



KNOWING JESUS PERSONALLY



Did you realize that God has created you for a wonderful purpose? That your life here on earth can be full and meaningful when you are tapped into that reality? It's true! And the way to experience this is through a personal relationship with God's son, Jesus Christ.

This magazine will help you get to know Jesus by looking at his life, what he offers each person, and how you can develop a close relationship with him. Obviously, there's much more to learn about Jesus than this publication can cover. It is merely a starting point—an introduction, if you will, to the greatest person in history. So enjoy the journey and may you discover the joy of knowing Jesus personally.

CONTENTS

Features

The Greatest Person Ever	3
BY JIM TULLOCH	
What Jesus Can Do For You	9
BY JIM TULLOCH	
Can I Trust The Bible?	13
BY MICHAEL HORNER	
Tough Questions, Honest Answers	19
BY MICHAEL HORNER	

Personally Speaking

Betty Mutwiri	28
Wayne and Irene Barnes	34
Dave Friesen	47

Knowing Jesus Personally

Beginning Your Relationship With Jesus	31
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4 Lessons For Personal Study

1. Understanding Your Relationship With Jesus Christ	38
2. Experiencing God's Love	43
3. Power For Living	49
4. Growing In Your Relationship With Jesus Christ	55

He is easily the most influential figure of all time. In fact, his arrival separated history into two eras: B.C. and A.D.



BY JIM TULLOCH

THE GREATEST PERSON EVER

What is it about Jesus that sets him apart from anyone else? Why, more than 2000 years after his birth do over 1 billion people claim to be his followers?

The answers to those questions are found in his life and teachings, but the most compelling of all is who Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be: God incarnate.

Why would the creator of the universe, of life itself, become a man? Author Philip Yancey offers this explanation:

"I learned about incarnation when I kept a salt-water aquarium. Management of a marine aquarium, I discovered, is no easy task. I had to run a portable chemical laboratory to monitor the nitrate levels and the ammonia content. I pumped in vitamins and antibiotics and sulfa drugs and enough enzymes to make a rock grow. I filtered the water through glass fibers and charcoal, and exposed it to ultraviolet light. You would think, in view of all the energy expended on their behalf, that my fish would at least be grateful. Not so. Every time my shadow loomed above the tank they dove for cover into the nearest shell. They

showed me one "emotion" only: fear. Although I opened the lid and dropped in food on a regular schedule, three times a day, they responded to each visit as a sure sign of my designs to torture them. I could not convince them of my true concern.

To my fish I was deity. I was too large for them, my actions too incomprehensible. My acts of mercy they saw as cruelty; my attempts at healing they viewed as destruction. To change their perceptions, I began to see, would require a form of incarnation. I would have to become a fish and "speak" to them in a language they could understand."¹

That's why Jesus came. Through Jesus, God not only explained his purpose for humankind, but revealed in human form, his very nature. Everything about Jesus' life, his extraordinary birth; his sinless life; the miracles he performed; his uniqueness from others; the words he spoke; the influence he's

had throughout history; his ability to satisfy the spiritual hunger in every person; and his power over death; confirms that. If God became man, you'd expect him to have these qualities. Let's examine them more fully.

Through **Jesus**, God not only explained his purpose for humankind, but revealed in human form, his very nature.

His extraordinary entrance into this world

The much-loved story of Jesus' birth is retold around the world every December 25. It begins with a young girl named Mary, who lives in the village of Nazareth, north of Jerusalem. Mary is engaged to a local carpenter named Joseph when an angel appears to her with some incredible news: "Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel tells her, "for God has decided to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus..."

Mary's response is honest and immediate: "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin?"

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:30-35).

Mary conceives as the angel says, and when the time comes, gives

birth in a stable in Bethlehem. In the process, a prophecy recorded hundreds of years earlier in the Old Testament book of Isaiah is fulfilled: "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son and she will call His name Immanuel," (meaning, 'God with us.')

But Jesus' birth is only one characteristic that sets him apart from all others. His life itself was one only God could live.

He lived a sinless life

Falling short of God's standard of holiness is what the Bible calls sin and it states that all of us have done so. Our sin is evidenced through thoughts and actions that are contrary to God's pattern of right living and even by indifference to God himself. But nobody's perfect, right? Honestly, who could ever live up to God's standard 100% of the time? Jesus could...and did.

Jesus posed the question to his critics, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46) to which he received no reply. His closest friends and followers whose sins were exposed by Jesus, nevertheless affirmed his sinlessness. Peter, his trusted disciple had this to say about him, "He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even." (I Peter 2:22).

Jesus' absolute goodness, his purity—indeed his sinlessness—displayed to the world the very nature of God. And that nature included the miraculous.

He performed miracles

Perhaps the most dramatic proof of Jesus' deity was the miracles he performed: restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to



the dumb, wholeness to a withered hand, health to a body teeming with leprosy, and strength and mobility to paralyzed legs. Jesus did these and even greater miracles. In three separate instances he raised people from the dead including a little girl, a widow's son, and his friend Lazarus of Bethany. He also displayed control over nature itself by stilling a storm, walking on water, and multiplying a little boy's lunch to feed five thousand people.

Why did he do these things? It was consistent with who He claimed to be—God himself. Only God could do these feats. But his actions also demonstrated his God-sized love for people—a love that dealt with the frailty of their human condition and more importantly the condition of their souls.

His Words were the greatest ever spoken

One day Jesus visited a synagogue in the town of Capernaum and began teaching. The crowd was

captivated. "They were astonished at his teaching," Luke records, "for his words had the ring of authority." (Luke 4:32). One has only to read the Sermon on the Mount to realize, as even his enemies did, that "No man ever spoke as this man speaks!" (John 7:46). What was it about his teachings that made people sit up and take notice?

Christian scholar Bernard Ramm believes, "...the words of Christ are not great on the grounds that they have a statistical edge over anybody else's words. They are read more, quoted more, loved more, believed more, and translated more because they are the greatest words ever spoken. And where is their greatness? Their greatness lies in the pure, lucid spirituality in dealing clearly, definitively, and authoritatively with the greatest prob-

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, our faith is worthless says the apostle Paul.

*lems that throb in the human breast; namely, Who is God? Does He love me? Does He care for me? What should I do to please Him? How does He look at my sin? How can I be forgiven? Where will I go when I die? How must I treat others? No other man's words have the appeal of Jesus' words because no other man can answer these fundamental human questions as Jesus answered them."*²

It's clear that Jesus himself realized the significance of the words

he spoke. “Heaven and earth will pass away,” he told his followers, “but my words will never pass away.”

And if you look at the lasting influence He’s had on humanity you’ll have to agree.

He has had a Lasting and Universal influence

Though his public ministry lasted only three years, the impact of his life ripples through history and into today—and most assuredly, tomorrow. Author Philip Schaff describes it this way,

“This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars com-

Without faith in the resurrection there would be no Christianity at all.

bined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.”³

Even those who were not his followers, great minds of literature and

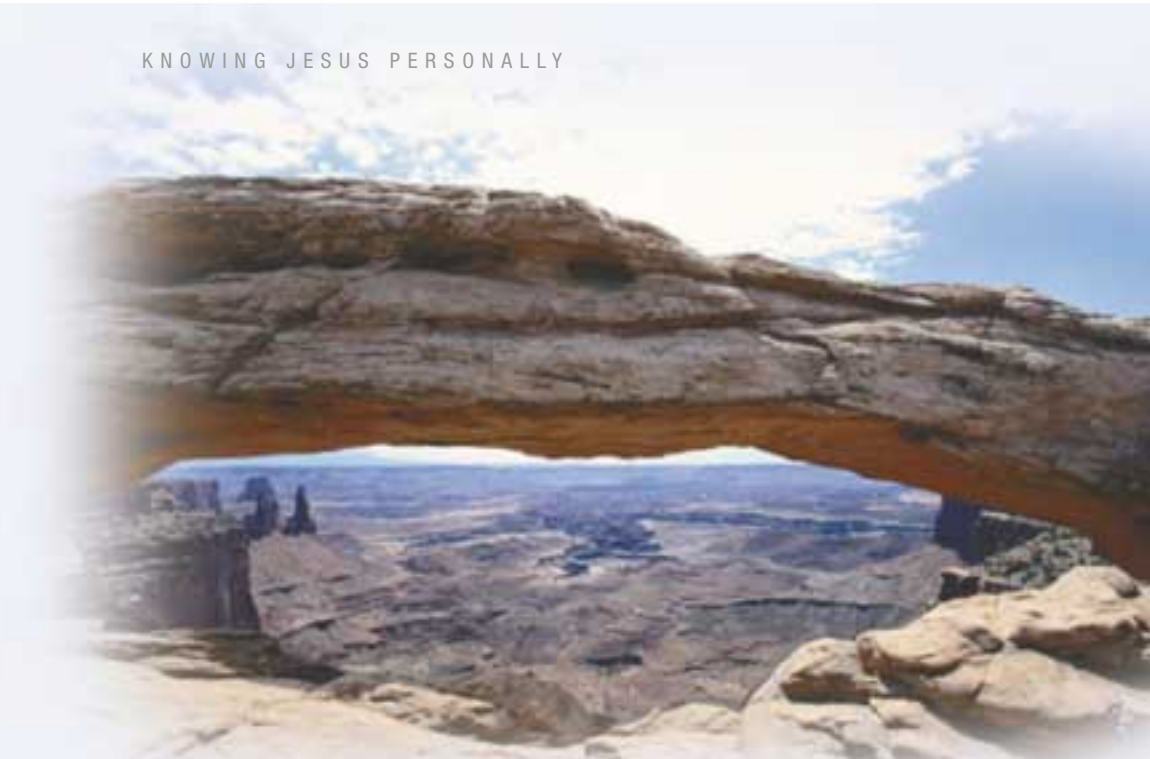
science, like H.G. Wells and Albert Einstein concur. “I am an historian, I am not a believer,” said Wells, “but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.”

