

How to Become a Christian (Part 1)

11/24/2024

I would like to begin this morning by including an article I read recently. I will include the article in its entirety and then explain why. Bear with me on this one!

How to become a Christian

As a believer you will have the opportunity to talk with others about your faith. At times you will find a person who wants to know how to become a Christian. Following is a guideline you can use to help a person understand what it means to begin a relationship with Christ.

Fact: You were called by a loving God. You have great value. God love you and wants to have a personal relationship with you.

Set-up Explain to the person that the world tells us that we were accidents of nature. We began as ooze in a pond, evolved into apes, and finally into humans. We live, we die, so we should grab all we can get in this life-after all, that's the only way to fulfillment. In contrast, the Bible tells us we are not accidents. We were created by a loving God who knew about us before we were born. We are here for a purpose, and we can find ultimate fulfillment by finding a relationship with him.

Read the following verses and make the following points.

God created you.

Psalm 139:13-16. You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

God knew you before you were born—even while you were in your mother's womb. He knows all about your family and your life until now. [Be sensitive that some people have had difficult circumstances in their lives. Explain that God loves them deeply, even if we can't understand everything that has happened to us.] He wants to give you a brand new start and a new way of living. He can do that when you give him your life. Why would you do that? Because...

God wants to have a personal relationship with you.

John 17:3. 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.

God is not some "force", an unspeaking and unseeing idol, or merely another name for your own self-esteem. Instead, God is a person, your Creator, who created you to be in a relationship with him. Why? Because...

God loves you

John 3:16. *For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

You can turn your life over to God's control because he loves you and wants the very best for you. In fact, he loves you so much that he gave his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for you. I'll explain more about that in a minute. I just want you to realize that when you trust God, you are actually trusting the One who created you. When you turn your life over to him, you are giving your life to the one who knows you inside out. Don't you think that is a good place to put your trust?

Fact: Your sin keeps you from having a personal relationship with God.

Set-up: Most people don't understand the concept of sin. We live in a fairly moral world that believes each person can decide what is right, what is true, and what is moral-whatever that might mean. Television and movies don't help with their portrayals of happy people blatantly living sinful lives. You will probably need to explain that God has set some standards about what is right and wrong, and that there is such a thing as "sin".

What is sin?

James 4:17. *Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.*

1 John 3:4. *Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God.*

God is holy and perfect; people are sinful. You probably know that for yourself-if you tried to be perfect for a day, you'd quickly discover that you couldn't do it. [Here you can draw a picture of a chasm, with a stick figure on one side and the word "God" on the other. Put the word "sin" in the chasm and explain further.] Sin means not understanding or even caring about what is "right". You defy God when you know what is right and then refuse to do it.

Who has sinned

Romans 3:23. *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

Romans 5:17. *For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many.*

The Bible says "everyone has sinned." We simply cannot help it - we're human. When Adam sinned (way back in the garden of Eden in the book of Genesis), sin entered the human race and sinfulness is now part of our nature . You might be saying. "So what?"

What's so bad about sin?

Romans 6:23. *For the wages of sin is death.*

Isaiah 59:2. *2 It's your sins that have cut you off from God.*

Sin lead to death. That's a big problem! Because God is perfect, he cannot have anything to do with us because we are sinners. He wants to have a personal relationship with us but our sin prevents it! So what did God do?

Fact: Only through Jesus Christ can we have a personal relationship with God.

Set-up: Sometimes people don't understand the concept of having a "relationship" with a being they cannot see or touch. Yet it is a reality. That's why Jesus Christ came. He was a human being who lived on this earth so that we could understand what God is like. At this point you may discover that the person has lots of questions (for example. "How can God be God and also Jesus"), the details of which can send you off the point. If that happens, explain that you don't have all the answers to some of those kind of questions - in fact, some questions are simply unanswerable because we humans cannot completely understand God and how it works. Explain that having a relationship with Christ is a spiritual reality that must be experienced, and that doing so will answer a lot of questions. The key questions to deal with at this point in the discussion include:

Why Jesus Christ?

