

How Do I Become a Christian?

In some ways becoming a Christian is the hardest thing imaginable. It is hard because our hearts are hard. Left to ourselves we cannot choose God... we will not choose God. The Bible says, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside" (Romans 3:10-12). Because we are thoroughly corrupted by sin we are unable and unwilling to choose Christ. It is, in fact, impossible to become a Christian on your own power. It is the hardest thing imaginable.

Jesus' own disciples recognized the difficulty of being saved. At one point they asked Jesus in despair, "Who then can be saved?" In Jesus' answer we find our hope. Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Although we cannot save ourselves, God can save us. Although we cannot become a Christian by our own strength or will, God can make us a Christian by his own strength and will.

This means that to become a Christian we must first look to God to save us. We must call to him in prayer, asking for him to be gracious to us, asking for him to grant us faith in Christ, asking for him to give us new hearts and new minds through which we may finally love Jesus and believe his gospel.

We cannot do these things ourselves. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. And not only is it possible with God, he loves to do it. He loves to save us and make us his children. The Scriptures say that God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7).

If you recognize your need for salvation, if you desire reconciliation with God, if you want to know the rich, eternal blessings of being counted as his child, do not hesitate, call on God for salvation today.



Sundays at Calvin PCA

Sunday School: 9:00 AM
Morning Worship: 10:15 AM
Evening Worship: 6:30 PM

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16-17



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Grace upon Grace



The Good News of the Gospel

The most important and difficult question any person will ever face is this: *How can I, a sinner, stand righteous before a holy God?*

The question is important because it seeks an answer to our most basic problem, the problem of sin. The Bible teaches that all have sinned (Romans 3:23). We stand guilty before God.

Amazingly, out of his abundant love God himself has answered our great problem with the gospel of Jesus Christ. By offering his Son in our place, we are able to stand justified before God... not by our own merit, but by Christ's perfections. In Christ we have received "grace upon grace" (John 1:16).



What Is the Gospel?

The word gospel means, “good news.” The gospel is the good news of how God rescues sinners from the guilt and power of their sin. At its heart the gospel is amazingly simple, beautiful, and it is easily the greatest treasure you could ever possess.

One of the clearest explanations of the gospel in the Bible is from 2 Corinthians 5:21. This verse says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” This verse tells us that God gave us Jesus so that our sin might be credited to him, and his perfect righteousness might be credited to us. In other words, Jesus was our substitute.

Some Christians call this substitution *the great exchange*. The exchange is two-fold. First, our sin was credited to Jesus, and therefore God’s righteous judgment fell on him. Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, spoke of Christ’s sacrifice in this way, “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). You see the emphasis in both 2 Corinthians and Isaiah—Jesus died *for our sake*, he was wounded *for our transgressions*, he was crushed *for our iniquities*.

The second aspect of this *great exchange* is this, his perfect righteousness was credited to us. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. Jesus alone is righteous in God’s eyes, yet in this great exchange his righteousness becomes our righteousness. This is how God is able to forgive us and declare us righteous before him, because of Jesus. Again the prophet Isaiah foresaw this, “By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous” (Isaiah 53:11).

At its heart the gospel is fundamentally about an exchange. Jesus takes our place, and we take his. This is good news indeed because now, instead of living under God’s judgment, we may live under his blessings. As God looked on Jesus and loved him as his son, so too does God look on all who trust in Jesus. He loves them as his own.

What Is a Christian?

Over the centuries the idea of what a Christian truly is has taken many different forms. Some believe that a Christian is simply someone who goes to church. Others suggest that to be a true Christian you must first get your act together, stop sinning, do good works, and live a better life. Still others identify themselves as Christians simply because they believe a God of love exists.

While some of those ideas may be helpful, none of them ultimately make someone a Christian. You are not a Christian just because you go to church. You cannot become a Christian by doing good works. And, you are not a Christian just because you believe in God.

A true Christian finds his hope elsewhere, not in what *he* has done, but in what *God* has done for him. A true Christian understands at least a few essential truths about God, about himself, and about how God saves sinners.

A true Christian is:

1. Someone who understands the holiness of God and the scope and gravity of his own sin.
2. Someone who understands that he can do nothing to save himself from the righteous judgment of God.
3. Someone who, by faith, receives and rests on Jesus Christ and *his* righteousness alone as the grounds of his standing before God.
4. Someone who, having experienced God’s grace, increasingly (yet imperfectly) desires to love, serve and worship God; and who desires to live a holy and obedient life.

The Gospel Speaks to Everything

To be sure, the gospel is very much a message about personal salvation. The gospel explains how we can be saved from our sin and how we might receive the sure hope of eternal life. On a personal level we undergo a dramatic transformation when God saves us. The Bible says that Christians are a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We would be remiss, however, to think that the gospel only has personal implications. The Scriptures are clear, the gospel has cosmic implications as well. The gospel speaks to everything.

When Jesus arose from the grave, he arose as the great victor over every evil this world has ever known. In the Bible Jesus is called the *firstfruits* because through his resurrection he began the work of making all things new. Jesus’ own resurrection is the *firstfruits* of this new creation.

The gospel promises personal salvation, but it also promises a new creation in which everything wicked and corrupt in this world will be forever gone. Jesus is making all things new, and one day he will return in glory to complete this new creation. For now, the whole creation groans as it awaits its new birth (Romans 8:19-23), but someday soon a new heaven and a new earth will come. On that day death will die forever, sin will be no more, nor will there be any more sickness, sorrow, pain, or suffering. Jesus will end every injustice and oppression. He will establish a new kingdom of perfect righteousness where all who belong to him will dwell secure. In short, Jesus will right every wrong.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.... “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away....” “Behold, I am making all things new.”

(Revelation 21:1-5)
