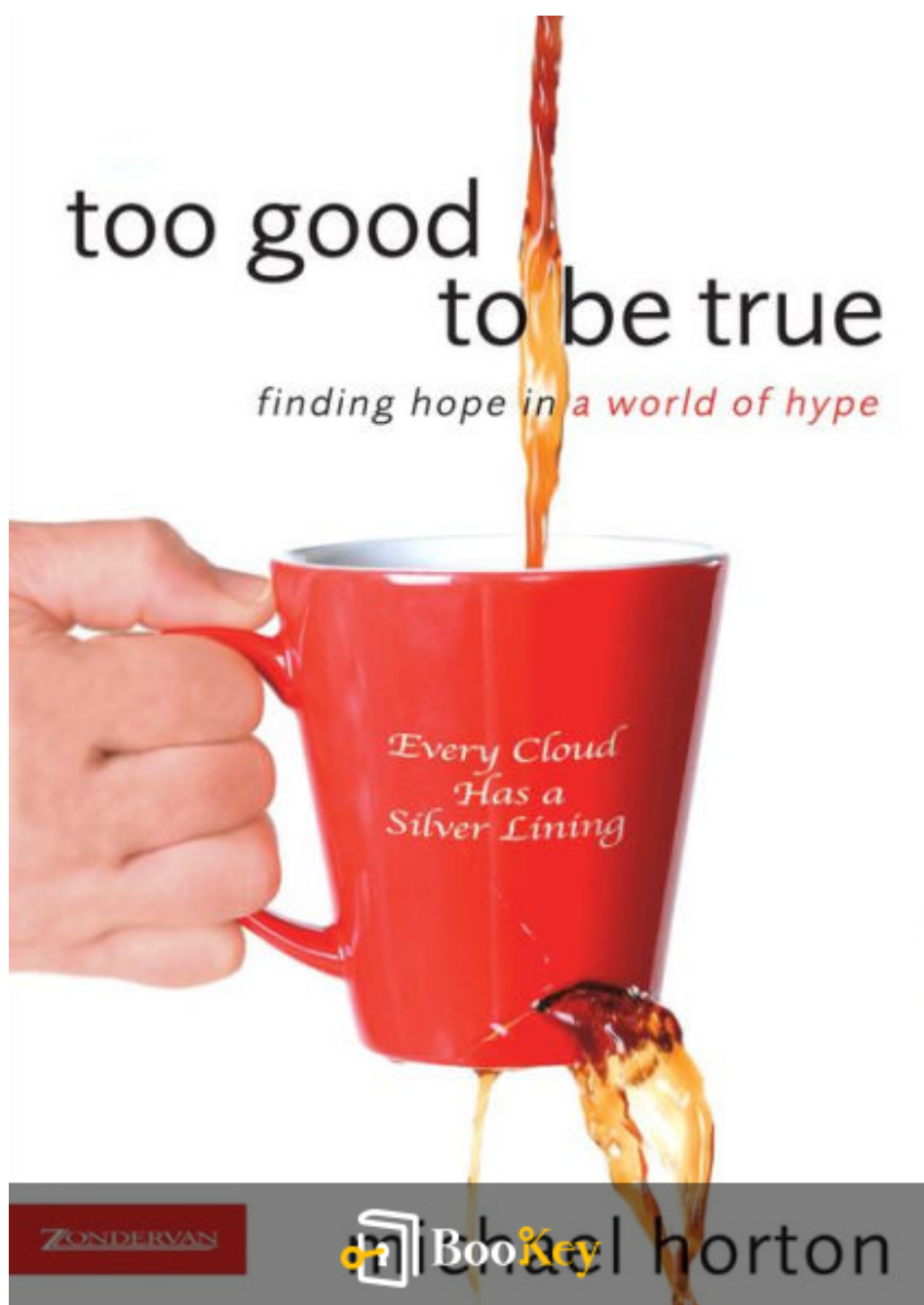


Too Good To Be True PDF (Limited Copy)

