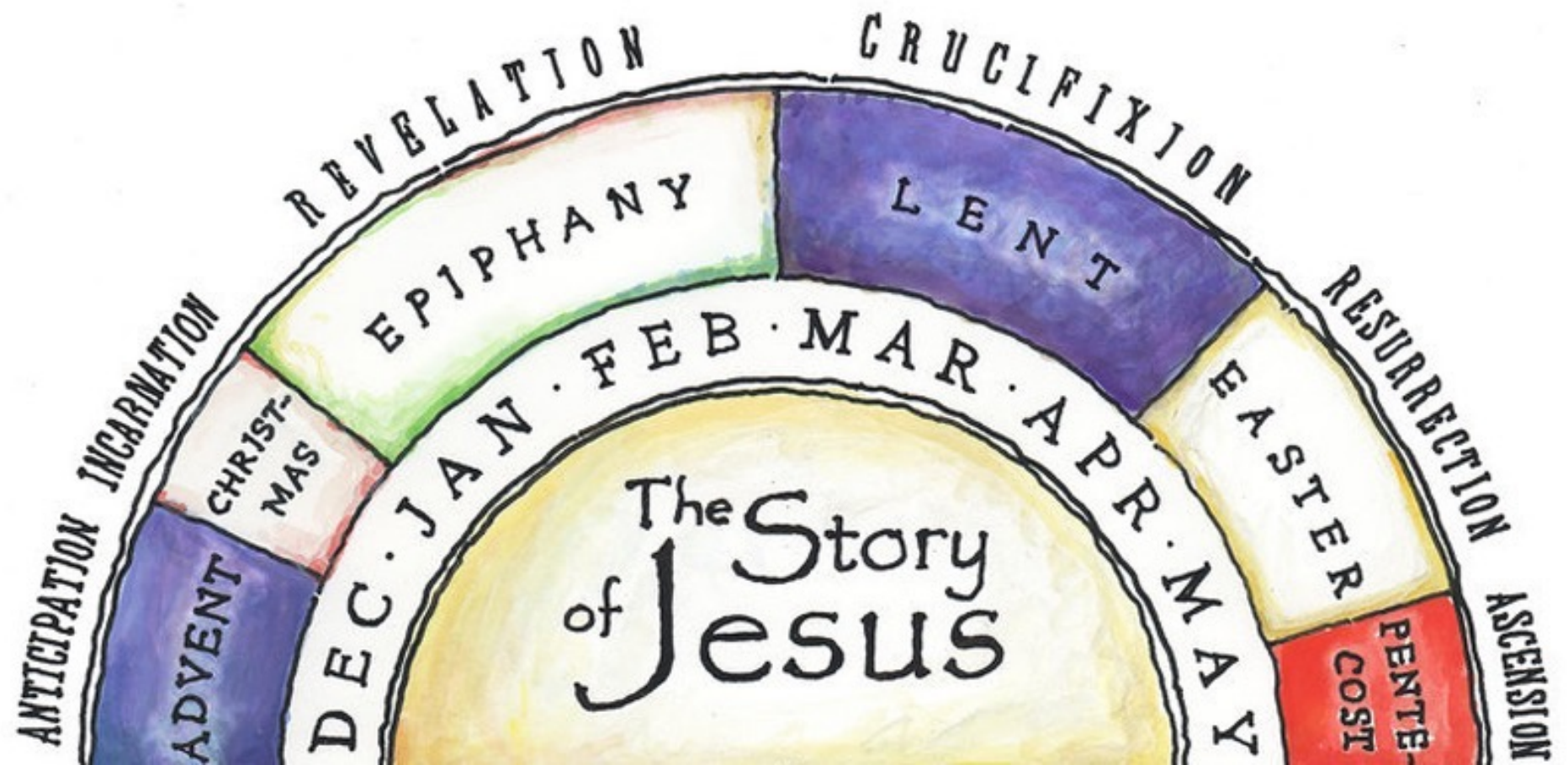


Holy God, you have called us  
to follow in the way of your risen Son,  
and to care for those who are  
companions and strangers alike.  
Fill us with your spirit that we may  
love you as we love our neighbor,  
not only with words of comfort,  
but with acts of generosity and love. Amen

**Opening Prayer**

A decorative banner at the bottom of the page features a dark background with white line art of hands holding a globe. The globe is composed of overlapping colored circles in red, green, blue, and purple. To the right, there is a white pattern resembling a fishnet or a woven mesh.