“As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud,” remarked Einstein. “I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.... No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”

For these reasons and more Jesus continues to have a widespread appeal today. And one of those reasons is how he deals with the universal issue of death.

He exercised power over death

At the end of his three years of ministry, Jesus was arrested on false charges by the religious establishment of the day, tried by a mock jury, and sentenced to death by crucifixion at the hands of Roman soldiers. As he hung on the cross, dying for the sins of the world, he handed his spirit over to God, then expired. His followers buried him in tomb hewn out of rock and sealed it with a great stone. That set the stage for the most significant event in history. On Sunday morning his followers found the stone rolled aside and the tomb empty. Shortly afterward Jesus appeared to his dis-



ciples and more than 500 eyewitnesses. Jesus had risen from the dead, proving he had the power to conquer death itself. In so doing he validated his promise of eternal life to all who believe in Him. Indeed, the Christian faith rests on the fact of the resurrection. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, our faith is worthless says the apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 15:17).

As writer Michael Green emphasizes, *“Christianity does not hold the resurrection to be one of the many tenets of belief. Without faith in the resurrection there would be no Christianity at all. The Christian church would never have begun; the*

*Jesus-movement would have fizzled out like a damp squib with his execution. Christianity stands or falls with the truth of the resurrection.”*⁴

A Man Without Equal

When you take into account his extraordinary birth, his sinless life, the miracles he performed, the wisdom of his teachings, his influence on humankind, and his ultimate victory over death, is there anyone who compares to Jesus of Nazareth?

¹ Philip Yancey: *The Jesus I Never Knew*, pg. 38-39, Zondervan Publishers 1995.


² Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Christian Evidences*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1957.

³ Schaff, Philip. *The Person of Christ*. New York: American Tract Society, 1913.

⁴ Green, Michael, *Man Alive*, Intervarsity Press, 1968

Something to think about...

1. Which characteristic of Jesus uniqueness is most interesting to you?
2. Why?
3. Is there anything in the article that you are surprised by?
4. What new questions arise in your mind after reading the article?

A photograph of four young people smiling and embracing each other outdoors. In the background, there are trees with some autumn-colored leaves and a white building. The overall mood is joyful and positive.

An important aspect of knowing Jesus personally is understanding the things Jesus can do for you that no one else can.

BY JIM TULLOCH

WHAT JESUS CAN DO FOR YOU

Pardon from Sin

Ever since the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and sin entered the world, humankind has strayed farther and farther from God's measure of right living. *"All have sinned,"* the Bible says, *"and fall short of God's glorious standard."* (Romans 3:23). God, who is holy, cannot stand sin in any form. His nature requires that those who sin be punished. *"The wages (penalty) of sin is death,"* (Romans 6:23). Since everyone has sinned, the world finds itself in the most dire situation imaginable with no way out.

Enter Jesus. He did what we on our own merit could not do—pay the penalty for our sins. Imagine a courtroom scene where you, the defendant, are tried and found guilty of a serious traffic violation. The judge is compelled by law to exact your punishment: a hefty fine. In a surprise move, the judge comes down off the bench and to your side. "Because I love you," he says, "I will pay your fine. Your debt is paid; your slate wiped clean."

In essence that's what Jesus did for you and me. The Bible describes it this way: *"Now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Jesus Christ, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment*

for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us," (Romans 3:24-25).

Jesus lived a sinless life yet willingly died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Why? Because God loves us and wants his creation to be in right relationship with Him. He sacrificed his own son so we could live. With that pardon comes another wonderful benefit: eternal life.

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

Forgiveness of sins. Pardon from punishment. Eternal life. Who else but Jesus could make such an offer? But that's not all Jesus does for us.

He gives us purpose

One of the great philosophical questions of life relates to purpose: Why am I here? What is my reason for being?

We all wrestle with that question and the nagging restlessness that accompanies it. Centuries ago, St. Augustine offered an explanation as to why this is so: "Thou hast made us for Thyself O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

The famous French mathemati-

cian and philosopher Blaise Pascal describes it this way:

“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

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

When a person places his trust in Jesus that emptiness, that void, is filled. Jesus bridges the chasm that separates us from God the Father and connects us with Him. It is then that we begin to understand our place in the universe.

Bill Bright, a former agnostic who later became a Christian and founded Campus Crusade for Christ, wrote, “I have found throughout the years that people who know Jesus Christ have a purpose for life. Those who do not know Him are like a ship upon a rough sea without a rudder and without sail, drifting with the tide. No matter how brilliant you might be or how successful as an athlete, as a student, as a business or professional person, unless you know Jesus Christ, you will never know real purpose in life.”

If you were building a home no doubt you would consult the architect’s designs before proceeding. It would be foolish to do otherwise. The Great Architect of Life offers a plan for each person. But He’s also given us the choice of whether or not to follow it. Only Jesus can provide the purpose each of us craves. Placing our trust in Him is the first step. It is then that you realize some

other great intangibles that Jesus offers, one of which, is peace.

He gives us peace

Are you experiencing worry or fear in your life? Frustration? Stress? Maybe it’s your job or lack of one, your children, school, an illness, financial pressure or difficulties in a relationship or marriage. None of us are exempt from problems, but Jesus offers an invaluable gift to help us through them: peace.

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart,” Jesus told his disciples. *“And the peace I give isn’t like the peace the world gives. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* (John 14:27).

Throughout history many have experienced this gift in the most desperate situations. In my own life, I recall vividly the unexpected death of my father. Overwhelmed by grief, I began to shed many tears, but in the midst of my anguish the most amazing calmness flooded my soul, a peace that transcended anything I could muster on my own. The presence of God was so near, so comforting.

Others can testify to God’s peace being with them in stressful circumstances from a driving exam to a job interview to “bad news” from the lab.

The Bible explains how to appropriate this peace: *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything,”* the apostle Paul writes, *“Tell God what you need and thank Him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience god’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard*

your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6,7).

But Jesus does more than give us peace in these tough circumstances; he provides the power to deal with them.

He gives us power

The Christian life is a supernatural life. We can't live it on our own strength, no matter how determined or self-sufficient we are. Jesus understood this and before he left this earth he promised he would send the Holy Spirit who would indwell each person who believed in him. The Holy Spirit would be the one through whom God would release his power in our lives: power that can change a person from the inside out, help them shed harmful habits, overcome past mistakes, curb a wicked tongue, and many other sinful tendencies.

One night a religious leader named Nicodemus came to Jesus and queried him about God. *“I assure you,” Jesus replied, “unless you are born again, you can never see the kingdom of God.”*

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”

Jesus replied, “The truth is, no one

can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.

Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven.”

God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. God himself is spirit. If we

Pardon, purpose,
peace, and power.
Four incredible things
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are to have fellowship with God we must become spiritually alive. This “new birth” happens when we place our trust in Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us.

Not only does the Holy Spirit bring us into fellowship with God, He produces in us the qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. *“My purpose is to give life in all its fullness,”* said Jesus (John 10:10). When we are filled with God's spirit we experience that fullness.

Pardon, purpose, peace, and power. Four incredible things Jesus can do for you that no one else can.

Something to think about...

1. As Blaise Pascal said "we all have a God shaped vacuum that can only be filled by Jesus" however, we try to fill it with other things. What are some of the ways we try to meet these needs ourselves?
2. Why are they ultimately unsatisfying?
3. These are great benefits that Jesus offers His followers. Which one do you think is the most 'felt' need in our society today?
4. Which one or two strike you as being the most beneficial to you at this time?



BY MICHAEL HORNER

CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?

The Bible, in particular the New Testament, is the primary information source about Jesus. But how do we know these records are true? Is the Bible reliable? Can you trust it? The answer is a resounding “yes!” Here’s why.

Beginning with the New Testament documents, there are really two separate issues involved in determining their trustworthiness, accuracy to the original and reliability of the original.

Accuracy to the Original

“Has the New Testament changed drastically over the years?” It is important to understand that there is widespread scholarly agreement in this area called textual criticism, that in our modern New Testament we have substantially what was originally written down.

Sir Frederick Kenyon, keeper of ancient manuscripts and director of the British Museum, after a lifetime of study of ancient documents came to this conclusion,

“No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text and so unbiased scholar would deny that the text that has come down to us is substantially sound.”

So the text has not been altered, but we can trust what was originally written down is reliable history.

Legend?

Couldn’t the writings be legendary, the result of the overdeveloped imagination of the early



church? There are strong arguments against this hypothesis.

First, there just wasn’t enough time for any legendary development

to replace what really happened. Professor A. N. Sherwin-White, a classical historian of Roman and Greek history contemporaneous with Jesus, has studied the rate at which legends developed in the ancient near east. He found that “. . . even two generations is too short a span to allow the mythical tenden-

According to Aristotle, the benefit of the doubt is always given to the writer’s veracity, unless there is good reason to doubt their integrity. Only the paranoid think everyone is lying.

cy to prevail over the hard historical core.” The gospels and their sources are well within this time frame.

Secondly, the gospels were not written in a legendary style.

Thirdly, if the claims Jesus made for himself in the New Testament are legendary, the early Jewish opponents of Christianity would surely have charged that these claims were never made by Jesus, but they never did.

But one might ask whether the writings are not deliberate fabrications.

Deliberate Fabrications?

There are a number of points that count heavily against this hypothesis. According to Aristotle, the benefit of the doubt is always given to the writer’s veracity, unless there is

good reason to doubt their integrity. Only the paranoid think everyone is lying.

What we know about the followers of Jesus gives us no good reason to doubt their integrity. Their lives and writings clearly show them as at least sincere people who were trying to live up to the example and teachings of the one they called their Lord. They do not come across as cunning deceivers with some elaborately planned hoax.