Michael Horton



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Too Good To Be True Summary

Embracing Grace in a Works-Driven World

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About the book

In "Too Good to Be True," Michael Horton delves into the often-ignored complexities of faith, grace, and the human condition, challenging contemporary notions of what it means to live a life of genuine belief. Through a compelling blend of theology and relatable narratives, Horton exposes the pitfalls of a simplistic gospel that promises instant happiness and success, revealing instead a richer, more profound understanding of God's grace that invites us into a deeper relationship with Him. This thought-provoking exploration encourages readers to embrace the tensions and mysteries of faith, ultimately pointing to a truth that, while daunting, is infinitely rewarding. Join Horton as he beckons you to reflect on the astonishing reality that in a world filled with enticing, yet superficial assurances, the true essence of faith may indeed be the most transformative journey of all.

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About the author

Michael Horton is a prominent theologian, author, and professor known for his insightful contributions to Reformed theology and contemporary evangelical thought. With an academic background that includes a Ph.D. in Historical Theology, Horton has dedicated much of his career to exploring the intersections of faith, culture, and theology through his books, lectures, and podcasts. He is a co-founder of the White Horse Inn and serves as a professor of theology at Westminster Seminary California. Horton's writing often emphasizes the importance of grace and the transformative power of the gospel, making complex theological concepts accessible to a broad audience.

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Chapter 1 Summary: when tragedy strikes

In Chapter 1 of "Too Good to Be True" by Michael Horton, the author presents a deeply personal account of his father's illness and the subsequent challenges faced by his family. The narrative begins with the author's poignant recollections of his father's deteriorating health due to a benign brain tumor. Recognizable for his bright personality and indomitable spirit, Horton observes the profound transformation in his father as illness strips him of strength, revealing a shadow of the vibrant man he once was. At seventy-eight, James Horton's once penetrating eyes now showcase a blend of terrified pain and fleeting moments of hope amidst his suffering.

1. The Pain of Suffering: The author reflects on the uncharacteristic fear in his father's eyes, contrasting his past resilience with the current helplessness resulting from illness. This evokes deep feelings of grief not only for the father's physical decay but also for the emotional toll on the family, particularly the author's mother, who is grappling with the helplessness of watching her partner suffer and her own struggles with a severe stroke that leaves her dependent and uncertain. This second blow to the family echoes the frailty and unpredictability of life, raising questions about divine justice and the harsh reality of suffering for those who have dedicated their lives to serving others.

2. Theological Trials: The text delves into the author's exploration of



faith amidst despair. As he wrestles with existential questions about God's goodness and purpose, he and his wife confront their theological beliefs against the stark reality of suffering. They grapple with the seeming contradiction of facing life's greatest fears, questioning whether their loved ones deserved the pain they were facing after a life of altruism.

3. Trials as Teachers: The narrative emphasizes that faith is often challenged and deepened through experiences of suffering. The author connects their journey with the biblical character Jacob, illustrating how wrestling with God leads to transformation and an understanding of divine grace. He underscores that trials can renew faith even when they expose vulnerabilities and provoke doubts.

4. Community Support and Healing: The importance of community during difficult times is highlighted, illustrating how friends, family, and the broader church community played vital roles in providing support and comfort to the author's family. This communal aspect becomes a vital thread, echoing the shared nature of human suffering and the comfort found in companionship.

5. The Inward Renewal of Hope: Through the lens of his father's declining condition, Horton narrates a poignant reality about hope amidst suffering – despite physical decay, spiritual renewal can thrive. His father's moments of joy and faith accentuate the notion that true inner peace often



comes not from circumstances but from a profound connection with God.

6. Confronting Suffering with Grace: As the author reflects on different personal responses to suffering, particularly contrasting his mother's resilient spirit with his own struggles, he recognizes the varying impacts of trauma. Yet he insists on the centrality of grace, encouraging a reliance on God's promises as a source of enduring strength during trials.

