



Know the Truth

**Am I really going down the right spiritual path?
Who is God? Who is Jesus? What's the point of life?
Can I really have a personal relationship with God?**

Are you absolutely sure you know the true answers to these questions? The Book of Proverbs in the Bible issues a serious warning, encouraging us to make sure that we know the truth. And, Jesus himself warns that some people think they know him but actually don't know him at all.

*“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”
(Proverbs 14:12)*

*Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’
will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;
but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
Many will tell me in that day,
‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name,
in your name cast out demons,
and in your name do many mighty works?’
Then I will tell them, ‘I never knew you.
Depart from me, you who work iniquity.’
(The Bible, Matthew 7:21-23)*

Understanding God's Plan

First things first: Who is God?

Simply put, God is the highest, greatest power that exists.

- God is all-powerful. He is the ruler of everything.
- He is the only God.
- No one created Him. He has no beginning and no end.
- God knows everything.
- God's throne sits in Heaven, yet his presence is everywhere.
- God is love.
- God is fully pure and holy. There is no evil in Him.
- God is perfect and completely fair.



God created everything, including the universe and all that is in it. He created Heaven and earth. He created humans, too, and even made humans in His image!

So...What's the Plan? It's all about **LOVE** ...

It's impossible to grasp the amount of love that God put into His creation and how much love He has for us. Although He does not need our love, He does want to be loved by us in return.

In fact, loving God is our true purpose. This is the meaning of life!



True love, though, can only be expressed when a person is not required to love the other person.

In other words, for humans to be able to truly love God, He had to give humans the free will to choose otherwise. He had to give humans the ability to choose not to love Him and not to obey the laws He created for us.

The First Human Rebellion

The first two humans were Adam and Eve. They lived in the Garden of Eden. Food was provided to them on trees and a river running through the garden provided water.

God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of any tree they wanted except one – the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God warned Adam that eating of that tree would result in death.

Sadly, Eve (and then Adam) disobeyed God and were cast out of the Garden of Eden.

This single act of disobedience introduced sin and the consequence of sin—spiritual and physical death—into the world. Since then, every one of us has inherited a desire to sin and the consequence of death.



The Barrier Separating Us from God

What is sin? Sin is disobedience to God. Sin is rebellion against God’s will. Sin is breaking God’s law. Sin is choosing our own selfish way over God’s way. Sin is evil.

Whether we like it or not, we have all been guilty of sinning. Perhaps we lied...or we felt pride...or we said something cruel to someone...or we committed all kinds of immoral acts... Whatever the case, we have all sinned. The Bible tells us:

“For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” – Romans 3:23

Tragically, sin creates a complete, impenetrable barrier between us and God. That barrier goes up when we first sin!

- Sin creates a spiritual barrier: we can no longer have a relationship with God.
- Sin creates a physical barrier: we can no longer be in God’s presence.

Humans



God

Why does sin create a barrier? Frankly, our sin is repulsive to God. That's easy to understand. It's easy for us to see how lies, arrogance, selfishness, deceit, murder, rape, adultery, pedophilia, theft and hypocrisy are nauseating. Imagine how much more nauseating it must be for an all-loving and all-knowing God!

Not only is sin disgusting to God, it's also a violation of His law. The penalty for breaking that law is separation from Him—death. If he let our sin go unpunished, he would no longer be fair.

*“But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not Hear.” – Isaiah 59:2*

“For the wages of sin is death...” – Romans 6:23a

There's absolutely nothing that we can do to break down the barrier between us and God. A lot of religions teach other paths to God or that we can make our own path to God, but sadly all those paths lead to death.

Good Deeds Won't Save Us

One popular notion is that good deeds and being a good person will get you to Heaven.

The truth is that even if we could do millions of “good deeds,” they still wouldn't make even one sin we've committed any less disgusting to God. No amount of good deeds will ever be enough to pay the fine associated with breaking the law.

Don't despair! The story didn't end there. Here comes the Good News!

The Good News: Our 2nd Chance

Gracious and loving, God could not tolerate this as the “final verdict” for the humans He had created.

As it stood, all humans were condemned to die and spend eternity apart from Him. God created the law of the Old Testament (the Torah, including the Ten Commandments) and gave it to his chosen people, the Jews.



Although the Law showed humans the standard of perfection, it also revealed how sinful they truly were. The law did not save humans from the penalty of their sins; it convicted them.

Even though humans had rebelled against God, He created a solution. As a just God, He could not remove the penalty for sin. What He could do is shift the penalty to someone else...someone completely blameless and without sin whose death would give humans renewed hope.

Who would be spotless and blameless enough to bear that penalty for everyone else? As we’ve already said, every one of us has sinned.

The only solution was for God the Father to make the ultimate sacrifice: to send His only Son from Heaven to the earth—in the form of a human.

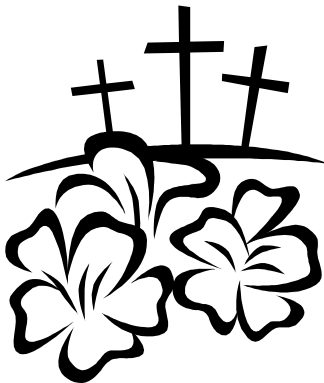
- Only the Son of God could live the sinless life that was required to save us from our sins.
- Only the Son of God could break down the barrier so we could live eternally with God in Heaven and be his children.
- Only the Son of God could be our mediator to God the Father.
- Only the Son of God could remove the “conviction” of the Old Testament law.
- Only His death could serve as the single sacrifice that would cover all our sins, once and for all.

The Son of God Dies for Our Sins

The Son of God came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth, whose arrival as the coming Messiah had been predicted for years in ancient Jewish texts.