Second, the disciples had nothing to gain by perpetrating a hoax. They “gained” only scorn, contempt, torture and ultimately death. And how could they have maintained their motivation for 50 years proclaiming a lie? People don’t die for a lie, when they know it’s a lie! And yet nobody ‘broke’ and confessed this ‘hoax’ under the threat of torture and death. Liars make very poor martyrs!



Third, there is no competing story about Jesus Christ from this time period.

Fourth, if you were starting a new religion, you would choose reasonable and appealing doctrines.

Nothing was more implausible to the Greeks than a resurrection from the dead. And the idea that Jesus was God was blasphemy to the Jews.

The idea that the followers of



Jesus were involved in some kind of complex conspiracy doesn't seem to fit with the facts.

But Aren't These Writers Biased?

What does this question mean, except that what they wrote down is either deliberately or accidentally false, i.e. the fabrication, or legend hypotheses that we have just discussed? We have already shown that both hypotheses have strong arguments against them.

Furthermore, the mere fact of a historian's personal interest or even bias is not in itself a sufficient reason to assume that he has deliberately or inadvertently falsified the record. Further evidence is needed to legitimately draw that conclusion. Writing with a purpose, as well as organizing, and interpreting the events does not preclude writing accurate history.

Only the Bible?

But someone might argue that since this information about Jesus is found only in the Bible (i.e. the New Testament), we can't trust it.

First, and foremost, the assumption that just because it is in the Bible it can't be trusted, misunderstands the situation. We are not asking someone to begin with the presupposition that the New Testament is the Word of God, only that it is a collection of ancient documents.

With only that in mind, the availability of four records by four different authors about the same person is a rare and extraordinary phenomenon. Most writing from this period has not survived. There was not much written since writing itself was difficult, as was the availability of news. Jesus was not particularly newsworthy in the world at that time. Thus we do not find much

Writing with a purpose, as well as organizing, and interpreting the events does not preclude writing accurate history.

Roman mention of him. Only later as the religion spread and had newsworthy influence do we read much in Roman sources.

Second, the writings of Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus, Thallus and the Jewish Talmud all provide us with confirmation of much New Testament material.

Can I trust the New Testament? Absolutely! And trust in the whole Bible reasonably follows.

Contradictions?

Many people reject the New Testament because of the differences between the gospel accounts. Should this cause us to distrust what is written?

First, we wouldn't expect accounts by different people written for different audiences to be exactly the same. In fact if they were exactly

the same we would suspect collusion. Thus the existence of differences supports our previous contention that the gospels were not the result of some grand conspiracy.

Second, the differences are often only in peripheral details not in the historical core.

Third, many alleged contradictions are actually complementary not contradictory. A difference does not necessarily equal a contradiction. Many differences are merely authors emphasizing points other authors leave out because of the specific purposes of writing their gospel.

Fourth, many of the so-called "proven contradictions" of the past have simply evaporated to the great embarrassment of the skeptics.

Archaeology has never confirmed an apparent contradiction to be an actual contradiction, but has many times shown what was thought to be a contradiction not to be one after all.

Can I trust the New Testament? Absolutely! And trust in the whole Bible reasonably follows.



What About the Rest of the Bible?


The reasoning here goes like this: if one can trust the New Testament documents as being fundamentally reliable for the reasons we have given, then those documents show Jesus of Nazareth to have claimed to be God (in the Jewish sense of the word), and that he would rise from the dead. Further they show him to have in fact risen from the

grave three days after being crucified by Pontius Pilate. This substantiates his claims to be God. Jesus clearly viewed the Old Testament documents as being the Word of God, therefore, it is rational for me to believe this as well, and since they are the Word of God, they too are reliable.

Michael Horner is a Canadian philosopher who regularly debates and lectures on university campuses around the world. For more information on the reliability of the Bible visit www.theLife.com

Something to think about...

1. Before reading this article, what was your view of the Bible?
2. Has this information changed your perspective in any way?
3. What are the implications if the Bible is true?
4. Have you ever read the Bible for yourself? What did you think?

A man in a dark suit and patterned tie is sitting in a black office chair, leaning back with his hands behind his head. He is looking out of a large window at a cityscape under a clear blue sky. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

Almost everyone has questions about God and His involvement in the world we live in. You might be asking some questions of your own. To help you, I have compiled answers to seven commonly asked questions about Jesus Christ and Christianity.

BY MICHAEL HORNER

TOUGH QUESTIONS, HONEST ANSWERS



Q If God exists, why is there evil and suffering?

A No one has been able to show that there is a contradiction between the existence of the all-loving, all-powerful Christian God and the existence of evil. This is because it is always possible that God has a good reason, although unknown to us, for allowing evil. As long as it is logically possible that God has a good reason, there is no contradiction.

God's love and goodness motivates him to create creatures who have the capacity of genuine moral choice. This is itself a good thing – after all would you rather be a robot? Only free creatures can give and receive love. Furthermore, no amount of power, including God's, can create morally free creatures who are guaranteed not to commit evil. That would involve a contradiction. If God guarantees that no evil will be committed, then the creatures are not genuinely free.

Although God may not have given us the intellectual reason for every specific evil that he allows, he has

given us a solution to the problem of evil in the person of Jesus Christ. Through knowing him we can experience forgiveness for the evil each of us has brought into this universe, as well as coping resources to deal with current difficulties, and finally ultimate rescue for eternity from any more evil and suffering.

For further reading: *No Easy Answers* by William L. Craig, (Moody Press, 1990). Available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916 <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/bill-craig/menus/resources.html>

Q Is there any real right or wrong?

A “Your values are right for you but not for me.” “Who are you to judge others?” “Who are you to say another culture's values are wrong?” We hear such comments all the time in our contemporary society. It's very easy to say there are no universal, absolute moral obligations, but it's much more difficult to live as if there are none. The judgments we make when people are mistreated reveals what we really believe about morals, regardless of

what we say we believe.

“All moral reasoning must start with foundational concepts that can only be known by intuition.” We all know that torturing people for fun, raping four year old girls and performing medical experiments on Jews in concentration camps are morally wrong. Not only do we



think these actions are wrong, we think everyone should agree they are wrong. Someone who disagrees is “morally handicapped”, just as handicapped as the person who cannot see that $2 + 2 = 4$, or that “If A, then B; A; therefore B.” They are just not functioning properly on a moral level, and “there is no reason to allow their impaired vision to call into question what we see clearly.”

Just because different opinions about the morality of an action exist does not mean that all opinions are right, any more than different opinions about any other topics makes all opinions right. Facts are facts whether or not anyone agrees with them. Even those who deny the existence of universal moral facts, or deny moral intuitions readily pass moral judgment on others, con-

demning injustice in the courts, or attacking racist governments, or complaining when they are mistreated. Our reactions reveal that we all know real right and wrong, that transcends cultural borders, exist.

Which is more likely, that our sense of right and wrong is an illusion and that atrocities like rape murder and torture are not really wrong, but just a matter of personal or cultural opinion; or that there are objective moral principles that really do justify our condemnation of rape, murder and torture for fun?

For further reading: “*True For You, But Not True for Me*”, by Paul Copan, (Bethany House, 1998); *Can We Be Good Without God?*, by Paul Chamberlain, (IVP, 1996); *God, Are You There?* By William L. Craig, (RZIM, 1999). Available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916 <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/bill-craig/menu/resources.html>

Q **Morality doesn't need God. We act morally because of biological evolution or social conditioning.**

A If one agrees that objective moral obligations exist, the question of whether God is needed as a necessary foundation arises. If God does not exist it is difficult to see how there could be any objective foundation, any universal standard for good and evil. How do you get ethics from only different arrangements of space, time, matter and energy? A purely materialistic universe would be morally indifferent. Moral judgments would be just relative and subjective, merely expressions of personal tastes. Or they might be just social conventions

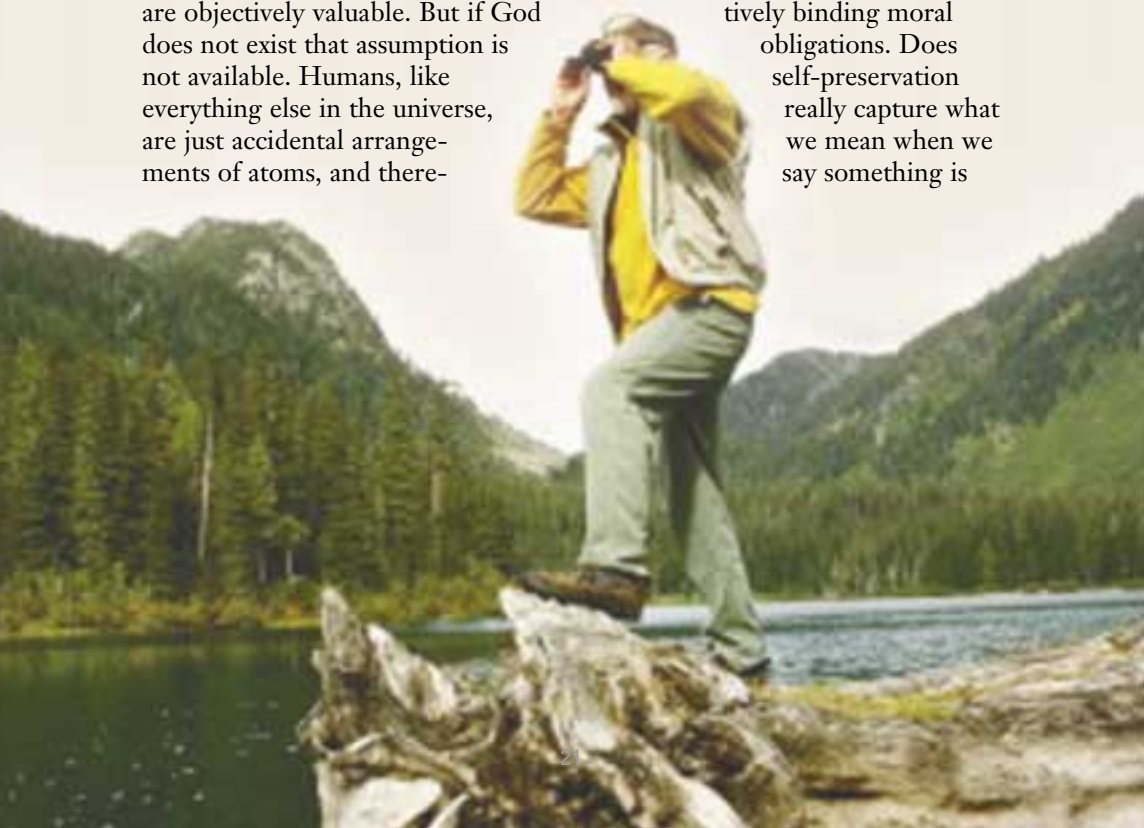
that society has agreed upon so that people can live together without chaos. But in neither case would they be objectively binding moral obligations!

