

us, and we accept his teachings. Since he died for us, we want to live for him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). We are willing to do what he says. We want to quit doing wrong, and in thankfulness for what Christ has done for us, we want to do what is right. We submit to Christ and obey him.

He made us, saved us, loves us, and wants us to live forever in happiness. We love him and trust him so much that we invite him to live in us. Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and *make our home* with him” (John 14:23).

We ask him to guide us from within. We are willing for him to change our hearts, to identify our problems and to give us better ways to live.

How do Jesus and the Father live within us? By the Holy Spirit — God *promises* to give us his Spirit whenever we ask. “How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

That changes our life! “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you” (Romans 8:11). If God’s Spirit is in you, then you will live with God forever!

If you ask God for his Spirit to live within you, if you ask the Father and the Son to make their home within you, you can be *guaranteed* that it is done— and you belong to Christ. You have given

yourself to him, even as he gave himself for you on the cross. You are a Christian!

Prayer

To ensure that you have done this, it is helpful to verbalize it. Talk to God — tell him your story. Tell him that you admit your sin, you admit your need for forgiveness, you admit your need for his mercy, to cleanse your guilt. Accept the gift of Jesus Christ, that his death ransoms you from your sins. Repent of going your own way, resolve to do what *he* wants and ask him to live within you. Accept the gift of his Son — accept the gift of forgiveness — accept the gift of the Holy Spirit — and accept the gift of eternal life! And be assured that it is done.

What then?

Becoming a Christian does not make all your problems go away. You will still struggle against sin, but you will do so with the assurance that Christ continues to love you and forgive you. “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

The New Testament also shows us that those who believe in Christ are to be *baptized* as a symbol of their salvation, the death of their old sins, and their new life (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism pictures what Jesus has done for us. Talk to a Christian leader about expressing your faith in this way.

The New Testament also shows that believers meet together frequently to learn from each other and to encourage each other. Find a group of Christians who will welcome and strengthen you in the faith.

How to Become a Christian

If you want to become a Christian, the first and most important step has already been done: God has chosen you. He loves you. He wants to live with you, and he will make sure that you can live with him.

People generally want God to leave them alone. But sometimes God works in their lives to make them aware of a hunger for something more — something supernatural, something to fill an emptiness inside them. So he invites them to come closer.

If you *want* to become a Christian, then you have evidence that God is already working in your life. That's because no one wants to be a Christian unless God is *inviting* that person. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him" (John 6:65). He also said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). We come to God by coming to Jesus Christ — becoming a Christian.

Where do we start?

All human beings start out in the same place: alienated from God. We pay no attention to him, do not respect him, do not thank him or obey him. "All have sinned," Paul wrote, "and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 1:21; 3:23).

The result is simple: Without God, we die. Everybody dies, and unless something supernatural happens, we will stay dead. Our physical death pictures something that is even more important: We are spiritually dead because of our transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1). We are alienated from God, not having the life we could have with him.

Christianity brings the good news that the supernatural can happen — in Christ, we can be *with* God, and we can live with

him forever. The good news is that God is inviting you to be in eternal joy with him.

But it's helpful to remember where we start: in sin and death. "The wages of sin is death," Paul wrote (Romans 6:23). This is what we need to be rescued from. Christianity is a rescue operation. We are being saved *from* something. God is inviting us to escape sin and death through Jesus Christ. Let's see how he does it.

The work of Christ

Humans are unable to save themselves. But God loves humanity so much that *he has done it for us*. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God loves us. He wants us to be restored to him and live forever with him, so he sent his Son to die for us.

Jesus did not deserve to die. He never did anything wrong. But he willingly accepted his crucifixion, because his life was a ransom for ours, a sacrifice made so that we can live (Matthew 20:28; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Jesus' resurrection is evidence that we will also live forever. Although our bodies die and decompose, God ensures that we live again (Romans 6:4-5). Even now, in Christ, we have new life (1 John 5:13). That's what salvation means — something happens *now* that affects your life from now into eternity. All because of what *Christ* has done. He did it; our part is to accept it.

Accepting the invitation

Salvation — eternal life — is a gift of God. He gives to us through Jesus Christ. Our part is to accept this gift. God doesn't force it

on people who don't want it. How do we accept it? Through faith.

Faith is belief and trust. We believe that we need to be rescued, and we trust that Jesus Christ does it for us. We trust our lives and our future to him. We accept the fact that we have sinned. We cannot change our sinful hearts, but through faith in Christ, we are changed by God from enemies to friends, from strangers to family members.

God saves us as a gift of mercy. Mercy, by definition, is something we haven't earned and don't deserve. The Bible calls it grace: "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).

We can never earn salvation by our works, by doing good things. If we could earn it, we would have reason to be proud of our accomplishment. But Paul is saying that no one has any reason to boast, because salvation is given by God's grace, not earned by human effort.

We also accept that Jesus has claimed us, through his death on the cross. "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). When we *accept* what Jesus did for us, his claim on us becomes effective. Our sins are covered; they are forgiven. Our alienation is removed. There is no gulf or chasm between us and God.

Trust Jesus

Faith also means *trust*. We trust Jesus to take care of us. We trust him to teach