Born to a young virgin Jewish woman named Mary in a small town called Bethlehem and conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus lived during the time of the ancient Romans (approximately 3 BC to AD 30). As a young child, He amazed those in the Temple with His understanding of God's Holy Scriptures. As adult, Jesus was baptized at which point the Holy Spirit descended on Him.

Then, Jesus began his official ministry. He was tempted for 40 days and nights in the desert by Satan, but He never sinned. He spent His ministry healing the sick, performing miracles, casting out evil spirits (demons) and telling everyone how to have a relationship with God and live according to His will. He selected 12 disciples (also called apostles) to be His helpers and tell others about Him.

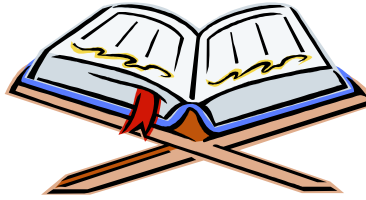


Because the religious leaders of the time were so threatened by His views, He was tortured and then sentenced to death by crucifixion by the Roman leader, Pontius Pilate. Jesus was crucified along with two other prisoners.

But His death was not the end; it was all part of God's master plan! By dying, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins—once and for all! He took the punishment that was rightfully ours!

Then, after three days of being buried in the grave and descending to hell, Jesus conquered death and came back to life (resurrection), so that all who believed in Him would no longer be eternally separated from God but rather have eternal life with God after death! Jesus appeared to many people before He ascended to Heaven forty days after His resurrection.

Today Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. After Jesus left earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell and guide all who follow Him.



*“For Christ died for sins once for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” – I Peter 3:18*

*“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – Romans 5:8*

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in
Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” – John 3:16*

One day, Jesus will return to earth. He will judge everyone who is living and everyone who is dead (who will be brought back to life). We will all see Him face-to-face. Then, everyone will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Christ means Messiah).

Those who believe in Him have their names written in the Book of Life. These people are collectively called, “The Church.” They will spend eternity with God the Father and Jesus in Heaven. Metaphorically speaking, Jesus is the bridegroom and the Church is His bride. At this point, they will be united.

Those who do not have their names written in the Book of Life will be judged for their sins and will be cast into the lake of fire.

*“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” –
Revelation 20:15*

Faith in Jesus: Our Only Hope



Jesus is our only hope for forgiveness and eternal life. He is the only one worthy and able to break down the barrier between us and God so that we can become God's children. For that reason, there is only one way to God—through Jesus Christ. No other religion, no other person and no other 'god' will lead to a restored relationship with the One True God nor will they give you eternal life.

*Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through Me." – John 14:6*

*"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." – I
Timothy 2:5*

*"He who has the Son has life;
he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God
so that you may know that you have eternal life." – I John 5:12-13*

"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." – Romans 5:1

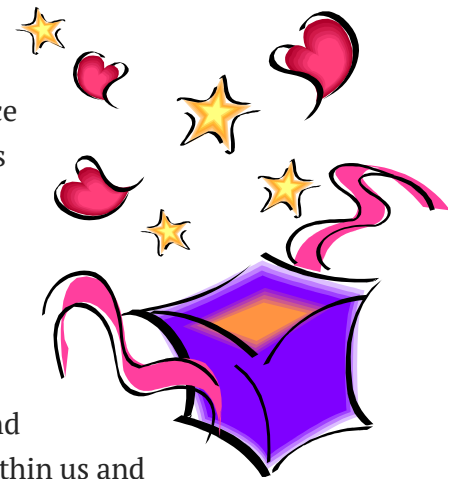
The Free Gift of Salvation

So, since Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we all automatically have eternal life with Him, right?

No. This gift of forgiveness and everlasting life isn't thrust upon us against our will. It is a free gift, in that we can do nothing to earn it. It has been given to each of us by the grace of God. But we must consciously and willingly accept it by faith.

Maybe you think that you need to clean up your life—start “living right”—before God will accept you. You can't clean up your life without God! Simply come to Him as you are.

Maybe you think you've been too bad and done too much wrong to be accepted by God. No one has sinned so much that they cannot be saved through Jesus' sacrifice for their sins and God's grace and forgiveness. God knows every single sin you've ever committed, and yet He sent Jesus to die for each one of them—just for you.



When we accept Jesus' sacrifice for us, our spirits are reborn, we're a new creation and we're freed from the death sentence of sin! Only then can we be called sons and daughters of God. Only then can God's Holy Spirit live within us and guide our paths. Only then can He help us grow spiritually and become more like Jesus.

*“For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Romans 6:23*

*“For it is by grace you have been saved—and not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
not by works, so that no one can boast.” – Ephesians 2:8-9*

*“Yet to all who receive Him, to those who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become children of God.” – John 1:12*

Accepting the Gift

Do you want to have a restored relationship with God? Do you want to be free from the penalty of your sins? God is waiting for you. He is calling out to you today.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.” – Revelation 3:20

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” – Romans 10:9

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” – Romans 10:13

To accept this free gift, you must pray to God, confessing out loud that Jesus is Lord, and believe that God raised Him from the dead. Here are my suggestions on how to do this in prayer to God (with your eyes open or shut!):

- Declare that Jesus is your Lord and that you vow to follow Him no matter what—through the hard times and easy times.
- Declare to God that you will put Him at the center of your life and that He will be your #1 priority from now on.
- Admit to God that you are a sinner and confess your sins (as many as you can remember).
- Confess to God that you believe that Jesus suffered and died to take the penalty of your sins. Call upon God to save you and forgive your sins. Ask God to help you turn away from your sins (repent) and obey Him.
- Through prayer, ask the God’s Holy Spirit to live in you, to teach you God’s truth, to teach you to obey God, to show you how to love and serve God, to show you how to love others and to guide your paths forever.