Some have suggested that we can provide an objective foundation for morality without appealing to God. Morality has just evolved over the centuries because it “works”, they suggest. That is, morality promotes individual or social benefits and survival for humans. Whatever promotes human flourishing and survival is good. Whatever doesn't promote human flourishing and survival is bad. That is all we need for objectivity in morality, they claim. There is no need for God.

But the problem with this suggestion is that it is based on the necessary assumption that human beings are objectively valuable. But if God does not exist that assumption is not available. Humans, like everything else in the universe, are just accidental arrangements of atoms, and there-

fore, we cannot justifiably claim that they are objectively valuable. We may be “higher” on an evolutionary scale, but this only means we are more complex, not more valuable. What could we say to an alien race that valued humans as the latest in *nouveau cuisine*? There is no objective basis in the atheistic world-view that would make it morally wrong for aliens to eat humans.

Moreover, if morality evolved because it produced survival benefits, we would not have found a justification for objective moral obligations, but merely an explanation for how moral beliefs arose. In fact it would be difficult to see how these beliefs or behaviors could even be considered morality anymore. They would be mere suggestions for survival, a far cry from objectively binding moral obligations. Does self-preservation really capture what we mean when we say something is



moral? Does mere prudence really capture what we mean by morality? The atheist philosopher of science, Michael Ruse, confirms this point:

“The position of the modern evolutionist is that humans have an awareness of morality because such an awareness is of biological worth. Morality is a biological adaptation, no less than our hands and feet and teeth. Considered as a rationally



justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when someone says, “love thy neighbor as thyself,” they think they are referring above and beyond themselves.

Nevertheless such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction, and any deeper meaning is illusory.”

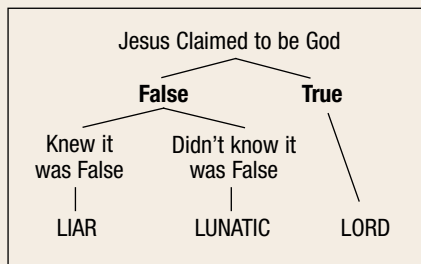
But if Ruse is right, then our strong intuitions that rape, selfishness, discrimination and hate are objectively wrong, even outrageously immoral, are just delusions. On this evolutionary model we would sense that objective moral obligations exist, but they really wouldn't. Are you really willing to accept the idea that while rape, murder, and

discrimination feel wrong, they really aren't? And once we've figured out that our feeling of morality with regard to say, rape, is just a biological adaptation inculcated into us over millions of years, then we would have no reason to regard rape as objectively wrong anymore.

For further reading: “*True For You, But Not True for Me*”, by Paul Copan, (Bethany House, 1998); *Can We Be Good Without God?*, by Paul Chamberlain, (IVP, 1996); *God, Are You There?* By William L. Craig, (RZIM, 1999). Craig is available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916 <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/bill-craig/menus/resources.html>

Q Is Jesus just like any other great religious leader, or is he really God?

A Because Jesus claims to be God (in the Jewish conception, not an eastern conception of God), there are only four options for the identity of Jesus Christ. He is either a legend, a liar, a lunatic or He is Lord and



God. There is little likelihood that Jesus' claims are legendary. First of all, this view fails to take into account the fact that it takes more than two full generations for legendary traces to wipe out the hard core of historical fact. There is good evidence that Matthew, Mark,

Luke and Acts were written within one generation after Christ, but even if all the Gospels were written after 70 AD, as proponents of the legend theory suggest, this is still within the two generations that are needed before mystical tendencies can prevail over the historic core. There just wasn't enough time before the accounts of his life originated for enough legendary development to replace what really happened.

Also, if the claims Jesus made for himself are legendary, the early Jewish opponents of Christianity would surely have charged that these claims never happened. Unlike modern sceptics though, the rabbis never denied that Jesus made such claims for himself. Instead, they called him a liar.

Since, therefore, there is little likelihood that Jesus' claim to deity is legend or myth, we should look to His words and actions to see if He thought of Himself as divine.

- Jesus claimed to determine people's eternal destiny (Luke 12:8-9).

- Jesus placed His personal authority over the Law of God (Matthew 5).

- In Mark 2:5-7, Jesus shows He believed He had the power to forgive sins. The scribes reacted by saying, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

- Jesus thought himself to be the Son of God in a unique and absolute sense in his use of the term 'ABBA' (daddy) to refer to God (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22; Luke 20:9-18).

- Jesus claimed to be "The Son of Man" – a divine figure (Daniel

7:13-14)

- Jesus claimed to be the "I AM" of the Old Testament (Matt 14:22-23; Mark 6:45-52; Exodus 3:14).

- The most explicit claims to deity are found in John's gospel where Jesus claims, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30); "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9); "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8:58); and Jesus accepts worship as God (John 20:23). There is no reason to hold that these passages are merely the result of the over-developed imagination of John, since Jesus' self-conception as God is already evident in the earlier three gospels.



Moreover, there is no question that the earliest Christians believed in and worshipped one of their own countrymen as Lord and God. How does one explain this worship by monotheistic Jews of one of their own countrymen apart from some divine claims or behaviour? If the real Jesus never made any such claims, this early belief in a divine Christ is inexplicable.

Since Jesus claimed to be God, his

claims are either true or false. If false, he must have been a liar, deliberately misleading the multitudes. Or, he was a lunatic, sincerely believing himself to be God, when in reality he was just a man.

Jesus' moral character and his willingness to die for his claim to be God have convinced most people that Jesus was not lying. Jesus' humility and unselfish love, his intelligent communication with the crowds, and his amazing self-control and composure amidst the tremendous physical and emotional stress of his betrayal and crucifixion, all point to his contact with reality. Jesus was no lunatic.

Since the evidence does not fit well with Jesus being a liar, a lunatic, or a legend, then the only other alternative left is that his claim is true - Jesus is Lord and God. And that conclusion is further supported by the remarkable evidence that Jesus rose physically from the grave.

For further reading: "*True For You, But Not True for Me*", by Paul Copan, (Bethany House, 1998); *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel and Reasonable Faith and *God, Are You There?* By W.L. Craig, (RZIM, 1999), Strobel and Craig are available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916 <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/bill-craig/menus/resources.html>

Q Do all religions lead to God?

A The assumption by many that all religions are basically the same just doesn't square with the facts. Although there are similarities in morals, the differences in teachings about God, reality, truth, the basic human dilemma, and the solution to that dilemma are significant. Eastern religions teach "monism" (all is one), that each person is a part of everything, including god, and that ultimately one needs to lose oneself in "the all" like a



drop of water losing itself in the ocean. Christianity, however, affirms that each person is a unique individual and will remain such after death. Christianity teaches that God loves us; an impersonal, eastern god cannot love us. All other religions teach, in one way or another, that each of us must earn our way to God or heaven. But authentic Christianity teaches that none of us can meet the high standards of 'membership' into a holy God's presence. In spite of our utter inability to be perfectly holy like God, he pays our 'membership dues' for us and invites us into a personal love relationship with him. All religions are not the same; their teachings contradict one another. Therefore, it follows logically that they cannot all be true.

Is it intolerant to claim or imply that one religion is true? At the root of this question is confusion between the admirable quality of tolerance for different views and the absurd position of the equal validity of all views. Truth by its very nature is exclusive and is intolerant of error. Thinking or stating that another view is false is not intolerance; tolerance implies disagreement. One can be tolerant by respecting the rights of others to hold alternative views without threat of violence, yet still be firmly committed to one point of view as true. The great value of tolerance in no way absolves us from resolving conflicting claims to truth.

Not only do the differences mentioned above show that religions cannot all be true, but the fact that

God allows all who freely accept his free gift of forgiveness to come into a relationship with him, rather than demand that we earn it ourselves shows that authentic Christianity is far more open, inclusive, and tolerant than other alleged paths to God.

And for the person who thinks it doesn't matter what you believe as



long as you're sincere - one can be sincerely wrong. Sincerity of belief does not guarantee truth. I may believe sincerely that a glass of liquid is water and drink it. If in fact it is hydrochloric acid, my sincere belief would have devastating consequences!

For further reading: *Jesus Among Other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias (W Publishing Group, 2000), *Dissonant Voices* by Harold Netland, (Eerdmans, 1991); *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel, Strobel is available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916 <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/menus/resources.html>

Q What will happen to those who never hear about Jesus?

A Although the bible does not give us the complete answer to this question, it does tell us that God "will

judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity (or fairness)” (Psalm 98:9). God will not condemn a person for rejecting a Christ they never heard about. However, we already stand condemned for something far more basic.

