

Tanakh [Hebrew Bible], there is no excellent living apart from God's way for Israel that is to become the way for all people," writes Charry. The joy of being Israel portends the joy of being Christ's church. And when the psalmist describes the woes of the wicked, he writes evangelistically: "The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away," is a way of saying, "Look at the joy you are missing" (Ps. 112). A similar intent drives Proverbs, which assumes each person chooses to act wisely or foolishly, and thus happily or unhappily.

The asherist themes in the Older Testament culminate in the Younger Testament, especially in John's gospel, which recounts how Joy himself came to dwell among us. At one time, loving God and thus living the good life was about keeping Torah. Now, John the Evangelist says, loving God and thus living the good life is about obeying his Son. "Eternal life" is the distinctly Johannine phrase that describes this new way of living for and with God. Charry writes passionately:

Abiding by divine commands is the wisdom of God for the Tanakh; in John's Gospel it becomes loving intimacy with God. Eternal life with God is to abide in Jesus' wise guidance. By submitting to it, we experience the wisdom that strengthens, empowers, and liberates the soul for a happy life.

This summer I finally read *The Cost of Discipleship*. I saw instantly why Bonhoeffer's call to radical obedience is a classic, and would recommend it to any Christian today, who inevitably is dealing with cheap grace in their circles. Yet I would suggest they read *God and the Art of Happiness* alongside it. Bonhoeffer's vision of the Sermon on the Mount seemed to me to lack the joy—the "blessed is he"-ness—of following Jesus. If I understand Jesus' words in John 10:10, abundant life is offered to us now, as we follow him to his Father's house. Of course Bonhoeffer is right, the trek will cost us everything, including ourselves. But as Charry's invaluable work reminds us, it will also proffer us everything worth having. ☩

**Katelyn Beaty** is *Christianity Today's* associate editor.

# Christ Is Enough

Why this simple reminder is necessary right now.

By Christopher Benson

**J**ust when many of us are buckling under the contemporary regimen for getting closer to God, Phillip Cary compassionately unties the "heavy burdens, hard to bear" (Matt. 23:4, *ESV*). Addressed to shepherds and their flocks, **Good News for Anxious Christians** (Brazos) ★★★★★ features the admonishing, teaching, and comforting voice of a Christ-haunted philosophy professor at Eastern University. Its timely message is timeless: Servants of Christ grow through repetition of the gospel (which turns the heart outward), not through experimentation with techniques (which turns the heart inward).

Addicted to novelty, American evangelicals are seduced to forget the wisdom of an Israelite king: "There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9). The author's target—"new evangelical theology"—is only a reincarnation of 19th century liberal theology, spearheaded by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Such liberalism insisted that the essence of piety is not knowing or doing but feeling an absolute dependence on God. "The molten outpourings of the inner fire," Schleiermacher claimed, give rise to Christian doctrine and ritual. When evangelicals rank their relationship with God above what God did, does, and will do in Jesus Christ, they make better German Romantics than biblical disciples. Consequently, Cary says, they're ushering in a "post-Christian future" in which the person of Christ becomes increasingly impersonal and the Christian experience becomes increasingly unchristian.

His quiver contains ten arrows, one for each of the practical things that we don't have to do because they're not in the Bible, such as: hearing God's voice in our heart, believing our intuitions are the Holy Spirit, letting God take control, and finding God's will for our life. Driven by "consumerist spirituality," churches use these techniques to expand their market share

and ensure brand loyalty. They "succeed" by keeping us perpetually twitchy: guilty when unpracticed, disappointed when practiced. They actually fail by leaving us alone with ourselves, where we're vulnerable to self-deception, moral evasion, and spiritual woolgathering.

Because "experience is formed from the outside in," the goal of the book is to get nail-biting, brow-wrinkled, and sleep-deprived Christians outside of themselves to hear: "The good news of the gospel is that God has already decided to do something about our lives—whether we let him or not, whether we do anything about it or not, whether we believe it or not." God is italicized here to emphasize that our transformation is always divinely wrought, not humanly contrived. That's why Martin Luther prayed, "I will remain with thee of whom I can receive but to whom I may not give." Cary submits that the Lutheran doctrine of *sola fide* (faith alone) offers a powerful corrective to the strangely Catholicized and psychologized evangelicalism that oppresses us.

How do we follow the commandment to not be anxious about anything (Phil. 4:6)? The gospel, Cary argues, gives us permission to ignore anxiety-producing techniques because Christ is enough, period. Finding ourselves in Christ, as opposed to finding Christ in ourselves, means we're equipped—through the flesh of Christ, the Word of God, and the life of the church—to persevere in "the trial by existence," invoking the title of Robert Frost's poem. Instead of "bearing it crushed

and mystified," as the poet says in the final line, we can bear any vicissitude with the love, obedience, wisdom, virtue, and beauty of our Savior. ☩

**Christopher Benson** is a writer in Denver, Colorado. His work has appeared in *The Weekly Standard*, *Books @ Culture*, *Christian Scholar's Review*, *Image*, and *The City*. He blogs at [Bensonian.org](http://Bensonian.org).

