

HOW YOU CAN HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Everywhere around the world, people share the same deep concerns. As humans we desire meaningful relationships. Also, part of our human nature is to wonder what happens to us after we die. Down through history the vast majority of people have realized there is more to life than the material world we see. Most people recognize there is a supernatural aspect to life and that God exists. Therefore, it only makes sense for us to want a personal relationship with God and to know where we go when we die.

Do you know for sure you have a personal relationship with God and you will live forever in heaven after you die?

God's Word, the Bible, says you can be sure of this: *"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 5:13

So it is possible to know for sure you can have eternal life and live forever in heaven.

Suppose you were standing before God and He asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What do you think you would say?

Now, let's see what the Bible says about this.

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| Fact 1: God wants to have a direct personal relationship with us. |
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All other relationships will eventually disappoint us, either by circumstances, choices, and/or death. **However, a personal relationship with God is permanent and we can always count on it.**

God loves us and wants to relate with us. The Bible says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* –John 3:16

- **Jesus Christ is God's Son, is fully God, and became a man.** The Bible calls Jesus "the Word" in these verses, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."* –John 1:1, 14a
- **Eternal life is offered to us as a free gift.** The Bible says, *"...the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* –Romans 6:23b
- **God wants to give us fulfillment right away.** Jesus said, *"...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* –John 10:10b
- When you have a personal relationship with God it will **continue forever** in heaven after you die. Jesus said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* –John 14:3

So, what keeps us from experiencing this amazing relationship with God?

Fact 2: Our wrongdoing separates us from God.

- **No one is perfect.** When we choose to go our own way instead of God's way, the Bible calls our wrongdoing, "sin." The Bible says, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...." –Romans 3:23
- **Sin automatically separates us from God. Because God is perfectly good and fair, He must punish sin.** The Bible says, "*For the wages of sin is death....*" –Romans 6:23a

If we are still separated from God on the day we die, we will stay separated from Him forever in eternal suffering. The Bible calls this "hell."

- **We cannot rescue ourselves** from being separated from God. There is nothing we can do to work our way into a relationship with God. So no one can say "I did it by myself." The Bible says eternal life with God is "*...not by works, so that no one can boast.*" –Ephesians 2:9

But the **Good News** is that God the Father loved us so much that He came up with a way to pay the penalty for our sin.

What was God's solution?

Fact 3: Jesus Christ provides the only way we can have a personal relationship with God.

- **Jesus paid the penalty for our sins** by dying on a cross so we don't have to be separated from God forever. The Bible says, "*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*" –1 Peter 3:18a
- **Jesus came back to life after He died.** The Bible says, "*He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification.*" –Romans 4:25

If you were drowning in the ocean, you would recognize that you couldn't save yourself. You would need a lifeguard to rescue you. When the lifeguard reaches for you, you would grab on to him as your only hope. You would trust in him to get you safely out of the water. It's like that when you place all your hope on Jesus Christ to save you from your sin.

- **The only way to have a personal relationship with God is to receive Jesus Christ.** Jesus said, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" –John 14:6

Referring to Jesus, the Bible says, "*Yet to all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God....*" –John 1:12

How do we receive Jesus Christ?

Fact 4: To receive Jesus Christ we must turn to Him, place our faith in Him, and let Him take charge of our life.

- A radical change occurs when we **turn to follow God** instead of following our own sinful desires. The Bible uses the word “repent” to refer to this change of direction: *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out....”* –Acts 3:19a

Repenting is more than just feeling sorry for our sins. Repentance involves actions. The Bible says, *“...repent and turn to God, and prove... repentance by... deeds.”* –Acts 26:20b

We repent by turning away from our sin and turning to God through Jesus Christ. It’s like walking down the road traveling north and you realize that you’re going the wrong way. So you make a U-turn to go south instead. Turning from our sin is a complete change in direction.

- **We must place our faith in Jesus Christ.** We can only receive eternal life by trusting in what Jesus has done for us instead of relying on our own efforts to be good enough to earn heaven. The Bible says, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”* –Ephesians 2:8-9

Saving faith is not just believing facts about Jesus. The Bible says, *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”* –James 2:19

So, it’s not enough to just believe facts about God to get into heaven.

Here’s the kind of faith you need: Trust only in what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin.

It is like trusting a boat will take you to where you want to go. Trusting in the boat is more than just saying that you believe the boat will hold you and take you where you want to go. If you really trust in the boat, you will actually get on it, and trust it with your life.

- **We must let Jesus Christ take charge of our life.** Letting Jesus have control as our Lord is not just saying we give our lives to Jesus. Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”* –Matthew 7:21

When Jesus is Lord of our life, we obey Him. Jesus said, *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”* –John 14:15

The Bible says this about receiving Jesus Christ, *“... if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”* –Romans 10:9-10

- 1. Does this information about how you can have a personal relationship with God make sense to you?**
- 2. Is there any reason why you would not be willing to receive God's free gift of eternal life?**
- 3. Are you willing to turn from your sin and trust in Jesus Christ right now to receive eternal life?**

If you are willing to accept God's gift of eternal life, the next step is to tell Him that you repent of your sins, that you are putting your trust in Jesus' sacrifice for your sin, and that you want Jesus to take charge of your life. If this is the decision you want to make, here is a prayer that you can use to talk to God:

**Dear God,
I admit that I have gone my own way and have sinned against You. I realize this sin separates me from You. But I am willing now to stop going my own way and turn to follow You. Please forgive me. I am placing all my trust in what Jesus Christ did for me when He died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin. Thank you for raising Jesus back to life again. I invite Jesus to be in charge of my life from now on. Amen.**

If you just prayed this prayer or a prayer like this, welcome to the family of God! You have just made the most important decision of your life. According to God's message to us in the Bible, now you can be sure you have eternal life, and that you will enjoy a personal relationship with God that will last forever in heaven.

As proof of giving Jesus control, we will want others to know that we belong to Him. To show others that you are following Jesus, the Bible tells us to be baptized and to worship God together with other believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus commands us to tell others the Good News about how to receive God's gift of eternal life! Jesus said, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* –Matthew 28:19-20

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