God has revealed himself to everyone through the creation around us and the sense of right and wrong inside us. Each person knows enough about God that he says “the truth is plain” and we are “without excuse” (Romans 1:18-20). It is for this suppression, distortion and rejection of the true knowledge of God and for the accompanying violation of God’s laws that we stand condemned.

Scripture also indicates that no one will be saved apart from Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). It is clear that someone who knows about Christ’s saving death on the cross, yet rejects it, will spend eternity away from God as a result of his/her free choice. However, what about someone who is sincerely responding to the light God is revealing but dies before the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be brought to them?

If a person, who never heard about Christ, throws herself totally upon the mercy of God, not trusting in her own good deeds or any religious practices to give her merit before God, then it may be possible that the work of Christ on the cross would be applied to that person. We do not know this for sure because God has not told us specifically, but is consistent with his character, and the saving of people in the Old

Testament whose “faith was credited to them as righteousness” without ever hearing about Jesus or even the Mosaic Law.

It is very important to notice that this does not mean that the devout person in any religion is therefore saved. Man-made religion does not represent our search for God, but often our flight from the true knowledge of God. Only by casting oneself only and completely upon the mercy of God, and not counting on any of one’s deeds—religious or otherwise—for right standing with God, could the cross of Christ be applied to one’s life.

C.S. Lewis pointedly identifies the attitude that each of us should have on this question:

“We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ,” but in the meantime, “if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is remain outside yourself.”

For further reading: “*True For You, But Not True for Me*”, by Paul Copan, (Bethany House, 1998); *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel, Strobel is available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916
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Q What about all the wars and suffering that have been caused in the name of Christianity?

A You cannot judge the teachings and truth of a religion by the conduct of people who do not live up to them. Some people try to discredit Christianity by pointing out the misdeeds done by Christians who were not following Christ’s

teaching or by people who weren't real Christians at all. The standard by which to judge Christianity is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The problem is the heart of all people. More people were murdered under atheistic regimes in the 20th century than were killed through all the religious conflicts of history combined. But shouldn't Christianity make a difference? It has and it does. But the heart of man is always capable of evil.

Moreover, the significant positive impact Christianity has had on the world is often ignored. Many men

who pioneered modern science were Christians. Christian revivals in the 18th & 19th centuries sparked a powerful impulse for social reform affecting slavery, the status of women and the poor. And as a result, many missionary and philanthropic organizations like the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and the YMCA began.

For further reading: *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel, Available from New Life Resources, 375 Highway 74 South Suite A, Peachtree City, GA. 30269, 1-800-827-2788, Fax: 770-631-9916
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Something to think about...

1. Were these answers helpful to you? Have you found yourself asking these questions in the past?
2. What are some other 'barriers' to faith that you may have that were not answered here?
3. If all your queries were answered would you be interested in beginning a personal relationship with God?

I GREW UP IN KENYA, the only girl in a family of four boys. We had a relatively ‘normal’ home life by Kenyan standards. My parents wanted the best for us and tried to provide us with a decent education.

We were expected to attend church every Sunday, and I did and ended up equating Christianity with church activities. However, I noticed that my mother did more; she read the Bible & prayed every evening before bedtime. She possessed a strong faith. Sometimes she’d invite me to join her, but I thought that the practice was just for “mums,” so I declined. I became a rebellious teenager; I preferred the party life in college and got involved in relationships that I deeply regret. Despite that, I earned a degree in education and was employed by a private company in Kenya soon after graduation. It was then that a long time boyfriend who was then pursuing his graduate studies in Canada proposed and invited me to join him. We confronted huge obstacles as we tried to obtain a visa but after 3 difficult months, I got the visa, got married and joined him in Canada. Three years later we moved to San Diego, where my husband got his first job after graduation.

At that time, I thought life was unfolding just beautifully, better than I had ever dreamed. We were happily married, enjoying our careers, blessed with a beautiful daughter and expecting our second child. But despite the ‘happy’ life, I lacked a deep abiding joy. I had a void that I tried to fill hopelessly with my favorite pastime—shopping. One day, when I was almost nine months along and shopping for the baby, a young couple approached us at a store and struck up a conversation. After we’d chatted for a while they invited us to their church the following Sunday. I thought, “They have a lot of nerve. You go to church if it’s convenient and here I am nine months pregnant; this was not a convenient time for us! But since the couple was quite pleasant, we exchanged phone numbers and promised to keep in touch. I secretly hoped they wouldn’t call, but they did so persistently. Seven months later we eventually went.

I was awed by the excitement about worship that I saw at their church, I had never experienced or witnessed that before. I craved the joy that I saw emanating from the people I met there, and wondered I how could get it. We were invited to join a Bible study soon after but did so reluctantly. Personally, I felt I had read enough of

Personally Speaking

BETTY MUTWIRI



Photo credit: Photographer

the Old and New Testament in my religious studies course at high school. I initially approached it as an intellectual activity, arguing through the passages that did not make sense or did not fit my perception about life at that time. My prideful attitude was quite evident to the other group members. But instead of shunning me they loved me and prayed for me and gradually the attitude subsided. The Bible came alive to me. It was relevant; it was alive—it was showing me how I could have a life with purpose! Spending time in prayer and reading the Bible now filled me with a great sense of joy and peace that I had not known before. One day, as I was reading Psalm 119, my heart broke because the words mirrored what I was feeling and craving. I knew then, that I needed to confess my sins, repent and commit my life to Jesus. My husband, who was also going through the same journey of discovering a personal relationship with Jesus, made the same commitment four months later.

Knowing Jesus personally has truly transformed my life. I nurture our relationship by reading the Bible, through prayer, meditation, and fellowship with other believers. I am also involved with a women's ministry which is dedicated to sharing God's grace with other women. I am convinced that nothing can be compared to a life with Jesus irrespective of one's material or career success. As a wife and mom with fulfilling work outside the home, my life is full, but my purpose is to share God's love with the people I come across, just like the couple that approached us did and changed our lives for eternity.

I have also experienced many challenges on this jour-

“ I’ve come to realize that I can live a truly abundant life. ”

ney; the difference is that now I do not rely on my own strength and aggressive personality. Instead, I have total faith and trust in God's providence and his promises. I move confidently and peacefully in the direction of His will for my life. I've come to realize that I can live a truly abundant life. When the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need! It really has been a journey of joy; I can't imagine life without Jesus!



BEGINNING **YOUR** **RELATIONSHIP** WITH **JESUS**

Many people believe there is a God but don't understand how they can know him personally. So how, exactly, does someone come to know Jesus? How do you begin that relationship? First, it's important that you seek God with an open mind and an open heart.

"Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God," the Bible tells us, "*and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*" (Hebrews 11:6b). Part of that search involves understanding some biblical truths that are foundational to your relationship with him.

1. God loves you and created you to know Him personally

Think about that for a moment. The creator of the universe created you in such a way that you can know him. He did this because he loves you and desires that you enjoy this relationship with him forever. "*For God so loved the world,*" Jesus says, "*that he sent his only son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16).

"And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to

earth." (John 17:3).

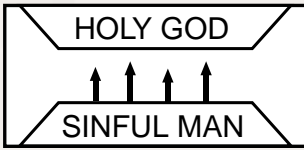
Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? However, something prevents us from knowing God personally. That something is sin.

2. We are sinful and therefore separated from God, so we are unable to know him personally or experience his love.

By means of the free will God entrusted us with, we chose to disobey God through our thoughts and actions. That's true of everyone. The Bible says, "*All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standard.*" (Romans 3:23).

Sin had a devastating effect on our spiritual capacity to know God. It destroyed it. We became spiritually dead, cut-off from him. And because we violated his standard of right living, we are morally guilty as well.

"For the wages of sin is death," the



Bible explains (Romans 6:23), which means spiri-

tual separation from God forever.

Despite the desperate state we're in, we long to know God and often try to restore that relationship through our own efforts. Some try to live a good life, adhere to certain philosophy, or even become religious. But all our best attempts fall woefully short of God's standard.

But there's hope. God provides the way to bridge the great chasm that separates us from him and to restore our relationship.

3. Through Jesus alone can we have our sins forgiven and come to know God personally

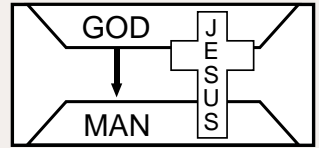
God realized there was no way we could ever pay the debt for our sins. Only a perfect sacrifice would do. That's why he sent his only son, Jesus to take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross, making possible the offer of forgiveness and pardon to whomever would receive it. This ultimate act of love healed the broken relationship between us and God.

“For God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his

life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends with God.” (Romans 5:8-11).

Through Jesus, our spiritual capacity to know God is restored. We become alive again spiritually and our guilt is forgiven. He is the only one who can make this possible. “I am the way, the truth and the life,” Jesus said. “No one comes to the Father but through me.” (John 4:6).

But Jesus didn't just die for our sins. He rose from the dead – a historical fact



verified by many witnesses. The Bible records that “Christ died for our sins, ... He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred...” (I Corinthians 15:1-3).

But it's not enough just to know these three principles.

Jesus' resurrection proved his victory over death and validated his claim to bring eternal life to all who trust in him.

4. We come to know God personally by individually receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord

We must receive Christ

“But to all who believed him, and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God” the Bible

explains, *“They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God.”* (John 1:12,13).

We receive Christ through faith

“God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

When we receive Christ, we experience a new birth

When you, by faith, trust Jesus to come into your life, you experience a new birth spiritually. That part of you which was spiritually dead because of sin is now alive. The Bible describes this process in John 3:1-8.

