

Become a Christian

This page contains the heart of *Hope Reborn*, Chapter 3 which explains how to actually become a Christian.

How do I become a Christian?

The Bible explains the story of humanity and the way God saves us in three stages. This is summarized in Ephesians 2:1-9, which is explained in three diagrams below:

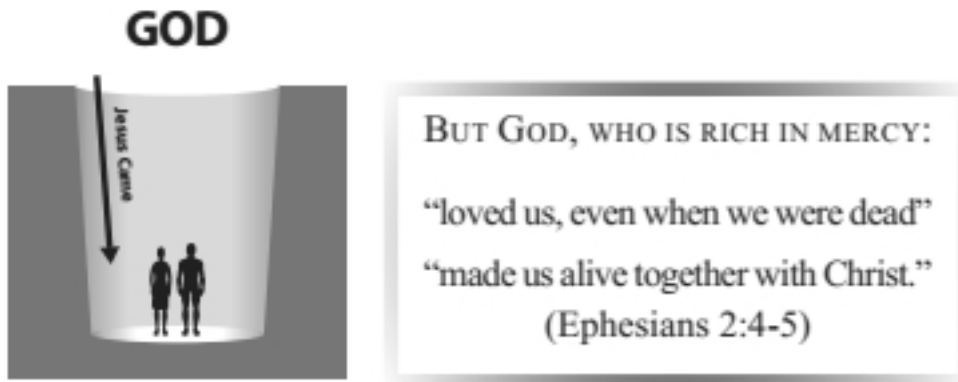
STAGE ONE: DEAD IN SIN



WITHOUT GOD WE ARE:
“dead in trespasses and sins”
“following the course of this world”
“carrying out the desires of the
body and the mind”
“by nature children of wrath”
(Ephesians 2:1-3)

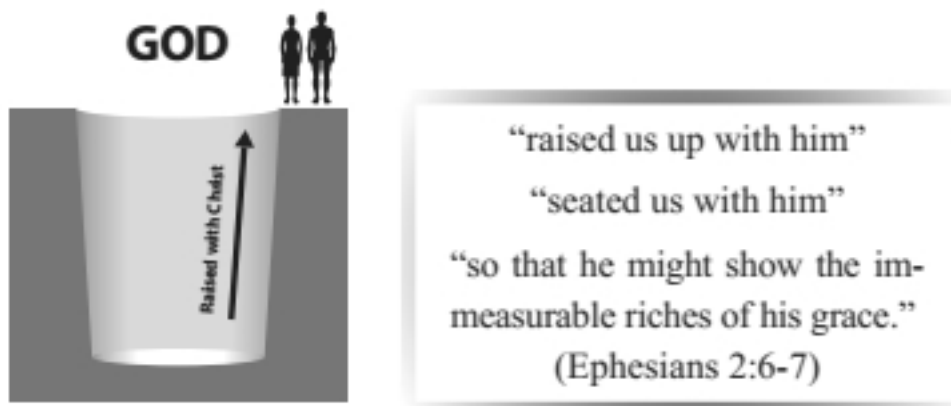
We are all trapped in a pit called sin, which separates us from God. Nothing we can do ourselves will ever save us. All our efforts to please God are hopeless.

STAGE TWO: MADE ALIVE



While we are still dead in our sin, Jesus came into our pit to rescue us. Through His death and resurrection Jesus provided us with the only way out. Many rejected Him, but, “to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

STAGE THREE: RAISED WITH CHRIST



When someone becomes a Christian, they are made alive with Jesus, who lifts them out of the pit, and he or she is now in a relationship with God.

The above process needs to become real and personal in an individual’s life.

An example of where a group of people became Christians is found in Acts 2, on the day the Church began. Early that morning, 120 people made quite a scene as they burst out of a prayer meeting on to the streets of ancient Jerusalem. They were the followers of Jesus who had remained loyal to Him despite His death. "Drunkards!" someone yelled at them, because they seemed full of joy, almost intoxicated.

The Apostle Peter, often the spokesman, answered in their defence that it was surely too early for bars to be open, and gave the true reason for their happiness. He described what a terrible wrong had been committed when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was tortured and publicly executed. The Savior that the world had been waiting thousands of years for had been rejected in the worst possible way.

