

The Basics Of Christianity



**“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!”
2 Corinthians 5:17**

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Preface

There's much confusion about what Christianity actually is, who can be considered a Christian, and how a person becomes one. Here's a brief look at how the Bible answers that.

If you recently put your faith in Jesus Christ, *Basics of Christianity* is a great place for you to learn more about some important topics. If you haven't taken that step but want to learn more about what Christians believe in your own search for truth, start here! This section covers topics like: What is sin, and what does salvation mean? Is it possible to resist temptation? How should we pray? And how can you tell others about Christ? Find answers to these questions and more in *Basics of Christianity*. The majority of this information was taken from messages by Billy Graham.

First and foremost let's make sure we are all on the "same page" so to speak and agree as to what the essentials of Christian Faith really are.

Essential Truths of the Faith

It's fairly easy to coast through the Christian life without thinking too deeply about the essentials of our faith. Every child of God knows the basics of the gospel, since they are necessary for salvation. But once we are saved, we need to grow in our understanding of the doctrines that are foundational for Christianity.

1. We must believe that the Bible is true.

Scripture is the heavenly Father's self-revelation about His nature, plan of salvation, and dealings with mankind. It's the final authority on life, faith, salvation, and conduct (2 Peter 1:3), and we can trust that it's without error because God inspired its writers and protected its transmission throughout history (2 Timothy 3:16).

2. There is only one God who expresses Himself in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit.

The concept of the Trinity is supported in numerous Scriptures, including Jesus' baptism when all three were present and the Great Commission in which we are told to make disciples and baptize them in one name—that of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; Matt. 28:19).

3. The Lord is the Creator of all things.

As His creatures, we exist for Him and through Him, and He has authority and power over us (1 Corinthians 8:6). God is not simply a greater version of us; He is in a totally different category because He is self-existent and the source of life. We, on the other hand, are dependent upon Him for our next breath.

These three essentials keep us grounded in the truth. If we doubt them, we will find ourselves deceived by other doctrines (Eph. 4:14).

Introduction

What Is Christianity?

Everyone who asks the question "what is Christianity?" often wonders what the truth is behind something that has been turned difficult to understand by man. As the video above says, Christianity is pretty simple. It's all about one life, the life of Jesus the Son of God. The Bible teaches that Jesus was God Himself, come to live in His world as a human. Perhaps you've never thought about it very much, but the life of Jesus has a tremendous impact on you.

The Bible teaches that because we are sinners by nature and by choice, we have a broken relationship with our Creator. We live out our days seeking fulfillment and meaning in the things that surround us, but the deepest need of the human soul is to be restored to the One who made us. Jesus came to accomplish that restoration.

A true fact about Christianity that sometimes surprises people is that Christianity is Jewish. Jesus demonstrated that He was (and is) the Messiah foretold in the Jewish Scriptures. Christianity is the culmination of Judaism. Jesus (Yeshua) was Himself, Jewish. He was brought up by faithful parents who regularly took Him to synagogue. He observed the Torah perfectly. The last recognized Jewish prophet, John the Baptist, declared that Jesus was the perfect "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The Apostles, the first disciples of Yeshua, were Jewish. After Christ's resurrection, in Luke 24:1, Jesus showed His followers how all the Hebrew prophets of former times pointed to Him, saying, "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the [Hebrew] Scriptures.

The central message of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is God the Son who came to earth to rescue sinners not only from a life of sin but also from eternal damnation in hell. Christians believe that the 66 books of the

Bible comprise the inerrant Word of God. As such, they read it, come to know God more deeply by it, stand for and live by its truth.

Who Can Be a Christian?

At the heart of what it means to be a Christian is justification—that is, being right with God (see Romans 4:20). So, another way of asking "who can be a Christian" is "who can be considered right with God?" John 1:12 says that "...as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." In other words, not everyone is automatically a child of God simply because he or she is born into the world.

Galatians 3:1 explains that one becomes a child of God "through faith in Christ Jesus." A person is not saved by faith. We are saved by Christ, the object of faith. In other words, every person who asks to be delivered from sin and trusts Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness will receive God's forgiveness. Romans 10:9 says, "...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

This forgiveness also means reception into a new family relationship with God and His people. People who follow Christ gradually take on the character of Jesus. A true child of God will be known by good works, pure thoughts, and godly attitudes. These things are not the grounds for justification. Rather, they serve as evidence of being "born again" by the Spirit of God who lives in all believers (John 3:1; Ephesians 1:1) from the very moment of salvation on.

People question the exclusivity of the Bible's claim, but it's not an arrogant stance. The gospel of Jesus Christ is no more arrogant than saying $2 + 2 = 4$. Trust in Jesus Christ is the only path to a right relationship with God. Trusting who Christ is and what He did through the cross and resurrection is what we're called to do. Rejecting that shows disregard for the truth and disrespect to the most loving being in the universe. One of the most common ways people reject Christ is by thinking, "I'm good enough to get into heaven." But the Bible says no one is good enough to enter heaven (Romans 3:10). Just one sin will keep us out of God's presence. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus commands: "Be perfect, your heavenly Father is perfect."

Furthermore, this trusting in Christ is always accompanied by repentance, according to the Bible. Repentance means turning away from sin and submitting to Jesus Christ as the ruler (Lord) of one's life. Intellectual assent to the Bible's truth without a holy pattern of life is a trait of God's enemies, not His children (James 2:1).

What makes Christianity different?

1. It is a spiritual belief that is open to all, regardless of age, religion, sex, or economic status.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

2. It is a faith relationship with God that solves the problem of sin. In other words, deliverance from sin is not achieved by one's personal adherence to a system of works. One is delivered from sin by receiving God's grace in Christ. A sinner is declared to be right with God as the merits of Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension are applied to him through faith. 2 Corinthians 2:21 says it this way: "He [God the Father] made Him who knew no sin (i.e. Jesus, God the Son) to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Other faiths believe that salvation is based on good deeds or keeping certain laws. Christianity recognizes that "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10).

The Bible clearly says that "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." (Titus 3:5)

3. Unlike Buddha, Mohammad, and other religious leaders, Christianity accepts that its Messiah, Jesus Christ, is still alive today.

"...Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." (Romans 8:34)

Jesus died on the cross for sinners, but was resurrected after three days. His resurrection vindicated the truthfulness of His message. He was witnessed by many who were eventually martyred for their faith. The historic truth of Christ's life and message has stood the test of time and will ultimately triumph over all other beliefs (Revelation 21:1).

Isn't Christianity Just a Political Movement?