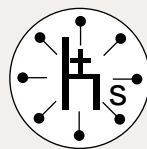
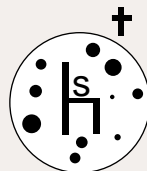
We receive Jesus by personal invitation

Jesus stands ready to come into our lives, but we must invite him to do so. *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,”* he says. *“If anyone hears my voice and opens the door; I will come in to him.”* (Revelation 3:20).

Receiving Jesus involves admitting that you are spiritually dead and guilty before God, turning away from those thoughts and actions that displease him, and trusting Christ to come into your life to forgive your sins, to bring new spiritual life and to be the master of your life. It’s not necessarily an emotional experience, nor is it merely agreeing intellectually with the presentation in this article. But, as an act of your will, you simply and willingly

choose to turn over your life to Jesus and by faith, trust him be your Savior and Lord.

These diagrams represent two kind of lives: self-directed and Christ-directed. Which circle best represents your life? Which circle would you like to have represent your life?



If you would sincerely like to know God in a personal way, simply tell him about it. Here is a suggested prayer.

“Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be.”

If you prayed this prayer by faith you can be sure, on the trustworthiness of God’s word, that you are now a child of God, your sins are forgiven, and you have begun the great adventure of knowing Jesus personally.

The remainder of this magazine is designed to help you develop your new relationship with him.



Personally Speaking

WAYNE AND IRENE BARNES

IRENE: I GREW UP IN A SMALL TOWN. We were quite poor. My father was a heavy drinker and my mother was mentally ill. My mother was schizophrenic. When I was five I was shipped off to my aunt's house on many occasions because my mother couldn't take care of me.

I never felt I was good enough or smart enough. I never measured up to anything. I was insecure. I had no security.

But I had to grow up very quickly. By the time I was ten I had to take care of my mother and everyone else in the family. I didn't really have a normal childhood.

At 21 I got married. I married my first boyfriend. Lived next door to my parents. Built a house. Got divorced when I was 28. Moved out to Edmonton. Wanted to get away from my family. Wanted to get away from my mom.

When I came out here at 28 I got a job working in sales and devoted my energy and time into my career. I became very successful at it. I sell insurance and I became one of the top sales reps in Canada for 15 years in a row. I had a great career, a beautiful home. I had everything on the exterior, but inside I was dying—and very lonely. I remarried and I found out after we were married that my husband was a cocaine addict.

He basically ended up losing everything and I walked away before I lost everything I had too.

I felt lost and depressed. But I was very good at wearing masks. I could put on a façade. People didn't see the truth. I was searching for something to fill the emptiness in my life. I tried all sorts of avenues: New Age spirituality, hypnotherapy, Transcendental Meditation—I had a mantra. But none of these filled that void.

It was around that time I met Wayne.

Wayne: I grew up in an alcoholic, disfunctional family. Sexual abuse, mental abuse, and physical abuse were pretty common. My best friend was my sister. At the

“ I had a great career, a beautiful home. I had everything on the exterior, but inside I was very, very lonely and dying. ”

age of 12 I was walking along the road with her and a drunk driver killed her. At that moment I lost my best friend and the only person I could really confide in about all the secrets in my life. Loneliness really set in. When I was a youth I chose to leave home to get away from the abuse and tried to get a better life for myself. At the age of 18, I headed to the west coast and got a job in the logging industry.

One day when I came home from work at the sawmill I was exhausted and pretty lonely. I turned on the radio and I laid down in bed and a Christian broadcast was on.

The speaker asked some very probing questions and said “If you answered no to any of these questions then

you have serious problems in your life.” *I had answered no to every question.* “But I want you to know that Jesus has the answer,” he continued. As he presented the gospel message, I got out of bed and onto my hands and knees and I asked Christ to come into my life and forgive me of the sinful life I was leading.

Just a year and a half later I was off to Bible school. By the time I was 22, I was married and helping to pastor a small rural church. But I didn’t want to be there. When the senior pastor died, I was asked to take over until a replacement was found. Three years later they finally found someone so I left.

I got into the medical field, running an ambulance service. Unfortunately my marital life ended. I started living life for myself and took my eyes off God. I met another woman and lived with her eight years. But that relationship came to an end when I came down with MS (multiple sclerosis) and that was basically when she walked out the door. I became pretty sick and handicapped.

I was experiencing a fairly decent spell of health when I met Irene. We just really hit it off when we met each other. I was very needy. I told her my whole life story the first day I met her. I had never done that with anyone, because I was so ashamed of everything that had happened in my life. Then she told me her story.

Irene: Within two weeks of our meeting we were living together. I thought Wayne and I would be happy, but things didn’t work out. I loved Wayne very much but I couldn’t let go of the guilt and shame I felt from my past. I was very depressed.

But during a lengthy car ride together an amazing thing happened that would change all that.

Three years earlier I had visited a church and they had given me a CD and a Bible. While travelling in our car, Wayne and I played the CD and the words to one of the songs said, “Leave your burdens at the door. You don’t have to carry them anymore.” We started to weep. We realized the void in our lives could only be filled by God. I took out the Bible and we read it together during our seven hour car ride. I invited Jesus to come into my life and Wayne rededicated his life to the Lord.



After returning home, Wayne and I separated. I went to a retreat center. There I spent three days working through my unforgiveness, shame, guilt, fear, anger—all of that kind of stuff—with a godly couple. At the end I had an image: I was standing in a river. I was naked and the water was gushing at me. I looked down the stream and all I saw was my resentment and my shame and guilt and feelings of inadequacy flowing down the river. Jesus was there showering me with cleansing water and he dressed me with a robe and slippers and a gold crown. And he left me with a promise that He who the Son has set free is free indeed. And I am a free woman. My life is totally changed.

Wayne: Shortly after that Irene flew to Newfoundland to be with her ailing mother. I called her and asked her to marry me. She said, “Yes” and 10 days later we were married.

“The greatest thing about knowing Christ is total forgiveness, me not having to work for anything but to sit back and say thank you.”

Irene: In our marriage, knowing Jesus has brought us together. We pray and talk openly with each other. We share a deep intimacy and love for the Lord and place Him at the center of all we do. He keeps on molding us. We’re kinder to each other. We realize that God has a design for us, a plan to make us better.

Wayne: The greatest thing about knowing Christ is total forgiveness, me not having to work for anything but to sit back and say thank you. To know in my heart 100% that I can be forgiven takes a load off you like you’d never believe.

Irene: Jesus takes away the pain. He heals the damaged emotions. I don’t have to be a product of my past. My identity is based in him. God works all things for good. Jesus has set us free.

Developing a relationship with someone requires a commitment of time and energy. So it is with your relationship with Jesus Christ; it takes time to learn some of the basic principles of the Christian life.

This section offers four lessons to help you develop your relationship with Jesus Christ. Each lesson discusses an important aspect of that relationship such as God's love and forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

Understanding with



Study the first lesson thoroughly by reading the Bible references and answering the related question. Take time to follow the suggestions for further growth and then proceed to the next lesson. Correct answers are provided at the end of each lesson.

Lesson 1

Your Relationship Jesus Christ

Knowing Jesus Christ is the most exciting relationship you can have. It is the beginning of a life of adventure with an all-loving, all-powerful God. If you have sincerely asked Christ to come into your life, you can be sure that your relationship with God is secure. As a result of Christ's death on the cross, the only sufficient provision for a relationship with God, you have been completely forgiven and accepted by him.

There are many exciting things that are true in your relationship with Christ. Understanding these truths will help you build a firm foundation on which to grow.

1 Christ forgave your sin.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace . . ." (Ephesians 1:7).

When you trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, all your sins were forgiven . . . past, present and future.

What difference do you think it makes to know that all of your sins have been forgiven?

2 Christ made you a child of God.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” (John 1:12,13)

What did you do to become a child of God?

3 Christ came into your life and He will never leave you.

(Christ speaking) “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.” (Revelation 3:20)

Where is Christ right now in relation to you?

(Christ speaking) “Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away” (John 6:37).

Under what circumstances might Christ leave you?

According to this, how many times is it necessary to receive Christ?

4 Christ gave you new life.

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

When you trusted Christ to be your Savior and Lord, you began a new spiritual life. God will increasingly produce many new qualities in you as you grow in Him.

5 Christ gave you new life.

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 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.” (1 John 5:11-13).

a) In whom is eternal life found?

b) Who has eternal life?

c) Do you have the Son (Jesus)?

d) Do you have eternal life?

e) When did eternal life begin for you?

Key Question: If you were to die tonight, how sure are you that you would spend eternity with God?

(Please circle one) 0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

These wonderful benefits are based totally on Jesus Christ. None of them can be earned. You received them the moment you placed your faith in Christ.

Which of these five truths are especially meaningful to you now?

Why?

Dealing with Doubts

Even though feelings are important, your relationship with Christ is based on facts, not on feelings that can change daily. Doubts, questions and varying emotions are common parts of everyone’s life, but they are very unreliable gauges of anyone’s relationship with Christ. The Christian lives by faith in the trustworthiness of God and His word.

But what if you don’t feel like a Christian tomorrow? Place your faith in the faithfulness of God Himself and the trustworthiness of His Word. The more you learn the more you will be able to answer any doubts with solid facts. Your feelings will begin to respond to the truth of God’s Word and not to your circumstances.

Summary:

Since you have trusted in Christ’s payment for your sin, understood the basis of your relationship with God and have learned five truths about your relationship with Christ. You can be confident in your relationship with Christ.

Suggestions for Further Growth:

- ▶ Take one truth each day and reflect on it. Read the accompanying verses and thank God that this is now true of you.
- ▶ Tell someone this week that you have a relationship with Christ.