It was our sin that drove Jesus to the cross. If we had lived in Jesus' time, we might like to think we would have been part of the crowd that welcomed Him into Jerusalem, singing, "Hosanna to the son of David!" But just days later, the very same crowd shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The Apostle Peter's conclusion was remarkable: Jesus had been raised from the dead! He was now seated at God's side in heaven, ruling the universe. Peter's hearers were familiar with how kings in those days would avenge themselves brutally. Full of the sudden realization that

they had sinned against God Himself, they asked, ***“What shall we do?”***

Peter’s reply is compelling in its simplicity, and demonstrates that God is not the kind of person who delights in taking revenge. Strikingly, he explains that God offers mercy and forgiveness, even to the people who had demanded the Romans execute Jesus:

*Repent and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit** ... there were **added** that day about three thousand souls.*
(Acts 2:38-41)

In this passage we find four steps that should mark the beginning of the Christian life:

STEPS TO BEGIN YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

STEP ONE: REPENT AND BELIEVE

Make a choice to think differently about Jesus and live for Him.

This step is broken down into three parts in the following verse:

*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. (Romans 10:9)*

a. **“Confess with your mouth”** Tell someone you want to become a Christian.

b. **“Jesus is Lord”** Choose to worship Jesus as God and follow Him as your Lord. Admit that you have sinned against Him. Ask Him to forgive you.

c. **“Believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead”** Thank Jesus for dying for you and rising from the dead for you.

Once you have decided to follow Jesus, there are three further steps which naturally follow:

STEP TWO: BE BAPTIZED

Make a public declaration of your new faith in Jesus.

STEP THREE: RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Be empowered to live your new life as a Christian. This is explained further [in this section](#) of chapter 4.

STEP FOUR: BE ADDED TO A CHURCH Become part of Jesus' family.

These steps will be explained in the rest of this article and chapter 4.

STEP ONE: REPENT AND BELIEVE MAKE A CHOICE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT JESUS AND LIVE FOR

HIM.

This first step underpins all the others. The word “repent” is not often used today. There are four components to what it means: a change of *mind*, a change of *heart*, a change of *behavior*, and a change of *direction*.

Repentance means changing what you think about Jesus, and apologizing for ignoring Him, belittling Him, excluding Him, and not trusting Him. It is a radical change in perspective.

REPENTANCE

A change of mind, a change of heart,
a change of behavior, and a change of direction.
Often used interchangeably with “believe”, but
involves more than mere intellectual assent.

Repentance involves your heart being miraculously renewed so that you now love and value Jesus above everything else and are satisfied in Him. Repentance includes turning from your sins. However, Christianity is not primarily external behavior, but an internal conversion. The outer works flow from the inner work.

Repentance means reorienting your life around Jesus, and asking Him to rescue you and to be in charge from now on. It means changing from a life that is all about you, to a life that is all about Jesus.

Repentance is such a simple concept, yet it does demand that your whole life change direction. You stop going your own way, and turn around; you convert.

You must count the cost of such a decision. But the choice is between living your own way forever, apart from God and under His judgment, or following Jesus and enjoying His presence. Jesus warned us often that hell is a real place (e.g. Matthew 10:28). Why would anyone want to end up there? Sometimes repentance can be accompanied by strong emotions, but the key element is a sober decision to start on a lifetime of following Jesus:

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

In some of the other messages recorded in Acts, hearers are urged to "believe" in place of the word "repent" (see Acts 15:7 and Acts 16:31). While repentance is about more than just agreeing with certain truths, it does begin with what we must believe:

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. (Romans 10:9)

According to this verse there are three components to the decision to believe in and trust Jesus, which is at the heart of repentance:

*The first is that you must openly say something, or **"confess with your mouth."***

*The second, is what you must say: **"Jesus is Lord."***

*The third, is what you must "believe in your heart": **God has raised Jesus from the dead.***

This is how to begin the Christian life. Without this response you will never be saved. With it, even if what the Bible calls "fruits in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8) are not yet visible in your life, you can be sure that they will begin to appear.

Let's look at each of these components of our response to the gospel in more detail:

A. "CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH"

Usually the best person to tell first will be another Christian.