No. Real Christianity is not a political movement that seeks to change the world from the outside in. Rather, it is truth that radically changes one's entire worldview from the inside out. Twentieth century British author, C.S. Lewis, said it well: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

There are many hypocrites and counterfeits in the world. And Christians can and do sin. But the general direction of a real Christian's life is to increasingly love the things that are dear to God's heart such as (see Acts 2:42) faithfully handling, believing and obeying His Word, being relationally committed to the people of His Church, worshipping Christ sincerely from the heart, and being winsome in the way one lives and shares His message of hope to the lost.

What's Missing from the Average Person's Picture of Christianity?

One Christian author* has answered the question like this:

It's like we're in a war—in a concentration camp—and suddenly you're hearing on the smuggled-in radio that the troops of deliverance have landed in helicopters five miles away. They're conquering everything in their path and they're just about to get to the gate and open the doors. And having lived all your life in this concentration camp, you're now going to be set free.

That's Christianity. It is news that God sent rescue troops into the world, namely Jesus Christ, and that at great cost to Himself He has conquered our enemy the Devil, opened the gates of the concentration camp, and welcomed us home.

And then you add the beautiful image of bride and bridegroom and realize that this is not just a soldier who simply frees you to go and do what you want to do. He's your Husband, as it were, who has been separated from you for years and years, and you're the wife who has been in the camp. And when the gates are opened, there He stands on the other side, and the affections are huge.

I remember watching at the end of the Vietnam war some of those magnificent videos of men who had been away from their wives—some of them I think up to five years. I remember watching them run toward each other and seeing them sweep their wives off their feet. My heart leapt and my tears flowed when I watched that kind of reunion. I believe it is this deeply emotional response to being rescued and united with God that is missing from so many people's picture of Christianity.

Jesus Christ

People often ask, “What makes Jesus different from all the other religious leaders who ever lived?”

The Bible—God’s authoritative word—makes it very clear that Jesus was more than just another religious teacher or prophet. It tells us instead that Jesus was unique.

How was Jesus unique? First, He was unique in His person. He wasn’t just an unusually spiritual individual. He was more than that; He was God in human flesh. Yes, He was fully man, but He was also fully God. The Bible puts it this way: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). This is what we celebrate at Christmas—God coming to earth in the form of a man.

Second, Jesus was unique in His purpose. Why did He come to earth? He came for one reason: to save us from our sins. As Jesus Himself said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). He did this by becoming the final sacrifice for our sins through His death on the cross.

We know His promise of eternal life is true because He did something no other person has ever done: He rose from the dead—what we call the resurrection—and still lives today. We invite you to look at Jesus as He is presented in the pages of the New Testament—and then to commit your life to Him.

The Bible

Where does the Bible come from?

The Bible is somewhat like a library because it is actually a collection of books. Those books were written over many centuries, and they were only gradually brought together into their present form. The first “collection” was probably the first five books of the Bible (often called the “Torah,” which is the Hebrew word for God’s Law). As time went on, other books were added.

The whole Old Testament was finished about four centuries before the time of Jesus. Only a few decades after His ministry, the books of the New Testament were written and then accepted by Christians. The most important fact about the Bible, however, is that God watched over its writing, and He has preserved it down to the present time.

The Bible isn’t just another ancient book of human wisdom—it is God’s Word, given to us to tell us how we can know God. The Bible says, “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). God guided the authors as they wrote the different books.

What place does the Bible have in your life? God wants to speak to you through its pages; are you listening? Most of all, He wants you to come to know Him by discovering Jesus Christ, who is at the Bible’s center.

Reading the Bible

The Bible is big—so big that even the greatest scholar will never exhaust its riches. But the Bible isn’t just for preachers and scholars! God wants to speak to you through His Word, and no matter who you are, the Bible can come alive to you. You may never understand everything in the Bible, but you can understand something. Samuel was still a boy, but God answered his simple prayer: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (I Samuel 3:9).

Today, many people keep the Bible a closed book. One reason is because we don’t realize how much we need it. If I suggested that you stop eating for a few months, you’d ignore me—and rightly so. We need food in order to survive, and without food we’ll grow weak and eventually die. Yet many Christians are spiritually starved and weak because they ignore the spiritual “food” God has provided in the Bible. The Bible is not an option; it is a necessity. You cannot grow spiritually strong without it. Job said, “I

have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread” (Job 23:12). Is the Bible this important to you?

So how can you discover the Bible’s message? How can the Bible become part of your life?

Learn the Bible from others. God has given some people a special gift to understand the Bible and teach it to others. The Bible says that “God has placed in the church ... teachers” (I Corinthians 12:28). Listen carefully when your pastor preaches from the Bible. In addition, seek out a Bible class in your church or community where the Bible is faithfully taught. Also check your local Christian radio station (if you live in a country that permits religious broadcasting); some of today’s most gifted Bible teachers are on radio. Investigate spending part of your vacation at a conference center devoted to Bible teaching. Many people find daily devotional books based on the Bible helpful. Although they may examine only a verse or two each day, God can use them to encourage you.

One of the most significant spiritual movements in recent decades has been the explosion in small group Bible studies. All over the world, Christians are coming together to read the Bible and share their insights. The Bible says, “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another” (Colossians 3:16). Jesus promised, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20, NKJV).

Learn the Bible on your own. If you have never read the Bible, or you started reading it once but got bogged down, let me encourage you to discover the Bible for yourself. How can you do this?

First, come to the Bible joyfully. Bible reading shouldn’t be a burden but a joy! I vividly remember the day I received Ruth’s letter saying she had decided to accept my proposal for marriage. I probably read and reread it dozens of times that day. God wants to talk with us through His Word; in fact, it is His “love letter” to us. Why shouldn’t we come to it joyfully?

Then come to the Bible prayerfully and expectantly. Ask God to speak to you through its pages and expect Him to do so. This doesn’t mean that every time we open the Bible we’ll find something new; God may be underlining truths we already know. But let the psalmist’s prayer become yours: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18).

In addition, come to the Bible systematically. Some people open their Bibles almost at random or simply reread passages they already know.

While God can certainly speak to us through any passage, we also need to remember that the Bible wasn't written [to be read] that way.

Get in the habit of reading the Bible the way it was written: one book at a time. I often suggest people begin by reading through one of the Gospels, such as John, perhaps only a few paragraphs at a time. Later you can read Acts, which tells of the early Christians, or some of the New Testament letters. Psalms in the Old Testament—the “hymnbook” of the Bible—has blessed generations of believers, while Proverbs gives practical guidance for daily living. Psalms teaches us how to relate to God, and Proverbs teaches us how to relate to others.

