

FINDING YOUR
SAFETY NET

DO HAVING FAITH, BEING BAPTIZED, AND
TAKING COMMUNION HAVE VALUE?

Revised and Expanded

Glen W. Covert

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Three hundred eighty-five (385) Bible verses are quoted in this book, 40 Old Testament and 345 New Testament. They make up about 14.6 percent of the manuscript. All except twelve (12) Scripture quotations are from Crossway, *ESV Student Study Bible. English Standard Version*. Anglicized Edition. London: Collins, 2011. Used by permission per that Bible's copyright page. These Scripture verses are clearly noted with "ESV" in this book. The twelve non-ESV verses are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission per The Lockman Foundation's statement on BibleGateway. These Scripture verses are clearly noted with "NASB" in this book.

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To everyone
who has told a true story to someone
and that person didn't believe you.

ENDORSEMENTS

Former atheists are writing the most fulfilling books I read! Glen's *Finding Your Safety Net* is no exception. His life story is heart-warming. In these pages, we see how God is gradually shaping minds like Glen's and filling them with Jesus' truth and love.

I recently read books by a university professor, a legal editor, and a homicide detective. All three were committed atheists until they investigated evidence for Jesus themselves. When these former skeptics analyzed the reasons for reliance on God, their lives were changed as His veracity poured into their extraordinary brains. I am talking about Oxford professor C. S. Lewis, Yale-educated Lee Strobel, and UCLA-trained J. Warner Wallace. The first (Lewis) was a literary genius. The second (Strobel) is a former legal researcher. The third (Wallace) is a world-class cold-case investigator. All three were committed atheists. Then they used their mental gifts to think through the considerable case for theism.

No one would be right if they were to claim that Glen's newfound confidence in Jesus was a product of his environment. He was not raised in a Christian family or culture. His education was also secular. Glen resisted the miracles of God and the claims of Christ.

I was delighted to be Glen's friend long before he was a believer. For over 15 years, I observed Glen resist Jesus as Messiah. Then I watched with wonder as God slowly nudged Glen's analytical and graduate school-trained mind into the Scriptures, where he experienced veracity personified!

Dear Reader. It's a joy to endorse Glen Covert's work. As you read *Finding Your Safety Net*, I hope you will ask yourself, *What is keeping me from being a wholly committed follower of Jesus of Nazareth? What are my doubts and difficulties with the Bible?* Allow yourself to be inspired to search for answers to your questions in a thorough, yet reasonable way; read the Gospels, investigate, interview, and humble yourself before God and ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Let *Finding Your Safety Net* be part of your search. I am confident that reading it will be a positive step on your journey toward God. It might even be the book you have been looking for as you've been searching for your safety net for a stronger and more resilient life.

Read on!

– **George Bradley, www.JesusPDX.org and Associate Pastor at www.HopeInternationalChurch.org**

ENDORSEMENTS

I have personally witnessed Glen's journey and have been an active agent in his journey to faith in Jesus, even being privileged to baptize him. His apologetics approach to faith including a healthy skepticism only underlines the credibility of the story in this book. Through an intelligent journey with a personal touch, you'll find this book entertaining as well as thought provoking.

– **Nathan Brewer, Founder, Kyrios Ministries; Author, *The Pulse of Christ: A Fivefold Training Manual*; Church Planter and 5Q Collective Trainer.**

Glen W. Covert, M.A., presents a personal approach to the question about faith in *Finding Your Safety Net: Do Having Faith, Being Baptized, and Taking Communion Have Value?* As a social scientist and professional genealogist, he invites the reader to participate in his research for truth and the meaning of life by thoroughly studying the Bible. An entertaining and yet relevant research.

– **Paul R. Tarmann, Ph.D. and Ph.D., philosopher, linguistic scientist, and theologian. Professor of Ethics, Private University College of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems; Lecturer of Philosophy, University of Vienna. Vice President, Verein für Täufergeschichte in Österreich ("Society for the History of the Anabaptists in Austria").**

When I first heard about the idea of writing a book about baptism, I couldn't help but be skeptical. If I were asked about baptism and its role in the or my Christian faith, I would certainly say that it is undoubtedly central. But a whole book about it? I rejected the concept. At first.

As it turned out, while reading *Finding Your Safety Net*, I discovered that it's not merely about baptism alone. Instead, one finds many facets of life. The author's questions not only challenged my view on baptism but triggered new thoughts about the value of diving into Biblical and Christian topics: sometimes they aren't dealt with profoundly and extensively enough, or worse, they are considered simply way too straightforwardly.

I consider *Finding Your Safety Net's* a very good read, its greatest quality and asset being the author's unique approach: instead of only presenting potentially dry or just theologically relevant questions, he takes the radically personal standpoint of somebody who has been questioning and struggling to discover what baptism (and the Christian faith in general) could mean in the context of one's own life. The author isn't hesitant to use his academic and professional capabilities in history and genealogy to break down different aspects of baptism for the sake of insight and deeper understanding for himself and the reader.

