

Coming to Christ

What are the first steps to take if I want to know God? Where do I begin? How can I know that I am moving in the right direction? These are good questions to ask. Chances are if you can identify with any of them the Lord is already at work in your life. You see, coming to Christ is possible because He has already come to us. He will reveal Himself to anyone who wants to know him. Someone described religion as man's attempt to reach up to God. But Christianity is the story of God reaching down to man. So we begin our search by acknowledging that He is, simply, that He exists. Here are several verses from the Bible that can help us understand this beginning point:

*And without faith it is impossible to please God,
because anyone who comes to him must _____
_____... Hebrews 11:6*

Creation communicates strongly that God exists. From the intricacies of the human body, or the minute detailed structure of the atom to the vastness of the heavens or the beauty of a sunset, creation speaks as the voice of the Creator saying, "I Am", "I exist".

*The heavens _____ the glory of God; the
skies _____ the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth _____; night
after night they display knowledge.
There is no speech or language where their
_____ is not heard.
Their _____ goes out into all the earth, their
_____ to the ends of the world. Psalms 19:1-4*

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible
qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- _____
_____, being understood from what
has been made, so that men are without excuse.
Romans 1:20*

The second part of this beginning point has to do with the nature of God.

*...and that he _____ those who _____
_____ him. Hebrews 11:6*

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God wants to reveal himself to us, to reward us, as we seek for Him. This is His grand design, His plan. In response to what we inherently know of Him and in response to what we know of ourselves He desires that we seek after Him. All of our need, our weakness, our selfishness, our inconsistencies, our broken promises and our dark secrets (what the Bible calls sin) along with a mixture of contrasting desires to do right, to love and to care are designed to help us humbly acknowledge His existence and cause us to reach out to Him.

These next verses gives us a brief synopsis of this point and again underscores God's plan: That we would reach out for him, that we would seek him.

26 *From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*

27 *God did this so that men would _____ him and perhaps _____ for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:24-31*

Again all of this beginning is built on the premise that God has reached down to us in Christ and is even now reaching out to us. He does this in hopes that we will turn to Him. He is not far from anyone of us. And if that is not enough, it is wonderfully true that He is very much involved in enabling us to respond to him. It is His Spirit that is at work in us that draws us to seek after Him.

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, ... John 6:44

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. John 15:16

If any of this is making sense, know that the God of the universe is close and wanting to reveal Himself to you. Our part is to co-operate with God, to respond to Him along the way. The next steps will help you respond to the gentle invitation of His Holy Spirit. They will help you see how much God really loves us. Open your heart as you go over them and learn about what he has done for us to bring us back into right relationship with Him. These are the next important points along the path.

This is the first in a series of other Bible studies that will help you as you begin your new life in Christ. Find someone who is a little further down the road than you are, (perhaps the person who has shared this study with you) and ask them to help you with the next studies in the series.

At the end of each study you will find a memory verse from the Bible. Spend some time hiding God's word in your heart. Memorizing scripture is a valuable practice that will strengthen your faith. Write this verse on a small piece of paper and carry it in your pocket or purse. Read and reread it until you can say the verse without looking.

Memory verse:

That if you _____ with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and _____ 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

So what does it mean to become a Christian?

A Christian is someone who believes that God loves them, has put their trust in Christ to forgive them and is learning to know Him and follow Him in their daily lives. Here are four simple steps to help you understand how this process can apply to you.

Step 1.

God loves you!! This is the Good News. You are loved by God. The God of creation is looking toward us with love and affection in his heart. He cares for us. He has already made up his mind about you. He loves you!!

"For God so _____ the world that he gave his one and only Son, that _____ in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

But God _____ his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...

Romans 5:8

This first step in becoming a Christian is to simply believe that God really loves you.

Step 2.

The second step brings us to man's main problem. All of us have turned away from God's love and attempted to live life on our own terms.

We all, like sheep, have _____, each of us has turned to his _____;.....

Isaiah 53:6a

God designed each one of us to have a love relationship with Him but we have chosen to do things our way. This is what the Bible calls sin and we've all done it.

.....for _____ have _____ and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:23

There are terrible consequences for this way of life---death!.....

For the wages of sin is _____, ...

Romans 6:23

.....That's separation from God here and now (bummer) and on into eternity (that's hell).

Step 3.

This is where Jesus enters the picture. Remember that God loves you and doesn't want you to be separated from him.

...but the gift of God is _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23b

So he sent Jesus (His unique Son – God as a man) to live among us and to show us what the Father's love and power were like. But more than this, **Jesus came to take our penalty for sin.** You see, Jesus, because he was sinless (he never once acted independently or disobeyed God) could take our place. He took the punishment we deserved.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, _____ Romans 5:8

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has _____ the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

That's right, the innocent Jesus took the place of the guilty you and me, so we could be restored back into relationship with God and experience life ('eternal' life is a heavenly quality of life right now as well as on into eternity...forever and ever) instead of the death we deserved. Wow!! That's love!! He's ready right now to accept you completely because of Jesus.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is _____ with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but _____ to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

According to this scripture, He continues to wait patiently for the world that He loves to respond to Him.

Step 4.

Respond in faith to the message of God's love and forgiveness in Christ by asking Him to forgive you and to come into your life.

Is there anything keeping you from trusting Christ and giving Him your life? God has done everything for us--- He has opened the way. Now the next step is our response to what God has already done. Are you ready? Has God been preparing you to surrender to the love He has shown us in Christ? This is the best news anyone could ever receive. The first step in the Christian life is trusting Jesus---just simply believing that:

- He is who he said He is—God who became a man in Jesus.
- That He loves you and took your place of punishment for sin. (the cross)
- And that because He was sinless death could not hold Him and that He rose from the dead and is alive today!
- We must be willing to turn from our old way of living and thinking and give Christ control of our lives.

A good way to exercise that trust is to pray a simple prayer that agrees with what's in those four steps. Something like this:

Almighty God, I believe in you and that you desire that I seek after you. I want to turn my heart to you right now as I pray. I believe that you love me and that you sent Jesus to earth to take my penalty for sin. I realize that I have failed and taken life into my own hands..... that I have sinned. I ask you to forgive me and I chose to turn from my past way of life. I trust you that when you died on the cross you were taking the penalty of my sins on yourself. Thank you. And I believe that you came back to life after you defeated death. Come into my life, and live in me. I give you all that I am, my past, my present, my future. Thank you for hearing me and bringing me to this place of faith, understanding and surrender.

So what's next?

You've joined a big family.....The body of Christ. Here are several ways for you to grow in your new relationship with God:

1. **Read the Bible.** This is God's word to us. The Bible is full of real life stories that will reveal more about who God is and how he acted in history. He has always had a plan for man. That plan was uniquely fulfilled in Jesus' coming so a good place to start reading is in the New Testament. (A wise man once said, "When all else fails try reading the directions".)
2. **Pray.** This is talking to God. Sharing your feelings, needs, desires,-----everything by simply talking to Him.
3. **Develop relationships with other Christians.** Find a church, a Bible study, a small group ----somewhere you can really connect with God's people.
4. **Look for opportunities to share your new relationship with others---** family, friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers..... God loves us all!!
Welcome to God's wonderful family!