The idea behind this phrase is similar to a marriage service, where a couple declares their commitment to a lifelong relationship with one another. Some people argue that marriage is an unnecessary piece of paper. But we are changeable beings, and in years to come it is helpful to have a memory of the day we acknowledged our love before other people. Also, something actually changes inside us when we openly make such a declaration.

In the same way, we must tell God, ourselves, and other

people that we will now follow Jesus. This solidifies our commitment to a relationship with God and transforms us.

It is very possible to become a Christian right now in private. But you will need to tell somebody, and as soon as possible. Usually another Christian will be the best person to tell first.

Many new Christians feel so full of love for Jesus that they want everyone else to share in their newfound joy. Despite our enthusiasm and passion to tell others, there are times when you need to be wise about who you tell and how.

The biblical account of Esther is interesting in this regard. Esther was a Jew living in exile in a hostile country. When she was taken to the king's palace Mordecai wisely advised her not to tell anyone that she was a member of God's people (Esther 2:10). If she had, she might well have been instantly killed. At the right time, in the right way, when Esther admitted her identity to the king, it led to a miraculous rescue of her people from genocide (Esther 7:3-4 and 8:4-12).

It may help you to find a mature Christian to talk through the wisest steps for you to take as you begin to tell others about your new faith, especially if you are concerned about negative consequences. Pray that God will help you know who to tell, and when.

It is sometimes hard to say, "I am a Christian." However, to do so is liberating. There comes a point in everybody's faith journey when what may have happened secretly in their heart must be declared openly. In fact, telling somebody that we now believe is an essential part of becoming a Christian. Jesus also warns,

Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32-33)

B. "JESUS IS LORD"

Choose to worship Him as God and follow Him as your Lord.

Admit that you have sinned against Him. Ask Him to forgive you.

There is rich meaning in these three words. The word "Lord" is used all over the New Testament as a name for God. At the heart of Christianity lies the belief that Jesus is God, and following His triumphant resurrection, He is the ruler of the universe who will one day return to earth to reign as King.

The Christian God is three in one: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John begins his Gospel by saying that Jesus, who he calls,

TRINITY

The word used to summarize the Christian belief that God has always existed as a loving community of three distinct persons: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. Together they form one God, not three gods.

"The Word," is God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Christians explain this by the concept of the Trinity: God has always existed as three persons, but one God,

and we worship them all.

Perhaps one of the clearest demonstrations of their personhood was at Jesus' baptism, when they each had distinct roles. The Son was the one getting wet, the Father spoke from heaven, and the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove (Luke 3:21-22).

The Bible tells us that "God is love" by His very nature (1 John 4:16). This was true even when only the Trinity existed, and there was no one else to love.

God has eternally been a community of three people, and so we should never foolishly imagine that He was lonely before the universe was created.

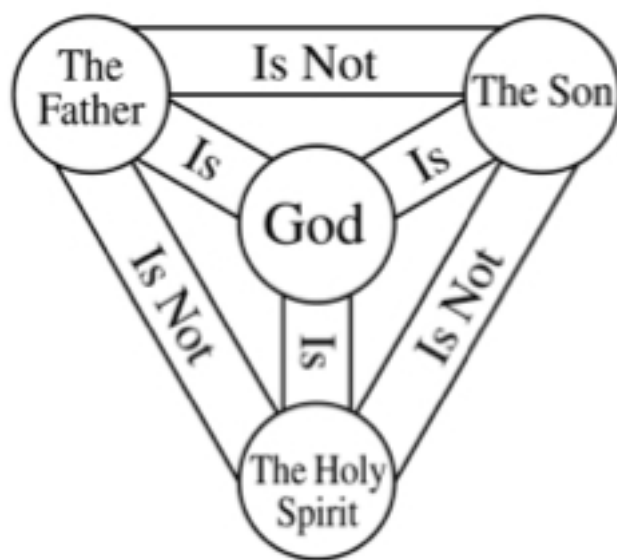
From eternity past the members of the Trinity have loved and indwelt each other. Jesus said, "The Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 10:38).

There are several illustrations commonly used to describe

God. While these are all helpful to some extent, they all have weaknesses which help us realize what God is *not* like.