Finding Your Safety Net isn't a collection of information about baptism, its history, or the classification of Christian perspectives on it. No, it documents a personal journey of someone who wanted to know why baptism could be important and why it could have value to him. The author's resistance to simplified explanations suggests

how important it is to think things through for oneself, and not walk down well-worn paths just because others have gone down those paths. I consider his approach very helpful in the search for a deeper conviction and well-founded opinions when it comes to faith and believing in general.

After reading *Finding Your Safety Net*, I had to ask myself anew how baptism and other related topics in Christianity and the Bible could serve as being part of my own safety net in life. This book serves as an impetus for that, and therefore makes it worth to read for practically everyone.

– **David Stroj, born in 1989, employed in museum education, and a graduate of the University of Vienna, Austria (MA in Theatre, Film, and Media Studies).**

Finding Your Safety Net is a very inspiring and interesting, but also provocative and courageous book. Glen carefully describes his personal, sometimes painful, and definitely not-straightforward life journey as he searched for meaning in his life and eventually came to have faith in Jesus Christ, be baptized, and start to celebrate Communion. The underlying message of this book is very powerful: a modern scholar with a strong scientific and non-Christian background can find a constructive connection with Jesus' teachings and become a believer. As a Christian and a social scientist, Glen shows in *Finding Your Safety Net* how innovative and academic thinking about facts and reason can coexist with belief and faith in biblically-based Christianity, even connecting and complementing each other in original, encouraging, and inspiring ways.

– **Andrej Mongiello, Master's in History, JUDr., and Ph.D. in Theoretical Legal Studies**

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I

SETTING THE STAGE

Preface

Acknowledgments

Introduction

PREFACE

- Are you thinking about being baptized but don't know why, when, or where?
- Have you already been baptized but don't remember the ceremony or have questions about it?
- Do you know someone who is unsure about whether they want to be baptized?
- Are you emotionally and intellectually curious about why others might decide to become baptized?
- Do you have questions about Communion?
- Are you wondering why some people believe in the Christian God and Jesus?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, great! This testimony is for you!

I initially wrote down this testimony for myself to make sense of the confusing cobweb of thoughts that developed from the simple question so many people had for me since becoming a believer: "When will you be baptized?" Some of those same people encouraged and inspired me to write this testimony because they found that my questions and thoughts were refreshingly unique, meaning that they could help others along in their thought journey and reinvigorate those who have already been baptized.

Finding Your Safety Net: Do Having Faith, Being Baptized, and Taking Communion Have Value? is for folks who are looking for a spiritual how-to guide, including not-yet-baptized Christian believers, agnostics, and atheists. As the subtitle suggests, I include more than my research results into baptism in this book. Indeed, I also clearly identify the most reliable, unconditional, and customizable survival tool that I have found to overcome personal, occupational, and existential crises: faith. At first, for me, baptism and/or Communion weren't part of that tool, though.

When I was thirty-seven (January 2015), I became a believer in the Christian God and Jesus. But at that time, and for two years after, I didn't worry about thinking about baptism immediately or even at all, for two reasons:

- I knew why I believed, and that was sufficient for me. My new relationship was with God and Jesus, and that was good enough for me. I didn't feel I needed anyone's stamp of approval to authenticate my journey, which I knew to be true for me. Also, few knew my story, so how could a community authenticate what they don't know?
- I wasn't interested in becoming baptized just because Jesus had been and because he instructed his disciples to baptize new believers, which is the so-called

obedience argument. I found and still find this argument uninspiring and lacking positive substance.

After two years of friendly pestering by friends, which actually became a bit annoying, and about a year after I survived my near catastrophe, I came to a resolution for myself. I'd carefully investigate baptism for five months and consider if it was something that I wanted to do. To carefully investigate, I'd keep it simple:

- base my research on what it says in the Bible
- ask fellow believers who were concerned about me for their personal insights
- read the guides and glossaries in the ESV Student Study Bible in my bookshelf, which I had received as a gift a few years earlier
- take the Baptism class at the Pentecostal church that I was going to regularly (LIFE Church Vienna)
- if and when necessary, do very limited research in online articles for topical clarifications.

I decided that if I couldn't make up my mind by the baptism date (i.e., 20 August 2017), I'd stop investigating and wouldn't worry about it until I felt like worrying about it again, realizing that might be never.

I started investigating in March 2017. I attended the Baptism class twice. I started writing my notes a month or two before the 20 August baptism. I stopped my investigation on 14 August, basically a week before the 20 August baptism date, and I was so surprised by my journey. I worked to finish writing this testimony and make it organized and understandable over the course of the twelve months after 20 August 2017. Wishful thinking. I ended up finishing the first complete draft of the first edition in April 2019.