Key Question: What happens when you struggle and fall short in your efforts to live the Christian life? For the answer, study lesson 2

Answers: 2) You believed Christ, you believed in His name. 3a) In your life. 3b) None. 3c) Once. 5a) Eternal life is in the son (Jesus) 5b) All who have Jesus in their lives. 5c) The moment you received Christ

Notes

Lesson 2

Experiencing God's Love

Your relationship with God is secure because, through Christ, you are forgiven and accepted by God. However, God also desires for you to walk closely with Him and communicate with Him throughout each day. When we choose to sin, our relationship (our position as God's children) is not affected, but our fellowship with Him is interrupted. Sin keeps us all from experiencing God's love. Sin is more than cheating, lying, immoral behavior, etc. These actions are only the results of an attitude of sin. A simple definition of sin is: doing what we want instead of what God wants – both in actions and attitudes.

All of us, therefore, need to experience God's forgiveness for our attitudes and actions.

1 The basis for God's love and forgiveness.

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit"
(1 Peter 3:18)

Christ's death is the basis for forgiveness to bring us into a proper relationship with God. His death is also the basis for forgiveness in our daily fellowship with God. Read the following passage:

"You were dead in sin and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then He gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for He forgave all your sin, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of His commandments which you had not obeyed, He took this list of sin and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross"
(Colossians 2:13,14, Living Bible)

In the day when this was written, "list of sins" meant an itemized bond nailed to the prison door. It listed every crime for which the prisoner had been convicted. When the sentence was served or restitution paid, authorities removed the list and wrote "paid in full." The prisoner used this as proof that he could never be tried for those crimes again. The believer who trusts Christ's payment for sin can never be tried again. His sins have been "paid in full." He has full pardon from God.

“He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:10-12)

What has God done with your sins according to the verse above?

b) For how many of your sins did Christ die?

c) When Christ died on the cross for you, how many of your sins were in the future?

d) What difference will it make in your daily life to know that you are totally forgiven?

2 You can experience God's love and forgiveness every day.

Even though you are totally forgiven, you still need to deal with your sins on a day-to-day basis in order to experience continuing fellowship with God.

First John 1:9 says,

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Confession – agreeing with God about sin

When God brings to your attention that something you have done is sin, confess it. This confession involves at least three factors:

1. **Agree** with God that you have sinned.
2. **Thank** God that He has already forgiven you.
3. **Trust** God to change your wrong attitudes and actions.

By turning back to God and away from your sin (repentance), you will experience his love and forgiveness provided by Christ's death on the cross. Instead of feeling guilty or condemned, you can know that your fellowship with God is restored.

Confession – putting it into practice

Right now or tonight before you go to bed:

1. Ask God to reveal any sins in your life.
2. List these on a piece of paper. Be completely honest; this is just between you and God.
3. After completing your list, write over it the promise of 1 John 1:9.
4. Thank God for the forgiveness He has provided for you through what Christ did on the cross.
5. Tear up the list and throw it away.

a) How often do you need to confess a sin to God?

b) When should you confess a sin?

Confession – experiencing the results

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:5)

“...as far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12)

c) What should you do if you still feel guilty after you have confessed your sins?

d) What do these passages say about guilt and cleansing?

e) In light of what we have looked at concerning guilt and forgiveness, how would you complete this statement?

“When I have confessed all my sins, I . . .

Summary:

Understanding God's great love and forgiveness allows Christians to enjoy a growing fellowship with Him.

Suggestions for Further Growth

- ▶ Take some time now or before you go to bed tonight to apply the things you have learned about God's love and forgiveness. Make your confession list; then destroy it. Try to spend 15 minutes or so each day alone with God in Bible reading and prayer. Here are some suggestions:
- ▶ Read the story of the young man who ran away from his father and wasted his inheritance. The story was told by Jesus and is found in Luke 15:11-32. What does the story illustrate about our relationship with God, our forgiveness, and our fellowship with him?
- ▶ Read Galatians 5:16-23. Notice the differences that will take place as you allow God to work in your life. As you become aware of an area of your life that displeases God, deal with it according to 1 John 1:9 and then enjoy your fellowship with God.

Key Question: How can a Christian experience the power God has made available to live the Christian life? You'll discover the answer in Lesson 3.

Answers: 1a) God has forgiven them. 1b) All. 1c) All. 2a) Once. 2b) As soon as you realize it is sin. 2c) Count on God's word, the Bible, that you are forgiven and don't rely on your feelings. 2d) If anything is not confessed, there is reason for guilt to remain.

Notes

DAVE FRIESEN

Personally Speaking



I HAVE BEEN IN THE INVESTMENT BUSINESS FOR 13 YEARS. I am the founding partner of a successful financial group and a vice president of a prestigious financial institution. Those are my titles. And for most of my career they were also my identity. But there's another side to the story.

I grew up in a deeply religious home with loving and caring parents. Being raised in such an environment, one would think I'd be well-adjusted. The reality is that as a young adult I struggled greatly with insecurity.

For many years I lived with an overriding fear that if people found out who I really was they wouldn't think I was such a great guy. So I learned to wear different masks. I wanted everyone to think I was this smart, successful guy, who had everything going for him, so I never let anyone see me ask questions. I didn't want to give the impression that I was not in the know. I never let others know my fears. That would make me appear weak and afraid. People might think less of me.

I desperately sought recognition.

I felt the way to gain respect was through attaining lofty titles and to make lots of money. In every conversation, I immediately tried to establish who I was and what I had accomplished.

I covered my insecurities by being assertive, aggressive, highly confident. But the truth is, inside I was far from that.

I noticed that as I closed bigger and bigger deals, the accompanying adrenaline rush I used to experience got shorter and shorter.

One day my partner and I were working on our biggest deal to date. I remember thinking that if we could just close this huge deal that it would be so exhilarating. I would get that great adrenaline rush back.

When we closed the deal, I drove out to the dream house my wife and I were building. As I walked inside a thought hit me: I had achieved my biggest commission

day ever; my business was thriving; I was building my dream home; I had a great relationship with my wife and two wonderful kids.

If anyone should be on top of the world, it should be me. Instead, I just sat on our living room floor and cried. *What's wrong with me?* I thought. *Why do I feel so lonely? What's the purpose of my work?* All of a sudden everything seemed so hollow and I realized that I really didn't know myself.

I sat on the floor and prayed. As I did, God helped me realize that what I longed for was significance, not success, that He loved and accepted me for who I was, not who I thought I should be. It became very clear that I could not get significance from my business or even my family. I had to find it solely in my relationship with God.

That revelation started me on a journey of learning how to do things God's way.

I wish I could say that things changed instantly, but they didn't. I had so many issues to deal with. The next year was a confusing and lonely time. I lost both my business and my passion for life. But through it all I learned to trust God, and learned what it really means to have the Holy Spirit guiding my life.



“...through it all I learned to trust God, and learned what it really means to have the Holy Spirit guiding my life.”

I now realize that my confidence comes from God alone. I'm learning to be authentic and not wear masks. I can't adequately put into words how freeing that is. For years, I used to have terrible stomach problems and flu-like systems from all the stress I put myself under. God has removed that from me.

He has surrounded me with a tremendous group of supportive friends.

He has also given me back the passion for life and business. And most importantly he has taught me that who you are and what you have are not the issues. The question is whether or not we will be obedient to Him and allow ourselves to move from striving for success to desiring real significance.

Power for Living

Lesson

3

You are now beginning to live the Christian life, which isn't a standard of performance or a code of ethics, but a vital personal relationship with a loving God.

Just as our relationship with God is totally dependent on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God.

Through your new identity in Christ, you have all the potential you need to live as a new creation in Christ. But, you must continually draw from the proper source of power.

1 The Holy Spirit is the power source of the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is God

"For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:11-12)

The Holy Spirit came to dwell in you.

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the spirit, if the spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9)

The Holy Spirit came to convict the world of sin and justice.

"When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8)

The Holy Spirit came to lead you into the truth

"But when He, the spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak on what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13)

The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ.

(Christ speaking) *"He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you"* (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit confirms your relationship with God.

"...Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:14-16).

The Holy Spirit is the source of Christ- like qualities in your life.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Which of these qualities would you most like God to begin developing within you?

(Christ speaking) *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me"* (John 15:4-5).

a) What does Jesus say we are to do in order to see this fruit produced in us?

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

b) What does the Holy Spirit desire to equip you to do?

c) What does it mean to you to be a witness for Christ?

d) Why do you think the Holy Spirit’s power is needed to be a witness?

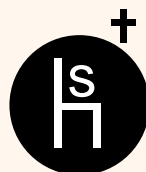
2 Not all Christians experience the Holy Spirit’s power.

Although the Holy Spirit lives within all Christians, not all Christians are filled or directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people: the natural, spiritual and carnal person.

The natural person

Those who have not trusted Christ’s death to pay for their sins and thus Christ does not live in them
(see 1 Corinthians 2:14).

The circle represents a person’s life. The natural person directs his or her own life and thus sits in control (S). Christ (†) does not live in the natural person’s life and is therefore outside the circle.



The Spiritual Person

Those who have trusted Christ as their Savior and are trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life
(see 1 Corinthians 2:15).

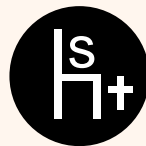
The spiritual person has invited Christ (†) into his or her life and has allowed Him to take control through the Holy Spirit. The person therefore yields to Christ’s direction.



The Carnal Person

Those who have trusted Christ to pay for their sins, but who are trusting their own efforts to live the Christian life. (Carnal Refers to “Flesh” as opposed to “Spirit”) A carnal Christian lives in the energy of the flesh, not in the power of the spirit (see 1 Corinthians 3:1,2).

Although Christ lives in the carnal person’s life, the Holy Spirit is not allowed to direct it. Instead, the person remains in control.



Which of these circles best represents your life?

3 You can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The abundant Christian life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through you in the power of the Holy Spirit. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit only by faith, by trusting God to produce in you the fruitful life He promised. The following three steps explain how you can be filled with the Spirit.