Also come to the Bible thoughtfully. In other words, be sure you understand what you are reading. Several years ago, a woman told me that her grandmother reads a chapter of the Bible every day. Then she added, “But whenever I ask her what she's just read, she can't tell me. Reading the Bible is just a habit that doesn't seem to make any impression on her.”

Focus on what the passage is really saying. What is happening in it? What is its central point or primary teaching? What does it say about God, or about Jesus, or about someone's response to God?

Finally, come to the Bible obediently. James wrote, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). Is God pointing out a truth you should believe or something you should do? Is He revealing a sin for which you need to repent? Remember: God never leads us to do anything that is contrary to His Word. But the opposite is also true: God always leads us to do everything that is in agreement with His Word.

God gave the Bible to us because He wants us to know Him and love Him and serve Him. Most of all, He gave it to us so we can become more like Christ. Make the Bible part of your life—beginning today.

Reading and Understanding the Bible

The Bible is God's Word to us. It's His message of love and forgiveness, and shows us how we can have eternal life. It can also answer questions you have as you strive to live a life that pleases Him. That's why Christians should try to read the Bible daily.

Here are some suggestions:

First, read one chapter from the Gospel of John each day. This will help you understand the basics of the Gospel. (Books of the Bible are typically listed in the front of the Bible.)

Second, read Acts, the exciting story of how Jesus Christ's first disciples told others about how He died and rose again.

Third, read the letters that Christ's apostles wrote to His first followers—all who were new in their faith. These letters are the book of Romans through the book of III John.

Fourth, go back and read one of the other three gospels: Matthew, Mark or Luke. You might not understand everything you read in the Bible, but don't let that discourage you. The Bible tells us what God is like and offers us wisdom. As you read it, ask yourself:

- 1. What does this passage mean?**
- 2. What is God saying to me in this passage?**
- 3. How can I apply this to my own life?**

As you read your Bible regularly, you will begin to understand more of it.

Here are 4 more ways to get more out of your reading:

- 1. Read the Psalms, the Old Testament book of worship, to enrich your devotion to God.**
- 2. Read Proverbs to gain wisdom and strengthen your relationship with others.**
- 3. Pray for understanding. The Holy Spirit can help you, and you will begin to see life from God's perspective.**
- 4. Talk to others about what you're learning. Try to attend a small group Bible study.**

Sin

What is sin? Some call it “errors” or “mistakes” or “poor judgment.” This may be a good starting point, but as we learn more about God and the Bible, we see that it’s something much more serious. Sin is falling short of the perfect standard God has set. And, by our very nature, we are all falling short of His standard. We are all guilty. We have all sinned against Him.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and that the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The angel announced to Joseph that the Child in Mary’s womb should be called “Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to be baptized, he exclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The Bible mentions sin so frequently for a very good reason—it is sin, our sin, that separates us from God and, if not dealt with through faith and repentance, it brings eternal death. Facing the truth about our sin and its deadly consequences is a biblical prerequisite to receiving Jesus as Savior.

That’s why I was shocked when I attended a Christian conference and one of the speakers said that we should not mention sin in our preaching because it is offensive. Sin certainly is offensive, but the Person who is affronted is the Holy God. God hates sin. He is eternally, fiercely opposed to it and cannot tolerate it in His presence.

That’s why the Scripture spends so much time speaking about sin. It is our fundamental problem and, if ignored, leaves us to rely on our own futile resources for a solution.

However, as much emphasis as the Bible places on the reality and peril of sin, it puts an even greater weight on the cure for sin—salvation through personal faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Sin has been dealt with. There is deliverance because we have a Deliverer. There is salvation because we have a Savior. There is redemption because we have a Redeemer.

The Good News is that God forgives sin. He poured out His divine wrath against it by punishing His own Son on the cross. “He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5, NASB). Sin’s penalty—eternal death—was paid in full when Jesus died as our substitute at Calvary.

When we turn from our sin—acknowledge our rebellion against God and utter inability to save ourselves—and turn to God in faith, we receive the free gift of salvation. We did nothing to earn it, because we can't.

Amazingly, God not only took away our sins, He also credited His righteousness to us. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21, NASB). Martin Luther called this the "great exchange," our sin for His righteousness.

Sin is indeed bad news. We are lost, hopeless and without God. However, as we put aside our pride and admit our sin, we are ready to receive the glorious salvation of Jesus Christ.

If I'm a Christian and keep sinning, will God turn away from me?

It's true that sin puts up a barrier between us and God and cuts us off from the fellowship He wants us to have with Him. The Bible says, "But your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

But that doesn't mean God refuses to have anything to do with us. In fact, He wants us to come back to Him and have our fellowship with Him restored—and He does everything He can to wake us up and bring us to repentance. Sometimes the only way He can do this is by making us so miserable that we finally realize what we've done and turn back to Him. Sometimes He quietly shows His love to us even when we don't deserve it, hoping to awaken us to His goodness.

Think about what happens in a family when someone wrongs his or her relative. That person is still a member of the family; nothing can change that. But a barrier has come between that person and the rest of the family; their fellowship has been broken. The only way to restore it is by confessing the sin and asking for forgiveness. The same is true with us.

Don't let sin come between you and God. God loves you, and Christ died to take away our sins. When we do sin, however, we need to confess it and seek God's forgiveness at once. The longer it goes on, the more the devil rejoices.

Salvation

Salvation is being saved or rescued from the penalty of sin. We are all sinners, and the consequence of sin is death—not just physical death, but eternal separation from God. To be saved from your sin, take these three steps: Ask forgiveness for your sins; be willing to turn from your sins; and believe that Jesus Christ—our Lord and Savior—died for your sins and rose again.

If you have done these things, you are saved! You have salvation, which means you have accepted God's love and forgiveness, are adopted into His family and have fellowship with His people—your fellow Christians. You are free from the power of sin—a child of God! The Bible promises you eternity in heaven (Romans 10:9-10).

How are we saved?

John 3:16-17 and John 10:10 tell of the great love God has for us. Because of His love, He wants us to come to Him just as we are. He wants to have a personal relationship with us and longs for us to talk to Him freely about our sins and our needs.

God revealed His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins more than 2,000 years ago. Jesus understands us because He lived as a man on earth for 33 years. He lived a sinless life and paid the price for our sins by offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross. He rose from the dead three days later and went up into heaven, where He intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

Don't good people go to heaven?

Many people think that being good will get them into heaven—that if they are nice, don't commit any crimes and try to do the right thing, they have earned their way into God's kingdom.

But the Bible says we all fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). We all sin, and the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). There's nothing we can do to earn our way into heaven.