In conclusion, the chapter allows readers to journey through grief, faith, and resilience. It encourages a contemplative approach to suffering while acknowledging the universal nature of pain. The author offers an invitation to embrace theological reflection as an essential tool for navigating life's inevitable trials and discovering profound truths about divine grace, community support, and the complexity of human suffering. Through the lived experiences of his family, Horton reinforces that amidst pain, one can still find hope and renewal, ultimately shaping a theology that recognizes both tragedy and the presence of God in the midst of it.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Trials as Teachers

Critical Interpretation: As you face your own inevitable trials and tribulations, consider how these challenges serve as profound teachers, much like the author's reflections on his father's illness. Each hardship offers not just pain but an opportunity to wrestle with your beliefs and cultivate a deeper understanding of your faith. Just as Horton found transformative grace through his struggles, remember that your moments of vulnerability can lead to significant spiritual growth. Embrace the lessons nestled within the turmoil, allowing them to guide you toward a more resilient and enriched sense of purpose, reminding you that even in your darkest hours, there is the potential for renewal and a profound connection with the divine.

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Chapter 2 Summary: good news for losers

In this chapter from "Too Good to Be True" by Michael Horton, the author explores the paradoxical nature of Christianity and its relationship with societal perceptions of success and failure. He prompts readers to reconsider the notion of being a "loser" in a world that values power, fame, and wealth, encouraging a deeper understanding of the gospel's message as fundamentally good news for those who struggle and are made to feel inferior.

1. Christianity as a Movement for the Disinherited: Horton begins by presenting Christianity as a movement that appeals to those marginalized by society, contrasting it with ideologies that celebrate superiority and dominance. He highlights the movement's foundation in fundamental opposition to the structures that elevate the powerful, likening the dichotomy to the stark contrast between Dionysus, the embodiment of life and renewal, and the "Crucified," who represents a call to transcend worldly values.

2. The Cultural Pressure to Be Winners: The author critiques the inclination within American evangelism to present Christianity as a pathway to success. Figures like Ted Turner epitomize the criticism that Christianity is for the weak. This has led to a public relations strategy showcasing only the successes of notable individuals, while the experiences of ordinary believers often remain unheard. Horton argues that such a



narrative overshadows the gospel's invitation to the weak and broken.

3. Valuing Weakness Horton emphasizes that biblical figures, notably the Apostle Paul, glorified weakness rather than strength. He references Paul's assertion that true strength comes from acknowledging one's frailty and relying on God's grace. The author contrasts this with contemporary views that equate strength with self-sufficiency and transient success, ultimately leading to spiritual malaise when faced with life's challenges.

4. The Danger of Healthy-Mindedness: The author describes a prevalent mindset within American culture that prioritizes optimism and denies the reality of sin and suffering. He cites philosopher William James's categories of "healthy-minded" versus "morbid-minded" religions, arguing that the former neglects the necessary acknowledgment of human frailty and the need for divine redemption. This tendency creates a superficial spirituality ill-equipped to handle crises or hardships.

5. The Necessity of a Theology of the Cross: Horton introduces the notion of a "theology of the cross," which focuses on Christ's suffering and death as the ultimate source of strength and redemption. The author argues that true Christianity calls for an acceptance of weakness rather than a pursuit of mere glory, as symbolized by the cross—a point of suffering that paradoxically leads to victory and hope.



6. Facing Tragedy and Human Suffering The author criticizes a modern tendency to avoid discussions of death and suffering within the church, suggesting that such avoidance alienates believers from the fuller truth of faith. Horton argues that lamentation and the acknowledgment of sorrow are integral to a robust Christian life, establishing a connection to God amidst hardship rather than retreating into denial.

7. Embracing a Different Narrative: The chapter concludes with a proclamation that the gospel of Jesus Christ redefines what it means to win. It is through acknowledging our brokenness and embracing the reality of suffering that believers discover true purpose and joy—not in the pursuit of fleeting pleasures. Horton emphasizes that the call to holiness supersedes societal metrics of success, anchoring hope in God amidst life's trials.