The Trinity is often compared to water, which can exist in three forms: liquid, steam, and ice. However, God is not sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Spirit. He is all three all at once. Another illustration that is used is a man who may be simultaneously a husband, a father, and a son. However, the man is only one person, who functions in different ways. In contrast, God comprises three persons, rather than three manifestations of the same person.

Ultimately, God is incomparable and all we can finally do is worship Him. The three persons of the Trinity are distinct from each other, yet together they make up one God.



This truth has been expressed for centuries in a diagram we include on this page. This is a profound mystery. Yet it is a simple truth.

Calling Jesus "Lord" also declares that **He is in charge of you and that you will live for Him.** Many today do not want to surrender the control of their lives to *anyone*, let alone to Jesus.

The Bible is clear: you cannot be a Christian and carry on living for yourself. If Jesus is your Lord, you must obey Him and give Him your total allegiance.

How you choose to respond to Jesus is the most important decision you will ever make. Some say, "He was a great teacher, the best the world has ever seen." Even secular historians recognize that Jesus was the most influential man in all of history.

Others go further saying, "He was a great prophet." But Jesus claimed to be God, accepted worship, and proclaimed that He would rise from the dead.

Good teachers don't claim they are the only way to God; instead, they point to their teachings. What He said was either true, or else He was foolish, or a liar. Jesus, it is often said, was either bad, mad, or God.

If you are not yet a Christian, recognizing Jesus as God and choosing to worship and follow Him as your Lord is the crucial turning point.

Declaring Jesus to be your Lord and meaning it requires the help of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is crucial that you admit to Jesus that you have sinned, and ask Him to forgive you, and help you to follow Him from now on.

Tell Jesus about your life: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Recognize that you have lived your way with no reference

to Him. Specifically list and repent of all your sins. Thank Him for promising to forgive you, even for the sins you have forgotten to confess. Invite Jesus into your life. Ask Him to take full control, not coming as a friend but as your master. Surrender all authority to Him.

C. "BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD."

Thank Him for dying for you and rising from the dead for you.

One definition of a Christian is: "Someone who believes in the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and lives their life in light of the implications of that event."

The idea that Jesus' physical resurrected body left behind an empty tomb is the foundation of Christianity. Why would we follow a dead man? Only Jesus' resurrection could have convinced the frightened disciples to begin the fastest growing movement the world has ever known. They did not gain riches, fame, or power, but rather persecution, torture and death, and yet none of them denied their faith.

Nothing other than Jesus' resurrection can make sense of the phenomenal growth and persistence of the Church throughout the ages, despite many attempts to stamp it out. Almost anywhere you go in the world today you will meet Christians. They worship in different ways, and even believe some different things. But they all agree that

Jesus rose again, He is alive! There is no more important question than, **"Did Jesus rise from the dead?"** This is the foundation on which the Christian faith stands or falls. As Paul explains, if Jesus were still dead then we would have no hope (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

If you find the idea of Jesus conquering death and leaving behind an empty tomb difficult to believe, ask God to reveal the truth to you. An article which examines the evidence for Jesus' resurrection is available free online at adrianwarnock.com/resurrection. If you want to become a Christian you must change your mind about Jesus, and accept Him as the risen Lord. God does not ask you to repent, become perfect, and then one day He might be pleased with you. He promises that if you simply trust in Him, then He accepts you already. The most quoted verse in the Bible promises us that if we have faith in Jesus we will live forever with Him:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

CONCLUSION We hope this page has made it clear that becoming a Christian is neither learned nor earned. It is a free gift from God. This is the simple gospel message. Don't let anyone tell you it is more complicated than this:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be

saved. (Romans 10:13)

If you are ready to become a Christian right now, pray to Jesus: Thank Jesus for dying for you on the cross. Tell Him you believe in His resurrection. Talk to Jesus about your past, the good and the bad. Repent of your sins by asking Him for forgiveness. Acknowledge Jesus as Lord of your life and tell Him that you will worship Him. Invite Him to take control of your life and live in you. Tell Jesus that you will now follow Him for the rest of your life.

If you prayed something like this, and believed it in your heart, you are now a Christian, and may we be the first to welcome you into God's family.

Who will you tell first?

KEY BIBLE VERSES: Acts 2:37-41, Romans 10:9-13, John 3:1-21