But God made a way by sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins! None of us are good enough to get to heaven on our own, but if we ask Christ into our lives, we can look forward to eternity with Him in heaven. It's not about good things you've done, but about what Christ has done for you (Ephesians 2:8). It's not about emotions you might feel, but about what

God's Word tells you (I John 5:11-13). Jesus provides the only path to salvation.

So what do I do?

Jesus has all power and authority over sin and evil (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 2:14-15; I John 3:8), and through Him we can also live victorious lives. We read in II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" The Bible also says in I Corinthians 15:57: "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

To be saved, admit to God that you are a sinner. We are all sinners and because God is holy, He cannot tolerate sin. Yet because He loves us, He forgives our sins when we ask for forgiveness. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation, but it is only by God's grace—His undeserved mercy—that we can be saved.

That doesn't mean we should go on sinning, relying on God to forgive us later. God is holy, and our sin is a direct rebellion against His holiness. We should take it seriously, realize we were wrong and actively try to turn from our sins—that's called repentance. Repentance carries with it the idea of confession, remorse and changing our ways to become more like Jesus.

Once you repent and ask forgiveness, recognizing Jesus as your Savior, thank God for His love and acceptance of you. If we give ourselves to Jesus, He comes into our hearts and lives there (Revelation 3:20). We must commit ourselves to Him and trust Him alone as our Savior and Lord.

Have complete confidence in everlasting life by accepting Christ, and experience the joy that comes from knowing Him personally.

The Holy Spirit

It is impossible to understand the Bible, Christian living, the structure of the church or our own relationship with God without understanding the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an “it.” The Holy Spirit is a person. The Bible says that He is not something. He is Someone. He is God.

To understand this better, let’s talk about the Trinity. There are three persons in the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christians do not worship multiple gods. God the Son, or Jesus Christ, was God in human form. The Holy Spirit lives inside us when we accept Christ and helps us grow closer to God.

The moment we receive Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is all-powerful and present everywhere. The Holy Spirit teaches us and takes us deeper into God’s truth as we go along in our Christian life.

There is not a person anywhere who can be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. There is not a person who can follow Christ without the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit sees everything that goes on. He knows what goes on in our hearts. He knows what goes on in our minds. Nothing is hidden from Him.

The Holy Spirit is also called holy. The Bible says, “Be holy, because I am holy” (I Peter 1:16). One of the Holy Spirit’s ministries is to help make us holy—to become more like Christ.

How does the Holy Spirit work?

First, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8, NKJV). He uses a mother’s prayers, or a tragic experience, or a pastor’s sermon, or some other experience to convict us of sin and of our need to give our lives to Jesus Christ. He points to us and says, “You are a sinner. You need to repent.”

We don’t like to hear that, but without conviction, we could never have our sins forgiven, we could never be saved and we could never go to Heaven.

Second, the Holy Spirit gives new life. The Bible says that we are dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1). Our spirit within us, made in the image of God, is dead toward God. Mankind needs life. Yet, we have all sinned and, therefore, are dead toward God. The Holy Spirit, however, gives us new life

in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “No one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again”(John 3:3).

But how is someone born again? What does that mean? The Holy Spirit is the one who makes you born again; it is a supernatural act. It isn't the good things we've done, but God's mercy through the Holy Spirit that saves us (Titus 3:5). All we have to do is accept the free gift of salvation by accepting Christ.

Third, the Holy Spirit lives in us. As you read this, you may realize that you are spiritually dead, but God says, “I will put my Spirit in you. I will come to live in you.” That's the reason we should never take anything unclean into our bodies. That's the reason we should discipline our bodies. God loves your body. He doesn't want it polluted by fleshly lusts or harmful substances. The Bible says, “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?” (I Corinthians 3:16).

Fourth, The Holy Spirit gives you power to serve Christ. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). Christ is coming back again, and He is ready to come into your heart by the Holy Spirit and make you a new person. Will you accept Christ as your Savior?

Baptism

Do Christians have to be baptized? And what does baptism really mean?

Baptism is not required to go to heaven, but it is a sign of obedience to God and a way of publicly declaring your decision to follow Christ. Christ commands His followers in Matthew 28:19 to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Remember that nothing we do will earn us salvation. Salvation is not about our actions, but about what Christ has done for us—the fact that He died for our sins. We must recognize our sin and ask forgiveness for it, but the Bible says that we are saved “by grace ... through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is God’s undeserved mercy.

You might recall the criminal who hung on a cross next to Christ when He was crucified. The criminal confessed Christ as Lord, and even though he didn’t have a chance for baptism, his place in Heaven was secured (Luke 23:43). God is a perfect, holy God, and there is nothing we can do to be good enough to spend eternity with Him in heaven. It’s all about what He has done for us.

At the same time, when we trust in Christ and desire to live the way He wants us to, it will show in our actions. We are changed because of His work in us. Baptism means that we identify ourselves with Christ; it’s a sign that He washed away our sins by His death on the cross. Just as water often symbolizes life in the Bible, baptism is a sign of our new life with Christ.

Christian churches haven’t always agreed on the details of baptism—how to do it or when, but they agree on its importance. Baptism reminds us that we aren’t saved by our own good works, but because of Christ and what He did for us on the cross. As evangelist Billy Graham has said: “Baptism is a conclusive act of obedience and witness to the world that we are Christ’s.”

God's Forgiveness

Believing in God's forgiveness of your sin isn't always easy. But if you have sincerely given your life to Jesus and are trusting Him alone for your salvation, then God has promised to forgive you. The Bible says, "This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life" (1 John 5:11-12). That includes you! The key is to depend not on your feelings, but on facts—the fact of Jesus' death and resurrection for you, the fact of your commitment to Him, the fact of God's promise to forgive you. Feelings come and go, and they can deceive us.

The facts of God's Word, however, don't change. You can depend on them. Don't focus on your feelings, but on Jesus Christ and what He has done for you. Imagine for a moment that you had a very wealthy relative, and one day you received a call from an attorney telling you that she died and left you a million dollars. What would you do? You might say, "Oh well, it can't be true," but would that be wise? Instead, you would probably accept by faith what he told you, and then begin to act on it. In a far greater way, Jesus Christ offered you a gift—the gift of salvation—and you have accepted it. Now act on it! Begin by thanking Him for saving and forgiving you, and seek to live for Him every day.

Does God forgive future sins?

One of the Bible's greatest truths is that Christ died to take away all our sins—not just part of them, but all of them: past, present and future.

You shouldn't fear losing your salvation every time you sin. If that were the case, we would lose our salvation every day. Even if our actions are pure, our thoughts often are not. And even if our actions and thoughts are pure, we still sin because of the good things we should do but don't.