In summary, Michael Horton's "Good News for Losers" challenges the cultural narrative surrounding success and failure, propounding that true strength and fulfillment come through weakness and reliance on Christ. It urges readers to embrace the gospel, which offers hope and redemption to all, particularly those who feel disenfranchised and marginalized in society.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Christianity as a Movement for the Disinherited

Critical Interpretation: Imagine for a moment stepping into a world that often measures worth by wealth, power, and accolades. In such a place, it's easy to feel like a 'loser' if you don't fit the mold of success. Yet, as you explore Michael Horton's insights, you're beckoned to a profound invitation—one that redefines your identity. Embracing Christianity as a movement for the disinherited liberates you from societal shackles that dictate success. You realize that true belonging is found not in the acclaim of the world, but in the grace extended to those who struggle. This realization empowers you to embrace your own vulnerabilities, knowing that your worth is not determined by status or achievements, but by the love and acceptance found in the gospel. Each hardship becomes a pathway to deeper understanding and connection with others, igniting a desire within you to share this good news with those who feel marginalized and lost, ultimately transforming your perceptions of success and failure.

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Chapter 3: suffering on purpose

In Chapter 3 of "Too Good to Be True," Michael Horton presents a profound exploration of suffering, stepping away from theoretical discussions about the problem of evil. Instead, he focuses on how the narrative of the cross and resurrection presents a practical and transformative perspective on human suffering. Here, Horton articulates essential truths that may guide our understanding of suffering in the context of Christ's redemptive work.

1. The Cross as the Answer to Evil: Horton emphasizes that rather than offering philosophical explanations for evil, God confronts it through the cross and resurrection. This divine act doesn't satisfy our intellectual curiosity but transforms us emotionally and spiritually, reminding us that God accomplishes His purposes in history through tangible, historical events rather than mere speculation.

2. Theology of the Cross vs. Theology of Glory: The author contrasts two theological perspectives. The theology of glory identifies God primarily through power and human accomplishments, allowing individuals to

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Chapter 4 Summary: is your GOD big enough?

Chapter Four of "Too Good to Be True" by Michael Horton explores the question of whether God is sufficiently powerful and personal in our lives, challenging the contemporary understanding of divinity that is often shaped by human experience and need.

- 1. Pragmatic Approaches to God:** The chapter begins by referencing William James, the founder of pragmatism, who suggests that religious beliefs are validated by their practical effects in people's lives. This perspective treats God not as an object of worship but as a means to fulfill personal desires. Recent studies indicate that American teenagers often adhere to a form of "moralistic, therapeutic deism," which reflects a superficial relationship with a God who serves their needs rather than a genuine encounter with the divine.
- 2. Idolatry and Projection of Needs:** Horton argues that many only confront their own psychological needs through their perception of God, resulting in a form of idolatry that reinforces existing beliefs instead of challenging them. The real God, as depicted in scripture, is often unsettling, as He contradicts our assumptions and requires deeper faith amid crises.
- 3. God's Size and Relevance:** The author critiques how many Christians cling to a small view of God, which cannot withstand life's trials or



suffering. J.B. Phillips, in his book "Your God Is Too Small," posits that many believers carry a diluted image of God that crumbles under pressure, leading to an inadequate response to suffering.

4. Experience-Centric Theology: Horton notes a troubling trend among some Evangelical theologians who downplay God's sovereignty, suggesting instead that God invites human cooperation to shape the future. Such a theology prioritizes human experience over divine revelation, thus limiting God's true nature and power.

5. The Disconnect of Experience: Emphasizing that human experience is laden with presuppositions, Horton argues that truth and reality cannot simply be determined by personal experiences—doing so leads to a distorted view of God. Our understanding of God should be informed by scriptural revelation rather than subjective experiences.

6. God's True Nature: Horton asserts that the traditional understanding of God as transcendent and immanent is crucial. The narrative of scripture reveals a God who is not merely a projection of human needs but an independent, powerful, and relational being. This God actively engages with humanity, as exemplified in the life and work of Jesus Christ.

7. Challenges to God's Attributes: The text addresses contemporary views that question God's omniscience and omnipotence in light of



suffering and evil. Some theologians argue that a good God would prevent atrocities like the Holocaust, implying that God is powerless in the face of evil.

8. God's Sovereignty and Its Implications: Horton reinforces the belief that God is ultimately sovereign and self-sufficient. He emphasizes that scripture illustrates God's unchanging nature and omnipotence, arguing that a diminished view of God does not provide true comfort or hope amid suffering.

9. Hope in God's Power: The concluding message emphasizes that knowing God is strong to save is essential for those afflicted by suffering. The real God, vibrant and personal, serves as a cornerstone of hope, offering an assurance that injustice and evil do not define the ultimate narrative.