# CHURCH CALENDAR



The image features two ripe peaches with a mix of red, orange, and yellow hues, set against a plain white background. Two vibrant green leaves are attached to the bottom of the peaches. The text "THE GOOD and BEAUTIFUL GOD" is overlaid in the center in a white, bold, sans-serif font. The word "and" is smaller and positioned between "GOOD" and "BEAUTIFUL".

**THE GOOD** and  
**BEAUTIFUL GOD**

*“What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE; AND **YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.**’ The second is this: ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

HOLY  
BIBLE

MARK  
10:37-38

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days God has spoken to us by the Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, and through whom also God made the universe. **The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being...***

HOLY  
BIBLE

HEB  
1:1-3

## THE TRUE NARRATIVES OF JESUS

God is **GOOD** ✓

God is **TRUSTWORTHY** ✓

God is **GENEROUS** ✓

God is **LOVE** ✓

God is **HOLY** ✓

God is **SELF-SACRIFICING** ✓

God is **TRANSFORMATIVE**



james bryan smith

The Good and Beautiful

GOD

FALLING IN LOVE WITH  
THE GOD JESUS KNOWS

---

*"The best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation."*

—DALLAS WILLARD

## FALSE NARRATIVE #6

We have to **WORK** our way to God  
(a different version of **karma** ...)

- Bible study
- Church attendance
- Devotional time
- Right behavior
- Serving/volunteering
- Tithes/offerings



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GOD

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## FALSE NARRATIVE #6

We have to **WORK** our way to God

## TRUE NARRATIVE #6

God **WORKED** God's way to us



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*Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all.*

HOLY  
BIBLE

PHIL  
2:3-11

*When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.*

HOLY  
BIBLE

PHIL  
2:3-11



## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

Because **GOD** worked God's way to **US** - for our sake - we follow God into the **WORLD** for the sake of **OTHERS**, both human and more-than-human; and we **LEARN** to see ourselves **RIGHTLY** within creation as a whole.



## DEFINITIONS

### SHALOM

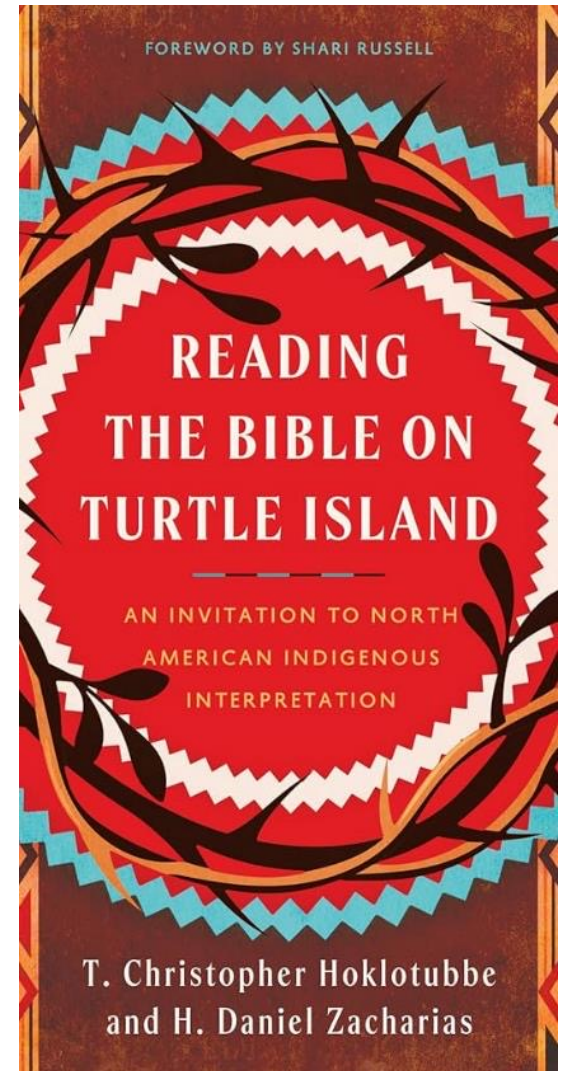
justice, peace, restoration,  
setting things right, wholeness

### JUBILEE

a practice enshrined in Israel's  
calendar in the book of Leviticus,  
to be enacted every 50 years



Just as Jesus restores shalom with Creator, Jesus works to restore our shalom with both human and other-than-human kin, and calls us into this ongoing work...Jubilee (was) a great national work for socioeconomic justice every 50 years...lands were returned, slaves were released, all debts were canceled, and the land laid fallow.



...the Jubilee year was a Sabbath year for the land, meaning that what the land chose to produce during its time of rest was for the owners, the foreigners, the poor, and the animals to make use of, as the land cared for all. Jubilee, then, was also for the poor, the hungry, the foreigner, the widow, the orphan, the livestock, and for the wild animals.



