

# essentials

the heart of the Christian faith

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First published in Great Britain in 2016

Reprinted in 2018

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-911272-00-7

Designed by ninefootone creative ([ninefootone.co.uk](http://ninefootone.co.uk))

Printed in Denmark by Nørhaven

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

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# essentials

CHAPTER ONE

## reveal

PAGE 7

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CHAPTER TWO

## reject

PAGE 17

---

CHAPTER THREE

## rescue

PAGE 27

---

CHAPTER FOUR

## relationship

PAGE 37

---

CHAPTER FIVE

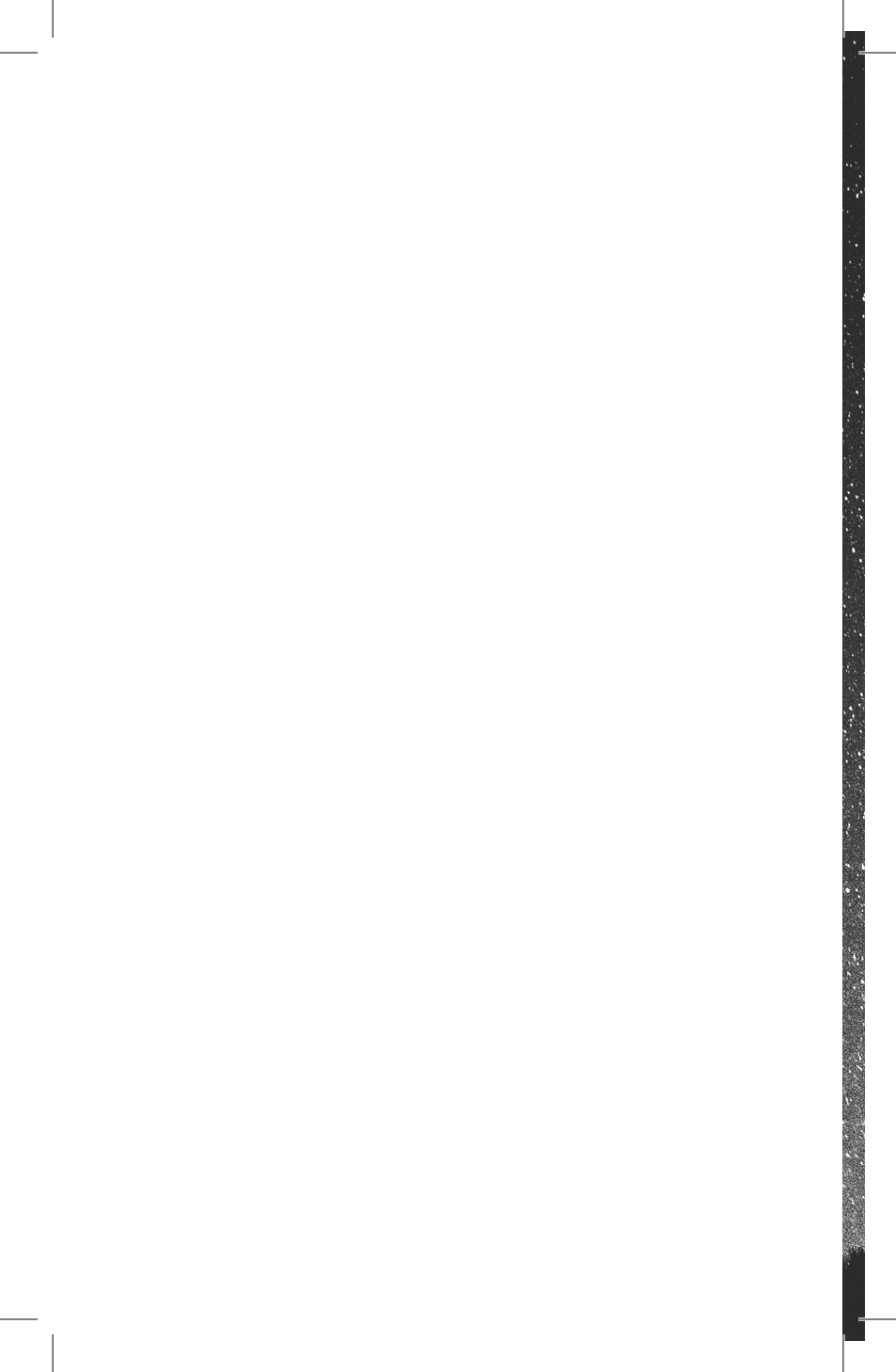
## response

PAGE 47

---

## questions

PAGE 51



A black and white photograph of a person standing on a rock under a starry night sky. A large white heart shape is overlaid in the center of the image. The text "CHAPTER ONE" is written in a small, uppercase, sans-serif font inside the heart, and the word "reveal" is written in a larger, bold, lowercase, sans-serif font below it.

CHAPTER ONE

**reveal**

**I** magine you are on a train. You look up from your phone and notice a stranger has sat down opposite. How could you get to know them? I guess you could stare at them for a long time. It would be weird, but you could look at what they're wearing and what they're watching and who they're with and see if you can construct an idea of who they are. But at the end of the day it would all be guesswork. What we need is to engage them in conversation. We need them to reveal themselves. And when they speak we need to listen.

The same is true when a new neighbour moves onto your street. Or when a new student joins your course. Or when a new colleague starts working in your department. We can guess all we like. But if we want to find out the truth, we need to have a conversation. We need the person to reveal themselves. We need to hear their words about their identity.

The same is true with God. Most of us would like to believe there is more to life than we can see or touch. The idea of living in a pointless

universe without a personal God who can provide us with purpose and protection is a frightening prospect to many. Whereas the possibility of belonging to and being loved by a caring God is absolutely thrilling. But how can we know the truth? How can we move from wishing it were true to knowing it is true? We need God to engage us in conversation. Everything would change if God turned up and spoke to us. We would be protected from self-delusion and guesswork.

Near the beginning of a short book called Luke's Gospel, there is a staggering claim made about the identity of a man called Jesus.

Listen to how he describes the moment when Jesus' mum discovers she is going to have a baby.

'...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The

Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.””

 LUKE 1:26-35

Ever had one of those days? You wake up in the morning with a plan, but then something happens that changes everything, and your