In summary, Horton's exploration in this chapter challenges readers to reconsider their perceptions of God, advocating for a robust and scripturally grounded understanding of the divine that affirms His power, presence, and purpose, especially in times of suffering. This perspective invites a deeper engagement with a God who transcends human experience and demands both awe and trust.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Reconsidering the True Nature of God

Critical Interpretation: Horton's challenge to expand your perception of God beyond a mere projection of your personal needs reminds you that the divine relationship is not contingent upon fulfilling desires but about embracing a God who is both powerful and intimately involved in your life. This realization can inspire you to cultivate a deeper faith that sustains you through life's inevitable trials, encouraging you to engage with the mysterious and sometimes unsettling aspects of faith. Trusting in such a God leads to profound hope, as it instills confidence that despite challenges, you are anchored in a relationship with a transcendent being who provides real comfort and assurance amid suffering.

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Chapter 5 Summary: is anybody up there?

In Chapter 5 of "Too Good to Be True" by Michael Horton, the narrative centers on a profound exploration of personal despair juxtaposed with theological reflection concerning the hiddenness of God. The author recounts his wife Lisa's struggle through a deep depression during her pregnancy, prompting her to internally grapple with her faith, especially in light of Psalm 51:12, which articulates a longing for joy and restoration. While Lisa had previously expressed faith without doubt, her newfound struggle propelled her into isolation, raising deep questions about God's presence amidst suffering.

1. Despite her despair, Lisa's faith was sustained through external means, particularly through the church, which the author emphasizes as vital for receiving the "external Word" that contradicts our internal judgments. This "Word" offers reassurance of forgiveness and connection to a greater community of believers who share doubts and fears, thus enabling her to eventually experience gratitude and divine presence again.
2. The chapter discusses the complexities of human experience, particularly highlighting how physical and spiritual struggles are intertwined. The author references Isaiah, noting that God can feel hidden, especially during crises that lead people to question His goodness. Historically, there has been a philosophical and theological acknowledgment of God's seeming absence,



echoed in figures like Nietzsche and Freud, who questioned the presence of a benevolent deity amidst suffering.

3. Throughout biblical history, humanity's encounter with God often incites fear rather than comfort due to the recognition of our sinfulness. The author finds parallels between the experiences of the Israelites and modern believers, advocating for a reliance on God's Word and promises rather than human speculations, as it is in recognizing God's otherness and our brokenness that we find genuine hope.

4. The continual quest for understanding God leads to a dangerous path of seeking self-comfort through idolatry or mistaken projections of God based on human desires. The author urges believers to remember that genuine revelation comes only from God's Word rather than human interpretation. Furthermore, it is asserted that true comfort is found in God's promise of salvation, which contrasts with mere acknowledgment of His existence.

5. The chapter also presents the notion of God's hiddenness, reminding readers that just because God seems distant does not mean He is absent. The incarnation of Christ is highlighted as the ultimate revelation of God's nearness, where He dignified human suffering by participating in it. The delay in God's apparent judgment is seen as compassionate, permitting repentance and reconciliation rather than immediate retribution.



6. The concluding thoughts urge believers to trust in God's ongoing work even when it seems invisible. The argument posits that divine strength is perfected in human weakness, and while societal views might shrivel in despair over God's hiddenness, faith recognizes His presence amid struggles. This paradox of divine nearness intertwined with absence serves as a profound source of hope, encapsulated in the assurance that, through Christ, believers have access to God's gracious intent rather than fear of judgment.

In summary, Chapter 5 reflects on the relationship between suffering, faith, and God's hiddenness, illustrating how external affirmations of God's promises can lead believers through dark times. It challenges readers to confront the nature of God's presence in their struggles while emphasizing the transforming power of grace revealed in Christ.

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Chapter 6: if we just knew why GOD let it happen

In the wake of the devastating tsunami that struck on December 26, 2004, claiming 200,000 lives, humanity collectively sought answers, posing the question, "Why, God?" Theologically, various perspectives emerged, with some attributing the disaster to divine punishment, while others denied any direct involvement of the divine. This polarized response reflects a common human tendency to seek understanding in moments of crisis, whether on a large scale or in personal suffering.