Never forget: Your salvation does not depend on you and how good you are; it depends solely on Christ and what He has already done for you through His death on the cross. The Bible says that Christ "appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

Does that mean it doesn't matter whether or not you sin? No, of course not. Sin is serious; it is an offense to God, and it breaks our fellowship with Him. God calls us to "be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). We should also be a good witness for Christ; others should be able to look at us and tell that something is different about our lives.

You can't live the Christian life in your own strength. You need God's help, which is why He has given His Holy Spirit to you. When you sin, confess it immediately, then seek the Holy Spirit's help each day to live as you should.

God's Will

God has a plan for every one of us. Many people go through life without ever thinking about it, but that doesn't change the fact that God put us here for a purpose. We aren't here by accident; we're here because God put us here. And He put us here for a reason—so we could come to know Him in a personal way, and then live the way He wants us to live.

This is the greatest discovery you will ever make: You were created to know God and to be His friend forever. God not only has a general purpose for each of us, but He also has a specific plan for each of our lives. God knows all about you, and He has a plan for you.

That's why you can pray and seek God's will when you face decisions, and it is why you can know God is with you every moment of the day. The Bible says, "Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path" (Psalm 27:11).

Knowing God's will

Knowing God's will can give you peace in the midst of suffering and everyday trials. When you are in constant fellowship with God, He will lead you in the fulfillment of His plan.

To know God's will, you must first know God Himself. You can do that by committing your life to Jesus Christ, who was God in human flesh. Christ came to earth to show us what God is like and save us from our sins, and once you accept Him into your heart, you are a child of God! You can know God's specific will for your life.

If you have accepted Christ, here are some ways to understand God's will for you:

— Make right any behavior or relationships that might keep you from knowing God's will. Is there a certain sin that continues to plague your life? Are you in an unhealthy relationship? Confess any wrongdoing, eliminate anything that might distract you from living a godly life and commit your life to God who can make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:6). The Bible says, "I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:16).

— God will never ask you to do something outside of His will. Do you feel like He's telling you to take a certain action? Have godly friends encouraged you to use a certain talent? Don't ignore wise advice or your own common sense.

— Look at God’s Word, the Bible. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” What does God command of you? Has a verse motivated you to do something?

— Pray and ask God to reveal His will to you.

— Make a list of pros and cons when faced with a decision. As you seek God’s guidance, weigh your options.

How do you know when God is speaking?

Have you felt a tug to do something and wondered if it’s God speaking? Our feelings and emotions can be tricky, and they can deceive us—especially if we depend on them alone for making a decision. God gave us our emotions, and they are important, but He also gave us our mental abilities, and when we face a decision, we need to look at it carefully and logically. Part of discerning God’s will is to ask Him to help us see all sides of an issue—sometimes with help from others we trust.

But emotion and intellect aren’t enough. When we face a decision, we need to pray about it, trusting God to lead us. We also need to do it in light of God’s Word, the Bible. God will never lead you to do something that is not in accord with the Bible. Also remember to have an open mind when waiting for God to respond to your prayer. He might not answer right away, or His answer might be something you haven’t considered.

The Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6, NASB). Make sure of your commitment to Christ, then submit every decision you face to Him. When we sincerely want God’s will above all else, He will help us know what is right.

Living Daily With God

When we come to Christ, the barriers between us and God are broken down, and God Himself lives within us through His Holy Spirit. In other words, we now know God and He knows us. Think of it: We have a personal relationship with the God of the universe!

But like any other relationship, it needs to be nurtured and strengthened. If it isn't, it will wither and grow cold; God will seem distant to us, and we will no longer think of Him as our friend. We might even drift into behaviors that don't honor Him and instead lead us to destruction. The Bible warns, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. ... The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15, 17).

Worldly values include greed, lust and obsession with one's status. Godly values include serving and loving others and humility.

So how do we learn to do God's will—to walk with Him—every single day? Think of a human friendship: How do we grow closer to someone on a human level? By spending time with that person—talking, listening, sharing concerns and lending a hand when he or she needs help.

The same is true with God. When we read or hear His Word, the Bible, He speaks to us. When we pray, we speak to Him. And when we worship Him and obey Him, we are doing His will and participating in His work.

Followers of Christ are often called disciples. Once you decide to follow Him, it's important to begin a life of discipleship, following His teaching and telling others what He has done for us on the cross. If you have not already done so, try to organize your day so that you have a special time to spend alone with God. Be sure you don't neglect this "quiet time" because it will give you strength and power to resist Satan (James 4:7), to live above your circumstances (Romans 5:3-5) and to become a victorious Christian (1 Corinthians 10:13). It's also important to read your Bible daily. This will help you mature spiritually (Colossians 1:10; Ephesians 3:17-19).

As you give your heart and life to Christ, you will grow as a Christian. Worship and fellowship in a Gospel-preaching church are also necessary for spiritual growth. Here's more on church.

Temptation

Every Christian faces temptation. Even Jesus was tempted! So how can you resist the urge to give in and stay strong?

Think of it this way: Did you ever play with a couple of magnets when you were a child? If you did, you'll remember that the closer they got to each other, the harder it was to pull them apart.

Temptation is something like that. The more you dwell on it and the closer you let it get to you, the stronger its attraction will be. In fact, if you don't look out, the time may come when it will be almost impossible to pull away from it. Don't let that happen!

The first step you need to take is to flee from whatever is tempting you. Get as far from it as possible. The Apostle Paul told his young friend, Timothy, to "flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace" (II Timothy 2:22).

Also remember that our thoughts are as important as our actions. In fact, Jesus had strong words for people who were outwardly righteous but inwardly corrupt. One reason is because our actions typically start with our thoughts. The Bible says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:19).

Don't entertain tempting thoughts. Avoid anything that fills your mind with sinful thoughts and fill it instead with good things by studying God's Word and praying for His guidance.

Most of all, you need God's help to fight this battle. If you have never done so, turn to Christ and ask Him to come into your life. Then ask Him to fill your heart with His love and power, and to crowd out whatever is wrong in your life. God has promised that "when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out" (I Corinthians 10:13). Ask Him to show you the way out—and then take it.

Prayer

Have you ever asked yourself what prayer is? Prayer is simply talking to God. It is for every moment of our lives, not just for times of suffering or joy. In fact, we should also use prayer to thank God for everything He has done in our lives.

Many people pray haphazardly. A few words spoken hastily in the morning, then we say goodbye to God for the rest of the day. At night we push through a few sleepy petitions. That is not the example of prayer that Jesus gave.

The Bible tells us to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This doesn’t mean we should spend every minute of the day on our knees, but that we should have a prayerful attitude at all times—acknowledge our dependence on God, obey Him and talk to Him throughout the day. Prayer should not be our last resort; we should start every day by giving it to God.