In the Jubilee, our circle of care and relations is reset, reminding us of the web of relations we are part of – the humans, the more-than-humans, and the land. Jubilee...shows that Creator is concerned about individuals who are suffering and so expects other people to create systems and structures to provide a safety net for those who are disenfranchised.



*Do you Israelites think you're  
any better than the far-off Cushites?  
Am I not involved with all nations?  
Didn't I bring Israel up from Egypt,  
the Philistines from Caphtor,  
the Arameans from Qir?*

HOLY  
BIBLE

AMOS

9:7

*Isn't it a fact that there were many widows in Israel at the time of Elijah during that three and a half years of drought when famine devastated the land, but the only widow to whom Elijah was sent was in Sarepta in Sidon? And there were many lepers in Israel at the time of the prophet Elisha but the only one cleansed was Naaman the Syrian.*

HOLY  
BIBLE

LUKE  
4:24-27

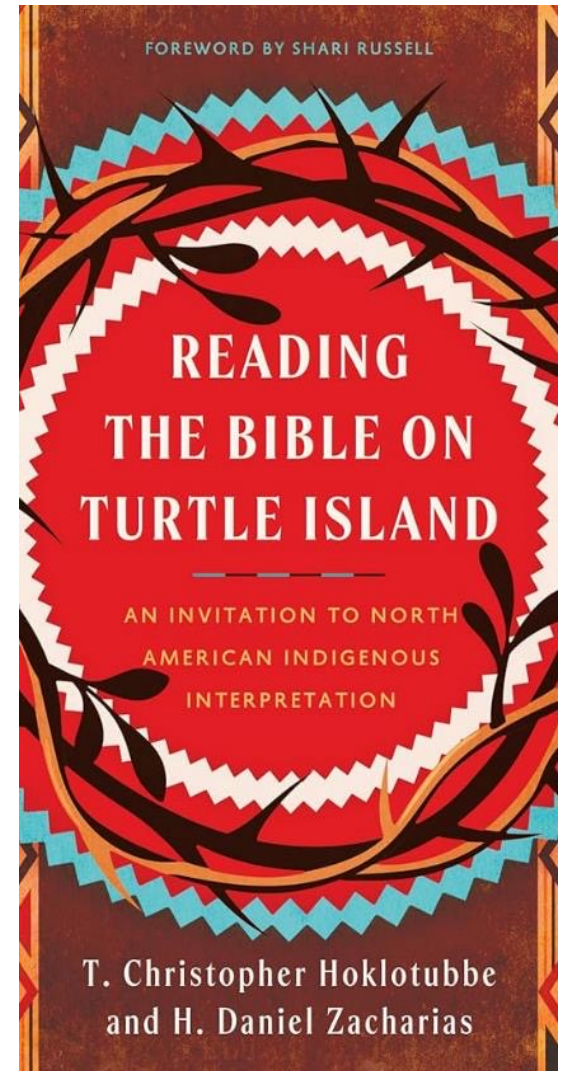
Jesus wanted the people in Nazareth to know they were not the only people loved by Creator. Those in Nazareth had succumbed to the thought that they were special, above everyone else in the world, but Jesus was telling them that everyone made by God was special, loved, and sometimes even preferred over those who claimed to know Creator the most.



Our work in and for creation is not simply caring for “God’s things” because God asked us to, as if we were house-sitters for a friend. This perspective still holds creation at a distance and objectivizes it. (Instead), we are part of creation and involved in many layers of relationship within it.



Creation itself has its own agency, and our relationship to it is largely one of reliance. Before we can talk about “creation care,” we must first acknowledge creation’s care for us.



Jesus showed humanity (what true power is for), not to gain advantage over the vulnerable and marginalized, but rather to empower those who are disenfranchised, even to the point of viewing them as our teachers.



## SOUL TRAINING EXERCISE

### ***Give without expecting RETURN:***

- Donate your time
- Engage in one act of “creation care”
- Give without designation
- Intentionally learn from/about others
- Offer your talent for free



james bryan smith

The Good and Beautiful

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Creator of the universe,  
you made the world in beauty,  
and restore all things in glory  
through the victory of Jesus Christ.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured  
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,  
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice,  
love, and peace, to the glory of your name.

Amen.

**Closing Prayer**

A decorative banner at the bottom of the page features a dark background with white line art of hands reaching out. Overlaid on this are several overlapping circles in red, green, blue, and purple, symbolizing unity and diversity.