

Following Jesus *The Glory of God and the Life of Man in the Cross of Christ*

The very heart of Christianity is a call to glorify God by following Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. This brings up questions God, your purpose in life, goodness, sin, Jesus, heaven, and hell. You are about to encounter seven of the most important questions in the universe. Your answers to these questions will affect you forever. Please consider them carefully.

Do you believe in God? Who or what is God? How can you know about God?

1. There is a God who is infinitely glorious.

"Stand up and praise the LORD your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting." "Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you." (Nehemiah 9:5-6)

The God of the Bible is infinitely more beautiful and wonderful and holy and majestic and powerful and awesome than the greatest human mind can comprehend. His power knows no end, His justice is perfect, His mercy is like a never ending tide, His holiness is whiter than the whitest snow, His knowledge is exhaustive, and His love cannot be contained by all creation. He has existed and will continue existing in all His beauty forever. He has no beginning and no end. He placed every star in the sky. He knows every atom in the universe by name. He stands alone in honor and value and worth. His name is above all names. He has no equal (Exodus 15:11).

What does God want from you? Why are you here? What's your purpose?

2. We were created by God for His glory.

"Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:7)

In His love and grace, God created us for the one thing that is truly fulfilling (his glory). God created us for the one thing that is able to satisfy us eternally (his glory). God created us such that we have, as our purpose, the very thing that we need most (the glorious God Himself). There is nothing (anywhere, ever) that is (or will be) able to satisfy us but, like, or more than the glory of God. And this is what we were created for, to recognize and respond to the glory of God.

Are you doing what you were created to do? How does God see us? Does God see us as basically good?

3. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

None of us have done that which we were created to do: live for the glory of God. That is, every one of us has sinned by nature and choice. We have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. In other words, we choose constantly to glorify God's creation (toys and money and sex and relationships) rather than God Himself. When God sees us, He does not measure our goodness in comparison with other people. Instead, God measures our goodness against Himself—a standard which we all fail to meet.

What's the big deal about sin? How does God feel about sin? Does God really punish sin?

4. The cost of our sin—of failing to live for the glory of God—is death.

"For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)

We see from the very beginning of human history (Genesis 2:17) that God has assigned the wage of death to sin. That is, when we chose to serve sin rather than God we earn (or deserve) the "fitting return" of death. We have all sinned by falling short of the glory of God; and in so doing we have all earned sin's wage. Again, our rebellion brings with it extremely serious consequences. By failing to glorify God as we

should, we have brought the wrath of God upon ourselves and those who remain in their sin will ultimately be judged guilty by God and sentenced to physical and spiritual death—hell.

Who is Jesus? Why couldn't God just let our sins slide? Why did Jesus have to die?

5. In order to show His love, uphold His justice, forgive sinners, and display His glory, God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay for sins with His death.

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:9-10)

Because God is just, He must punish all sin. Because He is love He provided a savior. Because He is kind He forgives sin. And because He is glorious He did not leave us without hope in our state of enmity. Instead, He provided a way for us to again delight in His glory and be reconciled to Himself. Therefore, God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). That is, in order to show His love, uphold His justice, forgive sinners, and display His glory, God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the wages of sin with His death.

How does God decide if you go to heaven or hell? What do we have to do to get to heaven? How can our sins be forgiven?

6. The forgiveness of sins and the everlasting life bought by Jesus' death is a free gift of God for all who trust in Jesus.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:1-9)

Trusting (or placing our faith) in Jesus means relying on *His* work for the forgiveness of our sins, *not our own*. It means relying on *His* wisdom for guidance for all things, *not anyone else's*. And it means placing our confidence in *Jesus* to be ruler in our life, *not ourselves*. Further, trusting in Jesus is a continual, rather than a one-time, thing. That is, we can know that we have received the gift of forgiveness and eternal life because we keep *trusting in Jesus*, not because we trusted in Him, in some way, at some point in the past. Finally, the Bible is clear that the chief marks of one who has been given the gift of trust in Jesus are repentance, belief, love, and obedience.

What should you do if this makes sense to you? What's the next step? How do you begin a Christian life?

7. If these six truths resonate in you, if they make sense to you, if you believe them, then:

- Call on the name of Jesus. "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. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame'" (Romans 10:9-11). Ask Jesus to forgive your sins and give you a delight in Him.
- Tell someone. Find a mature Christian to talk to and pray with. The Christian life is hard. You need to find someone to live it with.
- Get baptized. This is a command from Jesus to all who believe (Matthew 28:18-20). Water baptism is an ordinance to be observed by the church during the present age.
- Get a Bible and begin to read it. God has literally written you a letter. He wants you to know Him and His will for you. Mostly, He wants to reveal the magnitude of His love and His glory to you. He does these things in the Bible.
- Get plugged into a local church. God's chosen vehicle for nourishing and shaping faith is the Church. Find a Christian church where you can worship, pray, learn, and minister with other believers.

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