1. Understanding Providence: The author emphasizes the need for recognizing God's presence not only in miraculous events but also in the ordinary workings of life. Miracles can draw our attention, yet the ordinary processes should not be overlooked. Faith should extend to the gradual healing processes that occur through medical means, as much as it involves miraculous interventions. Acknowledging God's providence means understanding that He operates through both miraculous and non-miraculous means.

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Chapter 7 Summary: out of the whirlwind

In Chapter 7 of "Too Good to Be True" by Michael Horton, the author delves into the profound suffering experienced by Job, drawing parallels to the struggles faced in contemporary life, particularly those surrounding despair, loss, and the quest for understanding God amid suffering. This exploration serves not only to illuminate Job's trials but also reflects on personal grief close to the author's heart, specifically the tragic death of his friend, a fellow pastor.

1. Job's Plight and the Nature of Suffering: The chapter begins by highlighting Job's unwavering faith despite the monumental trials he faces, from losing his wealth and health to grappling with existential despair. The author recalls a personal experience with the pain and despair of a friend who succumbed to suicide, raising the question of how someone with a strong faith could reach such a tragic end. This highlights the complex nature of suffering and the inadequacies of simplistic theological answers that equate morality with fortune.

2. The Human Condition and Our Cultural Attitude: A critical analysis of society's view on suffering is presented, where despite advancements in medicine, the elderly and ill often remain isolated. The tendency to see life through a lens of utility—where success is measured by happiness and well-being—creates a model where faith can falter when challenges arise.



Yet, like Job, individuals are called to confront these harsh realities.

3. The Role of Friends and Misguided Theologies: Job's friends initially provide comfort through their silent presence but soon resort to traditional logic which suggests that suffering is a direct result of sin. This fallacy, rooted in a simplistic understanding of justice, fails to appreciate the complex relationship between suffering and divine purpose, echoing themes found in modern discussions surrounding tragedy and sin.

4. The Despair and Yearning for a Mediator: As Job wrestles with his pain, he expresses a yearning for a mediator to advocate for him before God, identifying his need for understanding and justice. This longing points to a deeper theological truth—human beings cannot adequately address their suffering without divine assistance. Despite pain and isolation, Job retains a glimmer of hope in his Redeemer, foreshadowing deeper theological themes of intercession and grace.

5. God's Sovereignty and Human Inability to Comprehend: The narrative shifts to emphasize that God's ways are beyond human understanding. In the face of Job's suffering, God's response is not to provide answers but to assert His sovereignty, reminding Job (and by extension, the reader) of the divine order that governs the universe. This underscores the notion that human attempts to rationalize suffering often fall short of grasping divine intent.



6. The Cosmic Trial: The chapter climaxes with the idea that Job's suffering represents a larger cosmic struggle that involves all humanity. The intercession of Christ as the ultimate mediator provides a powerful resolution to these struggles, as His sacrifice and resurrection open a way for reconciliation between humanity and God.

7. Hope and Redemption: Ultimately, the chapter conveys a powerful message that while life may be fraught with challenges, the Christian faith offers a promise of redemption and the reassurance of God's unyielding mercy. The resurrection of Christ serves as the cornerstone of hope—not a fix for all earthly problems, but a profound assurance that transcends physical suffering.

In summary, Chapter 7 of "Too Good to Be True" invites readers to confront the reality of suffering while holding onto hope in God's greater plan. Through the lens of Job's experiences and personal anecdotes, Horton powerfully articulates the importance of faith, intercession, and the understanding of God's sovereignty in the chaos of life.

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Chapter 8 Summary: a new creation

In contemporary society, the therapeutic industry faces serious scrutiny, as highlighted by diverse cases from San Diego psychotherapist Maureen O'Hara. Patients such as Jerry, who feels fragmented amidst numerous life changes and extensive therapeutic experiences, and Beverly, who struggles with dual identities, exemplify the profound disorientation prevalent among individuals today. Both embody a quest for meaning within a chaotic culture increasingly characterized by the quest for reinvention, a phenomenon termed the “Protean style” by psychologist Robert Jay Lifton. This yearning for perpetual self-transformation often leads to disappointments, revealing the emptiness of a life led by cultural trends rather than authentic spiritual foundation.