John 14:6. *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*

God decided to deal with our sin. However, he had made it clear throughout the Old Testament that sin leads to death. In the Old Testament, God asked people to sacrifice animals as a way to show that their sin required payment for death, and he allowed the animals to substitute for the people asking forgiveness. But that was only temporary. God's plan all along was to send his Son, Jesus - a perfect human being - to be the final and ultimate sacrifice.

Why did Jesus have to die?

1 Peter 3:18. *Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.*

Jesus died to take the penalty our sins deserved. In essence, he took our punishment so that we wouldn't have to! Now, because of Jesus, the way is prepared for us to be able to have a personal relationship with a holy God. [At this point, you can draw a

cross in the chasm, connecting the two sides. On the cross, write the word “Jesus”. This visually shows that Jesus is the only way to God. Also add that Jesus did not stay dead. He rose from the dead, which is a promise to us that we will also rise from the dead and go to heaven to be with him.] So what do you need to do next?

Fact: You must personally respond by trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Set-up: The fact of salvation means nothing unless a person accepts it personally. Emphasize that even if the person grew up in the church, it is still necessary to accept Jesus personally. Also emphasize that even if a person has led a terrible life, no one is too bad for God - a person does not have to be “clean up their act” before coming to Christ. In fact, Jesus died to take away all that sin and to help the person start anew. So emphasize that being good is not good enough, yet no one is too bad to be able to be forgiven - God wants all to come to him. All people need to trust in Jesus in order to be saved. So what kind of response should a person have? Talk about the following:

You respond with belief in Christ.

Romans 10:9-10. *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.*

You simply need to believe. That doesn't mean that you don't have any questions or that you don't understand everything. It simply means recognizing that you are indeed a sinner in need of a savior. You recognize that you cannot be good enough on your own. And you understand that God loved you so much that he sent Jesus to save you. If you believe that say so.

You respond by receiving Christ.

John 1:12. *But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Receiving Christ means acknowledging your belief in Christ, inviting him into your life, turning to God from your present way of living (repentance), and then beginning the adventure of letting God direct your life! And the moment you ask, it's done. Jesus has come in!

Question: Would you like to accept Jesus as your Savior?

Set-up: if a person is ready, explain that a person can express belief and trust in Christ through prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God. He knows what a person means even when it is difficult to express. Tell the person to pray spontaneously, or to repeat the following prayer after you.

Dear God, I know that my sin has separated me from you. Thank you that Jesus Christ died in my place. I ask you to forgive my sin and to come into my life. Please begin to direct my life. Thank you for giving me eternal life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

That's it! You can officially welcome this person into God's family - your new brother or sister in Christ!

I have included this article in its entirety because this was not just an article found in some magazine or newspaper. It was found in The Chronological Life Application Study Bible based on The New Living Translation. I came across it while skimming through the articles within that Bible.

The introduction section of this Chronological Bible makes a number of statements with regards to an individual trusting what God's Word The Bible says and not following the words or opinions of mankind. And yet it also includes this section with directions on how to become a Christian. But are these the words (directions) of God or of mankind on what is involved in coming to Christ in God's plan of salvation for mankind?

What is missing in this article titled 'How to become a Christian'? While there is plenty of good information to be found in this article the conclusion for responding to God's call is simply NOT what Scripture calls for. But what is included here is often called 'the sinner's prayer'. Something that is NOT to be found anywhere in Scripture.

Lord willing I will be presenting a lesson next week on what Scripture has to say about the matter of responding to The Gospel call of God. But here are a couple of passages to consider on the matter.

Luke 6:46-49 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

The above statement by our Lord makes it clear that there is both a need to hear what He says and to built a strong foundation upon it. The example He uses of building a house on a strong foundation is a well known principle and is a tested and true practice. One most people can relate to.

Consider the direction our risen Lord provided to His disciples in the following passage. It is also about as clear as one could make it. A passage which is often referred to as 'The Great Commission'.

Matthew 28:18-20

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matthew, an eye witness of this event, says these are the words spoken by the risen Christ. Jesus our Lord and Savior.

The one whom the Hebrew writer speaks of in the following passage -

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”

(Hebrews 1:1-4)

We will look a little closer at what God’s Word has to say on the matter of salvation in next week’s lesson, Lord willing.