God loves us and has promised to hear us when we pray. How can you learn to pray? First, understand why prayer is possible.

Prayer is possible because Jesus Christ removed the barrier between us and God—a barrier caused by our sins. You see, sin separates us from God, and because of that, we have no right to come before Him. But by His death on the cross, Christ paid the penalty for our sins and removed the barrier. God then gives us the privilege of coming into His presence when we commit our lives to Christ. The Bible says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). If you have never done so, ask Christ to come into your life today.

Then understand that God now welcomes you into His presence and promises to hear you. The Bible says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14).

Even if God doesn’t seem to answer your prayers at first, don’t stop praying. He loves you, and no prayer goes unanswered. Sometimes, God answers our prayers when we don’t realize it; He might answer “No,” or “Wait.” Yes, we think we know what’s best for us, but God sees the whole picture, and sometimes He lovingly refuses to give us what we request because He knows it isn’t according to His perfect plan.

We should also pray for others—even our enemies—as well as our leaders. When we pray for them, we should have faith that our prayers will be answered, but at the same time, remember to seek God’s will.

The Bible says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (James 1:5-6).

Maybe you find yourself praying in church, with a group of friends or at work. Sometimes, though, it might be easier to pray and hear God in silence. God Himself said, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Try to find a quiet place where you can approach God without distraction and give Him your complete attention. No matter where you pray, remember: Personal testimonies, church history and the Bible all confirm that prayer works.

Church

People often ask, “Why is church important? Why do I need to go to a church once I’m saved?”

The Bible encourages believers—new and old alike—to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18). The first step in this process is to become actively involved in the ministry of a local church.

All Christians are members of the body of Christ. In fact, church is not just a building but a group of people who have decided to follow Christ as their Savior. It is God’s will that Christians meet together as a spiritual body on the local level, which they have been doing for nearly 2,000 years. A number of New Testament letters were written to local groups of believers in different parts of the Roman Empire.

There are four main reasons we need church

First, we need to identify ourselves with God’s people, to be counted as Christ’s followers, to come together and remain strong in the faith. Interaction with other believers builds friendship and gives spiritual stability. The writer of Hebrews 10:25 admonished the first-century followers of Christ: “Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back again is drawing near” (TLB). We cannot overemphasize the importance of fellowship in the church. There is something about fellowship within the body of believers in the local church that is unique and cannot be found elsewhere. If one live coal falls from the fire, it soon grows cold. The same principle holds true in the spiritual sense. To neglect fellowship in church is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians. We gather together to share our faith and strengthen one another in the Lord.

Second, church brings people together for worship. There is nothing to compare with the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian’s heart and mind during the singing of hymns and songs of praise, public Scripture readings, prayer and the teaching of God’s Word.

Third, regular and accurate teaching of the Bible helps us grow and live successfully as Christians. Teaching that is in step with biblical truths convicts us to do what’s right and helps us lovingly hold our fellow Christians accountable.

Fourth, church is ideal for serving Christ and others. The evangelist Billy Graham once wrote, “I would choose a church which opens its arms to everyone with a spiritual need, regardless of social standing or race, one which has concerns about the social sins of the community, which has a missionary vision and spirit which cooperates with any worthwhile effort to bring Christ to the world. I would also choose a church which is worthy of one’s (financial gifts), and where I could unstintingly give of my talents and capabilities for the glory of God.” As we seek a church like this, we will have the opportunity to minister to others. Our lives will bear witness to Christ’s love (Matthew 5:16).

Other things to look for in a church

Churches differ by congregation and community, but the main goal is to find one that focuses on teaching the Bible. Key teachings include: the Bible as the true, authoritative Word of God (II Timothy 3:16); there is one God who exists in three persons—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Matthew 28:18-19); salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9); and spiritual maturity that develops as Christians dedicate themselves to prayer, studying the Bible and obeying God (II Timothy 3:16-17; Colossians 2:6-7).

No church is perfect. Every church is made up of sinners who struggle with the same things you do, so fellowship might require patience, forgiveness and love. Realize that you, too, are in need of these things.

It’s also wise to not get involved with groups that call themselves Christians but deviate from the message of the Bible or don’t practice what they preach. We should, however, still love and care for people who identify with these groups and use opportunities to share our faith with them.

Telling Others About Jesus

The Bible teaches that true followers of Christ will desire to tell others about Him and what He's done in their lives. (See John 4:28-30, 39-42 and I John 1:1-4.) Sharing with others—sometimes called witnessing since we are witnesses to Christ—is a vital part of the Christian life.

God commands us and empowers us to be His witnesses (Matthew 4:19; Acts 1:8). Your testimony—or the story of how you came to trust in Christ—might not always be accepted, but through the Holy Spirit, you can receive power to live a victorious Christian life and serve Christ effectively. (See Ephesians 5:18 and Luke 11:13.)

Here are a few suggestions that might help you lead others to Christ: Live a consistent Christ-centered life (Matthew 5:17); be a friend and a good listener; pray that the Holy Spirit will give opportunities to share with others and prepare the individual to receive God's Word (John 16:7-11); and avoid arrogance and preachiness. Pray daily for the people on your prayer list and ask God for wisdom as you share Christ with them. (See James 1:5, 3:17.)

The Gospel

When learning more about God or telling others about Him, you might wonder what exactly the word “Gospel” means. And how can you understand it? Here are 10 things you should know about the Gospel.

1. The definition

What is the Gospel? In I Corinthians 15:1-5, the Apostle Paul wrote, “I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve [disciples].” Christ also appeared to others, but the main point is that He died for our sins and rose again so we could have eternal life.

2. It's simple

You will be quick to notice that the Gospel is composed of two parts: First, Christ died for our sins; second, Christ rose from the dead.

3. It's not a religion

Religion is mankind's quest for God. The Gospel is the God seeking lost men and women through the Savior Jesus Christ. Religion can only produce an outward reformation; the Gospel creates an inward transformation.

4. It's free

No one can buy salvation. It comes as a free gift—by God's grace through our faith in Christ.

5. It's for anyone and everyone

It is called the “Gospel of our salvation” because it is “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

6. It will free you

It is called the “Gospel of peace” because, through Christ, it makes peace between the sinner and God. Christ is the bridge to bring us to God.

7. It happened once for all time

Christ died once for our sins. It was a one-time event and provides a way to everlasting life today and forever.

8. It's unique

The key difference between our supernatural faith and other religions of the world is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

9. Its work has been done

A young pastor asked an aged and dying woman if she had made her peace with God. "No, I have not made peace with God, and I am not afraid to die," she said. "You see, I do not need to make peace with God. Jesus Christ made peace with God 2,000 years ago, through the blood of His cross, and I am simply resting in the peace that He made."