1. The Cultural Crisis of Identity

The desire to constantly redefine oneself reflects a deeper societal malaise, resembling the futile pursuits documented in Ecclesiastes, where the relentless cycle of self-transformation is marked as “vanity.” This craving for a new identity, largely fueled by marketing and cultural narratives, blinds individuals to the inevitability of aging and the superficiality of temporal pleasures, thereby reinforcing a collective existential crisis.

Within this context emerges nihilism, characterized by a rejection of transcendent truths and an impotence to create genuine value from one's



existence. Nietzsche's concept of nihilism transforms from a rebellious stance into a passive acceptance of cultural norms, leading to a numb existence. The allure of endlessly adopting new lifestyles offers momentary excitement but ultimately fails to fulfill deeper spiritual needs.

2. The Promise of the New Creation

In contrast to the bleakness of despair, the gospel presents a compelling alternative: the concept of a "new creation," emerging from the works of Jesus Christ. This transformative reality not only addresses individual souls but heralds a cosmic renewal, as Paul articulates in Romans. The theological concept begins with the two Adams—Adam, who brings sin and death, and Christ, who embodies life and redemption. Through faith in Christ, believers transition from the condemnation of being “in Adam” to the grace of being “in Christ.”

3. Justification and the Assurance of Peace

Romans 5 underlines the objective nature of justification attained through faith, ensuring that believers stand reconciled before God regardless of fluctuating emotional states. This peace is fundamentally rooted in Christ's sacrifice rather than subjective feelings or earthly struggles. Moreover, the union with Christ carries both federal (representative) and organic (transformative) dimensions. Just as Adam's sin impacts all humanity, so too does Christ's righteousness extend to all who believe.



4. The Nature of the New Creation

The new creation is not instantaneous but unfolds progressively.

Regeneration marks the definitive moment of being made new, initiating a continuing process of sanctification—the struggle against sin characterizes the believer's existence within the “already” and “not yet” framework outlined in Romans 6-8. While believers experience profound inner change, they simultaneously face the realities of ongoing sin and spiritual warfare.

5. The Tension of Already and Not Yet

Romans 6 emphasizes that believers are already dead to sin and alive to righteousness, asserting the certainty of victory over sin through the Spirit. This victory is not a future hope but a present reality grounded in belief. Meanwhile, Romans 7 candidly reveals the ongoing struggle against sin, illustrating the painful tension of the Christian life. Each believer grapples with desires for righteousness while battling the internal conflict wrought by sin.

6. Living in the Spirit and Anticipating Glory

Finally, Romans 8 assures that believers are not condemned but empowered through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, leading them to eternal glory. Despite present sufferings, which are incomparable to the future glory awaiting creation and the faithful, Christians can live with hopeful anticipation of redemption, linking individual salvation to the restoration of all creation. Paul's encouragement is clear: our hope is secure in Christ, thus



urging believers to live faithfully in their callings, serving as a testament to the new creation amid the current brokenness.

This chapter encapsulates the dual reality of the Christian experience—celebrating the already existing new creation while patiently awaiting its future fulfillment. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that the essence of life is not about constant reinvention but about resting in the truth of God’s transformative work for humanity and creation as a whole. Life in Christ calls for active participation in the world, bridging the gap between present struggles and the assured hope of ultimate redemption.

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Chapter 9: the true nature of spiritual warfare

In the ninth chapter of "Too Good to Be True" by Michael Horton, we explore the profound intersection of personal crises, spiritual warfare, and the nature of faith. The author begins by recounting his and his wife Lisa's tumultuous early years of marriage, characterized by a series of challenges that strained their relationship. Despite their struggles with infertility, miscarriage, and the health issues of their premature children, these experiences serve as a backdrop for deeper reflections on the nature of faith and adversity.

The narrative highlights several critical principles regarding spiritual warfare and the divine battle between good and evil. While the couple faced immense personal distress and loss, they confronted significant spiritual dilemmas, particularly concerning the seeming absence of God during their tribulations. However, the arrival of their son James Paul marked a turning point, illustrating that God's mercies can prevail amidst trials.