Confess all known sin

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened” (Psalm 66:18).

a) Why do you think it is important to confess all known sin in order to be filled with the Spirit?

Yield every area of your life to Christ

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:12,13).

b) What do you think yielding every area of your life to Christ would involve?

Trust the Holy Spirit to fill you

God has **commanded** you to be filled with his spirit:

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled (directed and empowered) with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

God has **promised** to answer your requests which are in accord with his will:

“And this is the confidence which we have before Him that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him” (1 John 5:14,15).

c) Is it God’s will for you to be filled with His Spirit?

You can be filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. This prayer is a good way to express that faith:

“Dear Father, I know that I have been directing my own life and, as a result, I have sinned against you. I thank you that you have forgiven my sins through Christ’s death on the cross. I now invite Christ to take His place on the Throne of my life. Fill me with your Holy Spirit as you commanded me to be filled, and as you promised that you would do if I asked in faith. As an expression of faith, I now thank you for taking control of my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.”

d) Does this prayer express the desire of your heart?

e) What do you think would happen if you prayed this prayer right now?

If this is the desire of your heart, you can pray this prayer right now and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

4 You can be continually empowered by the Holy Spirit

If you find that you have retaken control of your life through sin—any definite act of disobedience—simply breathe spiritually (exhale the impure and inhale the pure). This important exercise will enable you to continue to experience Christ’s loving control in your life throughout each day.

a) Exhale – Confess your sin

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Also read Hebrews 10:1-25. Remember the three factors involved in confession:

1. **Agree** with God that you have sinned.
2. **Thank** God that He has already forgiven you.
3. **Trust** God to change your wrong attitudes and actions.

Inhale – Claim by faith the fullness of the Spirit in your life

- (i) **Surrender** the control of your life to Christ.
- (ii) **Trust** that He now directs and empowers you.

Summary:

The Holy Spirit is the power source of the Christian life. As you trust Jesus Christ, God’s Spirit will produce His character within you and empower you to be his witness.

Suggestions for further Growth

Continue to spend 15 minutes alone each day with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer.

Key Question: You can only trust someone as much as you know him. How does God want you to get to know him better? Lesson 4 has the answer.

Answers: 1a) Remain in Jesus: rely on and stay close to him. 1b) To be his witnesses. 1c) A witness tells others what he or she has seen or heard. A Christian witness should tell others what he knows to be true about Christ. 1d) He promises to give you the right words to say and the boldness to say them. 3a) Until we consciously have clean hearts before god, he cannot have fellowship with us. 3c) Yes, his command indicates his will.

Notes

Lesson

4

Growing in Your Relationship with Jesus Christ

God desires to empower you through the Holy Spirit to live a Christ – directed life. As you continue to breathe spiritually (confess your sin and claim the fullness of the Spirit), you will experience a deepening fellowship with God enabling you to grow in Christian maturity.

1 What does it mean to grow in Christ?

It means to increase in your knowledge of Christ, your love for Him, and in obedience to him.

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

What does Jesus say is the essence of eternal life?

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”

There are more than 600 commands in the Old Testament. Why do you think Jesus singled out this one in Matthew 22:37,38?

How would loving God with all your heart, soul and mind affect your life?

(Christ speaking) “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (John 14:21).

What will be a result of your growing love for him?

Just as it is a natural process for a child to grow in a loving relationship with a parent, so it is also natural for you to grow in your love relationship with God.

How can you grow in Christ?

Communication is vital to any relationship, including your relationship with Christ. There are four aspects of communication that will help you grow in your relationship with Christ as you live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2 God communicates with us through the Bible, revealing His character and His will.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

How would you define each benefit described in this passage?

Which of these benefits would be most helpful to you right now?

How would you evaluate the helpfulness of the Bible reading you have done so far?

3 We communicate with God through prayer – sharing our thoughts, our needs and our desires to do His will.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).

“This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14,15).

What do these verses tell us about prayer?

What are some things you can be praying about?

*“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

*“Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).*

Why is it important to be thanking God?

4 We communicate with Christians through fellowship – encouraging and building up one another.

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.
Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us
encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching”
(Hebrews 10:24,25).*

Why is it important to spend time with other Christians?

Why would this be important for you now?

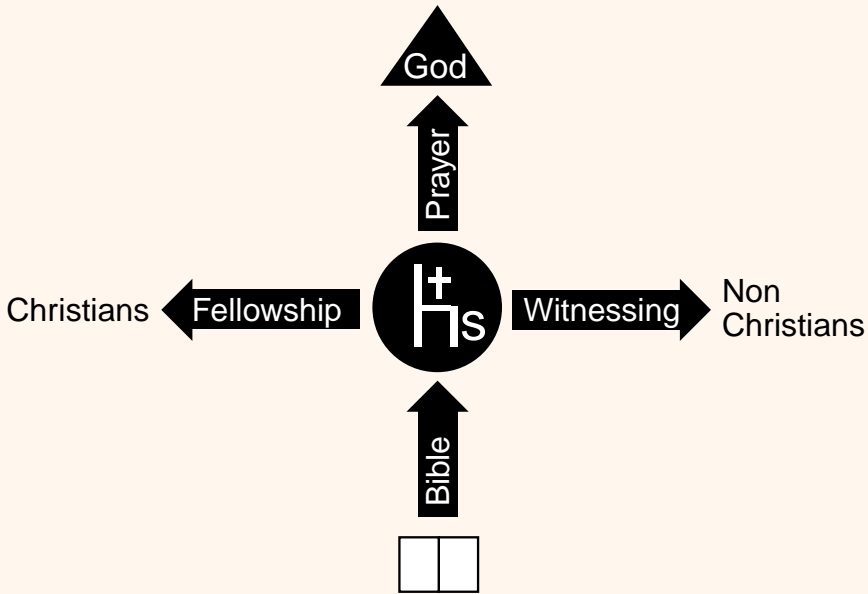
The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*, means, “sharing in common.” We desperately need to share our Christian experience with others who love God and walk with Him, and likewise allow them to share with us. The church, where we can meet other Christians and hear God’s Word, is God’s appointed place for Christians to meet. Bible studies and meetings are also extremely helpful.

5 We communicate with non-Christians by witnessing – sharing about our relationship with Christ.

*“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given
to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)*

What would motivate you to tell another person about Christ?

Who would you like to tell about what Christ has done in your life?



Summary:

Read 1 Corinthians 3:6,7. God is the source of your growth. You cannot develop spiritual maturity by trying real hard. As you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, read the Bible, pray, tell people about Christ and spend time with other believers, God will be at work in you producing fruitfulness and maturity.

Suggestions for Further Growth

Set aside time and a place for daily personal Bible study and prayer. A good book to begin with is the New Testament book of John. As you read, underline particularly meaningful verses. Pray and ask God to show you who he is and how you can respond to him. Some additional suggested passages for study are the ones in this lesson. Other passages are: Colossians 1:9-12; Matthew 7:7-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Psalm 1; 34; 103; 145; John 15:1-7; and Luke 9:23-26

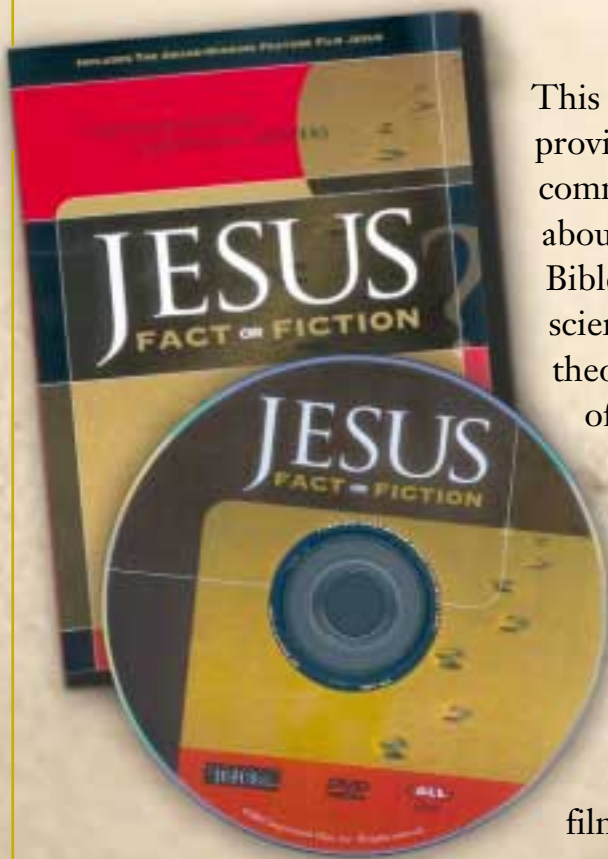
Answers: 1a) Knowing God. 1b) If we truly love God we will fulfill the other commandments. 2a) Teaching – presents truth about God and ourselves; rebuking – points out what is wrong; correction – shows us how to do what is right; training in righteousness – describes how to live a life which pleases God. 3a.) Pray about everything. When we pray according to God’s will, he hears and answers us. 3c) God wants us to; by thanking God, we express our trust in him. 4a) To be in an environment of mutual encouragement to love and do good deeds.



A vast field of yellow flowers, likely rapeseed, stretches across the foreground and middle ground. The sky above is a clear, light blue with some wispy white clouds. The horizon line is visible in the distance, with a few dark silhouettes of trees or structures.

This is the beginning of your Christian life and there is much more to understand than just these four lessons. The church is God's appointed place for Christians to learn and grow. Take the initiative today to find a Bible-teaching church in your neighborhood and make plans to attend regularly. To find out more about the Christian life visit the following websites: www.newliferesources.ca, www.newliferesources.com, www.crusademedias.com.sg.

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