10. You can receive it

If you will receive Christ, He will receive you, and you will find that this Gospel, which tells of His death, burial, and resurrection, is the power of God for eternal salvation. "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

What The Bible Says About Being A Christian

According to Acts 11:26, the followers of Jesus were first called Christians at Antioch. Why were they called Christians? Because they were “followers of Christ.” They had committed their lives to “walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6).

Other Scriptures explain how a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ and begins this relationship. For example, Ephesians 2:8-9 reveals that a person becomes a Christian by faith, not by following a list of rules or good works: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” A true Christian has faith in Jesus as the Savior.

Romans 10:9-10 says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” A true Christian is unashamed to say Jesus is Lord and believes Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

First Corinthians 15:3 says this message of the resurrected Jesus is of “first importance.” Without Jesus’ resurrection our faith is “futile,” and we are “still in [our] sins” (v. 7). A true Christian lives by faith in the resurrected Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:13-14).

Paul writes, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. . . . The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Romans 8:9, 16). A true Christian has God’s Holy Spirit living within.

The evidence of a true Christian is displayed in both faith and action. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). James says, “I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18). Jesus put it this way: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). A true Christian will show his faith by how he lives.

Despite the wide variety of beliefs that fall under the general “Christian” label today, the Bible defines a true Christian as one who has personally received Jesus Christ as Savior, who trusts in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness of sins, who has the Holy Spirit residing within, and whose life evinces change consistent with faith in Jesus.

Is There Such A Thing As An Ex-Christian?

This is a question for which there is definitely a clear and explicit biblical answer. First John 2:19 declares, “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.” This Scripture makes it abundantly clear—there is no such thing as an ex-Christian. If a person is truly a Christian, he/she will never depart from the faith “...for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us...” If a person who claimed to be a Christian denies the faith, he/she was not truly a Christian. “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us...their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

No, there is truly no such thing as an ex-Christian.

It is important to distinguish between a true Christian and an “in name only” Christian. A true Christian is a person who has fully trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. A true Christian is a person who understands what the Bible says about sin, sin’s penalty, who Jesus is, what Jesus did for us, and how that provides for the forgiveness of sin. A true Christian is a person who has received Jesus Christ as personal Savior, has been made a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and is progressively being transformed into the image of Christ. A true Christian is a person who is kept a Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:13, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:22). This true Christian can never become an ex-Christian. No one who has truly and fully trusted in Christ as Savior could ever deny Him. No one who truly comprehends the evil of sin, the terror of sin’s consequences, the love of Christ, and the grace and mercy of God, could ever turn back from the Christian faith.

There are many in this world who claim to be Christians, but are not. Being a Christian does not mean being an American or having white skin. Being a Christian does not mean recognizing that Jesus was a great teacher or even seeking to follow His teachings. Being a Christian means being a representative of Christ and a follower / servant of Christ. There are people who have had some connection to a “Christian” church and then later renounced that connection. There are people who have “tasted” and “sampled” Jesus Christ, without ever actually receiving Him as Savior.

However, there is no such thing as a true ex-Christian. A true Christian will never, and could never, renounce the faith. Any person who claimed to be a Christian, but later rejects the Christian faith, was never truly a Christian.

Answers To Common Questions From NonBelievers

[Answers To Questions](#)

1. "I don't believe that God exists. How can anybody be sure?"

Recognize that, logically, neither atheism nor agnosticism make sense.

Atheism requires complete knowledge of everything (which no human has) in order to declare for certain that there is no God. Agnostics claim that they can't know anything for sure, but it's a contradiction to say, "One thing I know about God: You can't know anything about Him." Explain the evidence for God's existence: Every effect has a cause (Both science and the Bible acknowledge that the universe had a beginning, and that it couldn't have arrived without a force behind it), Every creation has a Creator (Nature itself points toward its Creator and reveals what He is like), Every design has a Designer (The intricate design all around you - from the patterns the universe to the uniqueness of a DNA strand - show that they must have resulted from an intelligent Designer rather than just mindless happenstance), Communication requires a Communicator (the cells in people's bodies are filled with complex instructions that were programmed by Someone intelligent to communicate that information), and Every law has a Lawgiver (The universal moral law of what's right and what's wrong transcends cultures, and must have come from an outside source - the One who gave all humans a conscience. Not only that, but people's universal inability to keep the moral code perfectly reveals that all humans need forgiveness from a Savior).

Understand that God must be personal, as well, because He created people to be personal (with wills, emotions, personalities, volitions, and ambitions), and He Himself must be at least as sophisticated as who He has created. Realize also that God reveals Himself to the world so He can be sought. Know that He wants people to seek Him, and promises that if they do, they'll find Him.

2. "But what about evolution? Couldn't God have created us but used evolution to do it?"

Acknowledge that species have indeed changed over time to survive, but that the theory of evolution mistakenly claims that those adaptations can actually result in the creation of new species.

It also inaccurately claims that life itself could have randomly evolved from non-living material. Understand that the mathematical probability of life originating at random is so miniscule as to render that concept absurd. Know that the process of evolution (new, additional genetic information occurring in living forms or new life by genetic mutation) has never been observed in all of recorded history. Realize that the earth's fossil record reveals that every living form has appeared suddenly and completely developed - not through gradual transition, as the evolution theory would suggest.

Understand that current research in molecular biology has revealed what evolution's original theorist, Charles Darwin, didn't know: Proteins and nucleic acids are too structurally complex to have arisen spontaneously in the same place at the same time, and all the amino acids in DNA are of the same molecular orientation and couldn't have begun by chance, so life could not have originated solely by chemical means. Acknowledge that it's irrational to believe that something can come from nothing, that chaos birthed order, and that lifeless matter produced consciousness. Remember that, while evolutionists claim that biological life arose accidentally, people don't see information arising accidentally anywhere in the physical world. Realize that accepting the theory of evolution requires faith, just as believing in creationism does, because no human alive today can travel back in time to observe what happened when the universe began. Acknowledge that creationism is just as scientific as evolution, because each seeks to explain within its framework all the real known data of science and history. Know that, while the Bible leaves the time frame meant by "day" in the creation account unspecified, the point isn't how much time the process took. Recognize that the Bible is very clear about what matters most - Who is responsible for creation (God).

3. "How do I know the Bible is really true?"

Realize that many more ancient copies and portions of the Bible have been found than those of any other ancient manuscript.

Know that each of those biblical writings have been accepted as authentic by historians. Recognize that many of the biblical accounts were recorded just a short time after they took place, in contrast to the huge time gap of centuries that existed with most other ancient manuscripts.