1. **The Cosmic Battle of Faith and Doubt:** The author emphasizes that

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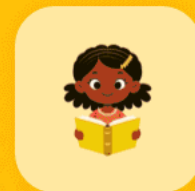
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Chapter 10 Summary: when GOD goes to a funeral

In Chapter 10 of "Too Good to Be True," titled "When God Goes to a Funeral," the author, Michael Horton, shares his poignant experience of preaching on the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection just days after his father's passing. This chapter, drawn from John 11:1-44, explores profound themes of grief, faith, and resurrection, reflecting on the transformative nature of Jesus' miracles amidst personal tragedy.

1. The Purpose of Jesus' Miracles: Horton emphasizes that the miracles of Jesus serve as signs pointing beyond mere spectacle or abstract proof of divinity. They illustrate deeper truths about Jesus' identity, such as being the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and ultimately, the Resurrection and Life. The raising of Lazarus is portrayed not as the climax of the miracle itself but as a sign pointing to Jesus' authority over life and death.

2. A Test of Faith: Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, summon Jesus with the expectation that he will heal their ailing brother, rooted in their intimate relationship with him. Their disappointment after Lazarus' death raises complex questions about divine timing and the nature of Jesus' goodness. The sisters' struggle reflects the human tendency to see immediate needs as paramount, but Jesus indicates that His delay serves a greater purpose: to reveal His glory and strengthen their faith.



3. The Depth of Grief: The narrative captures the emotional turmoil upon Jesus' arrival in Bethany after Lazarus' death. Martha's initial confrontational approach turns into a moment of faith as she recognizes Jesus' promise of resurrection, declaring Him to be the Christ. Jesus' emotional response — his weeping — illustrates his deep compassion and solidarity with human suffering. This moment demonstrates that grief is not a sign of weakness but of love in the face of loss.

4. The Assurance of Resurrection: In a critical exchange with Martha, Jesus establishes His divine identity by proclaiming that He is the Resurrection and the Life. This pivotal declaration calls her to profess belief not merely in a future resurrection but in His power to give eternal life. The conversation transitions from theoretical beliefs about resurrection to a personal acknowledgment of His divine power.

5. Jesus' Anguish: As Jesus approaches Lazarus' tomb, He is overtaken by visceral emotions of grief and anger against death. His tears exemplify the deeply human experience of mourning, rejecting any stoic or sentimental portrayals of death. Instead, Jesus faces death head-on, emphasizing that it is not a natural occurrence but an enemy stemming from sin.

6. The Miracle of Resurrection: Upon commanding the stone to be rolled away, Jesus' authority culminates in the resurrection of Lazarus. This event serves as a foretaste of His own resurrection, heralding the conquest over



death. The miracle invites believers to embrace the hope that death does not have the final word, for Jesus has triumphed over it.

7. The Response of the Community: The mixed reactions following Lazarus' resurrection reveal the divisive nature of Jesus' ministry. While some witnesses come to faith, others plot against Him. This division underscores the broader spiritual implications of Jesus' signs and teaching, highlighting that acceptance of His message carries profound relational and existential stakes.

8. Theological Implications of Death: Horton argues that death is not an inevitable part of life but rather a grim reminder of humanity's fall from grace. Nonetheless, through Jesus' death and resurrection, believers find hope as death is depicted as a defeated enemy — a foe that no longer holds ultimate power. This reshapes the narrative surrounding mourning and celebration, not as denial of loss but as rooted in the assurance of victory.

9. Living with Hope: The chapter culminates in the poignant realization that while death remains a painful reality, it is not the end. Through faith in Christ, believers are invited to look forward to the ultimate resurrection and the renewal of all creation. This hope empowers them to navigate grief, transforming it into a testament of faith rather than despair.

In essence, “When God Goes to a Funeral” eloquently intertwines personal



grief with profound theological insights, illuminating the assurance believers find in Christ amidst the reality of death. Through Jesus' interaction with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, the narrative invites readers to contemplate the depth of faith that can emerge from suffering, culminating in the triumphant promise of hope and resurrection.

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