Three years later, this second, revised and expanded edition corrects a few misspellings and grammatical errors, and clarifies a few points. This edition also more specifically encourages you to ask Christian women and men your questions about hot topics because their answers might surprise you.

Overall, my journey became as intellectual as it was emotional and uniquely personal. For starters, I began researching about baptism and quickly discovered that I had to look into Communion as well.

I also found out that I had to be 100 percent convinced and certain of my decision. Yes, more precisely, my decision measurement to be baptized: if not 100 percent sure, no, I wouldn't be baptized. Yep, not even 99.9 percent would have been sufficient. A perfect 100 percent was needed. I discovered what this 100 percent meant along the way and I think my progress bar will be surprising. Many barriers to being baptized were uniquely personal, more so than intellectual or emotional. Fascinatingly, baptism is a very personal event, as it is when a person says, "Yes, I believe."

Elaborating on the progress bar, after many topics or subtopics starting with chapter 4, you'll come across "percentage value" statements. They are there to give you

some understanding of the relative importance that the immediately discussed topic or subtopic had on my decision-making process. I've grouped all the percentage values together in chapter 15 to provide a quick and easy overview. Please do think about what your bar would be like, and have fun with it.

Since the organization of this book does not absolutely align with the order in which I discovered or understood things (see chapter 15 for my full disclaimer), I insert a "where am I in the grand scheme of things" statement four times so that you can have the big-picture view of the percentage values.

After many topics or subtopics starting with chapter 1, I've also included a "message in a nutshell". Each one is effectively the conclusion to each topic or subtopic. Each message became very important for me to untangle, understand, and make sense of the cobweb of thoughts I had on each topic or subtopic. Each one will be a helpful quick go-to statement for you.

Along the way, I found that many topics and subtopics overlapped. This made organizing this book quite difficult: how to organize everything, what to address first, etc. Many points or details were linked to topics or ideas that I chose to discuss later or had already discussed. To tie everything together, I've included footnotes as guides for you to follow should you like to read ahead about a point or detail that I mention or to refresh your memory about what I wrote earlier. In this way, this book transforms from a quick go-to guide to something you can study carefully.

If you've already been baptized and you haven't thought about your baptism since then, I guarantee you will learn something from this book because I for one learned more about my own baptism and baptism in general just by finishing this book's first edition one and a half years after my baptism. Additionally, in "Postconclusion Discovery", I document one experience that took place one and a half years after my baptism that directly related to the research that resulted in this book. While finalizing this second edition, I've discovered even more.

If you've already been baptized, you might be wondering what the value is in learning more about your baptism. Excellent question! I would compare it to why a believer should not stop reading the Bible. Scenario: upon becoming a believer, a person stops reading the Bible. Is that the recommended thing to do? No, I think every person would and should be encouraged to continue to read the Bible, reread it, and reread it again and again and again upon becoming a believer. Hence, I believe that every person who has been baptized should read this book.

Equally, if you have taken Communion and have stopped thinking about why you take it, this book will be an invaluable and inspiring read for you.

On that note, many Christians do not question the authority of John the Baptist to baptize Jesus or the believability of Paul the Apostle. This makes chapter 6 uniquely invaluable and inspiring because concerning those perhaps forgone conclusions, I carefully scrutinize John the Baptist's authority to baptize Jesus and investigate Paul the Apostle's believability. Why did I do that? Well, I didn't do so just to be provocative or mean. Instead, I decided to treat the Bible like a play or a song just to see what that

would do. As a former stage actor, I was curious about where my inquiry would lead me because in a play, besides needing a great production crew, the star must have really good supporting actors to perform well. Likewise, the performance of a song by the lead singer is only as good as the backup vocals. Therefore, while the main character in the New Testament is Jesus, I thought of John and Paul and everyone else mentioned as supporting characters whose roles are equally important to fill out the powerful message of the Bible. What I discovered became quite important for me to have an unshakable faith in baptism and Communion.

I hope you will find this book to be more than an interesting or inspiring read. Besides finding out the number of reasons for why baptism and Communion became something that I wanted to do, I hope that

- you will find answers to at least some of your questions about why belief and faith in the Christian God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are or may become critically important for your life
- you will come to your own conclusions about why baptism and taking Communion are things that you also want to do
- the person you are helping along in their spiritual journey will come to discover and accept what they know to be true
- if you've already been baptized, this book will inspire renewed curiosity in you to continue learning more about baptism and Communion.

If any of those four things happen, I will be forever thankful that I managed to finish this book – helping the world one person at a time by sharing my story.

If you are already a believer, this book will help you become much more informed about central topics in Christianity. Thus, you will be stronger, more anchored, and more unshakable in your Christian faith, and as a consequence, you will make whichever Christian community you go to or mingle with stronger and more resilient.