Understand that when various biblical manuscripts have been scrutinized against each other, they've been proven to be consistent. Realize that no other ancient document can even come close to the New Testament in terms of number of manuscripts found and the closeness in time to the original autographs, so questioning the New Testament's credibility would require tossing out the validity of every other ancient manuscript ever

found. Recognize that the Bible qualifies as the most reliable, verifiable source ever written. Consider the myriad of archeological discoveries that verify people, places, and events the Bible mentions.

Also consider the hundreds of biblical prophecies that have been fulfilled in specific and meticulous ways - often, long after the prophetic writer had died. Think about the Bible's historical and scientific accuracy. Ponder how indestructible the Bible has proven to be, despite many attempts throughout history to either censor or eradicate it. Realize that the Bible's unique structure points to its reliability, since it maintains perfect unity and consistency throughout, despite its 66 different books written by at least 40 different people from all walks of life over a period of 2,000 years.

Consider how profoundly the Bible has impacted world culture and events - more than any other document in human history. Think about the Bible's unique power to change people's lives.

4. "What about all the errors in the Bible?"

Admit that the Bible contains complicated passages that can be difficult to understand. But be assured that a proven error has never been found in all of Scripture.

All 66 books of the Bible are the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God. Remember that, although the New Testament wasn't officially compiled until the Council of Nicea in 327 A.D., the early Church already acknowledged the same 27 New Testament books long before then. Understand that, while early Christians wrestled with doctrinal differences, they agreed on the core of the faith - the essential beliefs related to Jesus and the salvation He offers. Know that what can appear to be variations in biblical narratives are not contradictions. Realize that, just like modern journalists, the author of each biblical book mentioned only the details that were most vividly impressed on their minds or the minds of those who witnessed the different events. Understand that a partial account doesn't mean a false account, and that none of the details mentioned in any of the accounts conflict with details in other accounts.

Consider that all of the biblical authors openly acknowledged that they were writing with divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and if all of them were wrong in those claims, then they were either lying or insane - neither of which makes sense, because they wrote the world's most beautiful literature containing the most perfect moral code ever devised. Think beyond mere assumptions as you wrestle with the Bible's difficult passages. For example, rather than assuming that a race of people not descended from Adam and Eve must have existed for Cain to find a wife, realize that he could have married one of his sisters, especially since the

command against incest didn't come from Moses until at least 400 years later. Understand that the Bible is reliable because its specific and verifiable claims have all been found to be true, eyewitnesses to biblical events and many other people throughout history have testified to its credibility, and biblical teachings have profoundly impacted the world in ways that go far beyond any other book.

5. "What makes Jesus so different from other great men of history?"

Recognize that Jesus stands out above all people because of: His prophesied coming, His supernatural birth, His miraculous deeds, His distinctive teaching, and His actions that substantiated His claims.

Understand that the greatest proof of Jesus' uniqueness is His resurrection, which has been verified extensively, through evidence such as the testimonies of the empty tomb, the numerous appearances of Jesus after He was resurrected, the instant and powerful change in the disciples afterward, and the complete silence of Jewish and Roman authorities.

6. "Aren't there many roads to heaven? Don't all paths ultimately lead to the same place?"

Understand that all religious viewpoints can't be true, because they're bound to contradict at some point.

Know that it's logical for opposite roads to lead to different destinations. Remember that Jesus explicitly stated, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me," (John 14:6) and that the Bible is unmistakably clear that there is only one road to heaven - through the salvation Jesus alone offers. Recognize the legitimate authority Jesus has to speak on the subject. Know that popular opinion to the contrary, while politically correct, is spiritually wrong.

7. "Is hell for real? If so, how can a loving God send people there?"

Don't deny the truth that hell exists. Understand that hell is necessary because God's just nature demands that sin be punished. Realize that all people actually deserve hell, but God's great love compelled Him to offer heaven to everyone who trusts Him. Know that God gives everyone the freedom to decide what they want for themselves, and those who end up in hell put themselves there by rejecting Jesus' offer of salvation and choosing to trust in their own imperfect efforts (which are bound to fail) instead. Remember God's promise to allow everyone who truly seeks Him

to find Him. Be assured that no one goes to hell because they can't be reached; they go because they don't want God.

8. "I don't think I'm a sinner. I'm not so bad."

Know that being "not so bad" or "pretty good" isn't enough to earn your way to heaven.

Understand that you must be perfectly righteous to go to heaven, and that is only possible by trusting in Jesus' work on the cross for you. Realize that God doesn't rank sins as people do; to God, sin is sin, even though one person might be a murderer and another might be a child who simply lies about brushing her teeth before bedtime. Remember that, in His holiness, God can't stand any kind of sin, but a saving relationship with Jesus will make a person perfectly pure and acceptable to God.

9. "Christians are all hypocrites. Why would I want to become one of them?"

Admit that all Christians, because they're imperfect humans, sometimes fail to live up to the standard Jesus set.

Understand that Christians don't claim to be perfect - just forgiven - and that they're all growing into better and better people, thanks to God's grace. Focus on Jesus Himself and decide to believe in Christianity, despite the behavior of some Christians, because: God offers you Christ instead of Christians, Christian truth is not negated by human failures, all people are hypocrites in reality, and human failures make the need for Jesus all the more clear.

10. "Why is there evil in the world? What about suffering?"

Understand that, while God allows evil because He has given His creatures free will, God never causes evil Himself.

Recognize that humanity is to blame for the evil that has corrupted our natural world. Remember God's promises in Scripture to handle evil in His way and timing, because He is in ultimate control. Trust in God's love, power, and wisdom and notice all the ways He constantly uses suffering to accomplish good purposes in people's lives. Know that the existence of suffering does not negate the reality of God. Rely on God's strength to help you and others deal with suffering well and emerge better people as a result.

Begin Your Journey To Peace

Step 1: God loves you and has a plan for you!

The Bible says, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, [Jesus Christ], that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” — a complete life full of purpose (John 10:10).

Step 2: Here's the problem: man is sinful and separated from God.

We have all done, thought or said bad things, which the Bible calls “sin.” The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The result of sin is death, spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23).

The good news?

Step 3: God sent His Son to die for your sins!

Jesus died in our place so we could have a relationship with God and be with Him forever. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

But it didn't end with His death on the cross. He rose again and still lives! “Christ died for our sins. ... He was buried. ... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Step 4: Would you like to receive God's forgiveness?

We can't earn salvation; we are saved by God's grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that's called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your honesty. We suggest praying the prayer below to accept Christ as your Savior.

Step 5: PRAY NOW

"Dear God, I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life. I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen."