

HOW TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD

The title “How To Get Right With God” immediately tells us that something is WRONG—we have a problem with God—or more importantly, God has a problem with US. To deal with this problem effectively, we’ll need to follow what the Bible says about getting right with God. To do this, we’ll need to answer 3 important questions:

1) WHY DO I NEED JESUS?

The world begins with a wrong view of the condition of people in relationship to God. If they believe in a life after this life, they tend to believe in a “divine scale”. What this means is they think that when they stand before God in Heaven, God will pull out His scale, putting all the good things they did on one side, and all the bad things they did on the other side. In their minds, as long as the good outweighs the bad, they’re IN! When talking about spiritual things with people, this is why many times they will point out the good things they do and the bad things that they avoid to prove that they are “good enough” to make it through those “pearly gates”.



The only problem with this belief is that IT’S NOT TRUE. The Bible tells us that every person is totally separated from God by a thing called “sin” (Romans 3:23). Sin is simply disobeying God. And since God is sinless, He can’t stand sin or people with sin, which includes every one of us. We have to be perfect. The problem is that we can’t be; it is impossible.

Think of it this way—instead of a “divine scale”, it is more like a “divine dart board”.

Try this riddle—if three of us throw darts at a board and one gets 2 inches away from the bull’s eye, another 4 inches away, and another misses the board completely, which one of us HIT the bull’s eye? No one, of course! This is what it’s like when it comes to trying to connect with God.

The bull’s eye is what God demands—perfection—we can’t EVER sin—not even once! Now some might come closer to obeying God than others, but no one ever hits the bull’s eye of perfection. So everyone is totally lost and are literally enemies of God, even if they get “close” to the bull’s eye. Just one sin totally separates us from God. What makes this worse is that we know that if we sin we have to die (Romans 6:23) and be separated from God eternally in Hell. Sin is keeping us from God—and it’s as deep as the Grand Canyon. How could we possibly get to God?

This is where Jesus comes in. God knew that there was *no possible way* that we could ever have a relationship with Him because of our sin. Knowing that we could not erase even one sin on our own, He loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world (John 3:16,17). Now since Jesus never sinned, He did not have to die.

But He chose to die on the cross for the sins of all people. He became the “perfect sacrifice” for all our sins, and God accepted His death for our sins as payment in full! UNBELIEVABLE! So, Jesus became the “bridge” between us and God. It is through only what He did that we can have a relationship with God (John 14:6).



All we have to do to connect with God is accept Jesus as our Savior and live for Him. That brings us to our next question.

2) HOW DO I ACCEPT JESUS?

The Bible talks about 4 steps:

1. **BELIEVE** in Jesus. Put your faith in Him (Ephesians 2:8-10).

This is not a blind faith, but rather a faith based on facts. Christianity is different from any other faith in that it can be verified or proven—other faiths CANNOT (see our “Facts Behind the Faith” seminar).

2. REPENT of your sins (Acts 17:30,31).

Imagine you are going to the store and you suddenly realize that you forgot your money. What would you do? You would probably be bummed that you wasted so much time, and just go back and get your money. That's like repentance. It simply says, "God, I blew it in these areas in my past, and I want to turn around and live the way that You want me to from now on." You can talk to God just like you would talk to a good friend and repent of any sin that has been a part of your life.



3. CONFESS Jesus as Lord to someone (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9,10).

In the Bible, God always puts a lot of emphasis on what we say, because "the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matthew 12:34). Because of this, God wants us to verbally commit to Jesus as Lord of our life to another person or persons.



4. Be BAPTIZED (Acts 2:38,39).

This simply means to stand in water, be lowered into the water by someone, then be brought back up out of the water. This all started on Day 1 of the first church (Acts 2:38,39), and the significance of baptism can be seen in Romans 6:1-7. An example can be seen in Acts 8:26-39.

While some teach that baptism is not part of accepting Jesus, you simply need to look to the Bible for what God says about this. Belief and baptism are always together in the Bible, never separated. Therefore, we would encourage you to search the Bible to discover the importance of baptism (see "Why Should I Get Wet?" in this handout). The fact that you need to "believe and be baptized" is clear in the Bible.

According to the Bible, this process gets you right with God. If you have chosen to do this, congratulations! You are now on the path and can begin developing a relationship with God. But how do we develop our relationship with Him? That leads us to our last and final question.

3) HOW DO I LIVE FOR JESUS?

Many times people believe God is going to forgive their past sins, but after becoming a Christian, think they can NEVER SIN AGAIN. This is not the case at all, so let's get an understanding on how we are to live after accepting Christ.

I John 1:5-2:6 describes a person who is right with God, then explains there will be times when they will still struggle with and fall into sin—it's part of being human. At these times, it says that the blood of Jesus cleanses them from all sin. However, it first qualifies how a Christian must be living to have this promise. It uses the terms "walking in the light" and "walking in the darkness".

The big issues here are foundation, motivation, and consistency. If our foundation is the Bible, our motivation is to be like Christ, and we consistently seek to live like Christ—then we can KNOW that Jesus covers our sins, and we are saved (I John 2:5,6 and 5:13). However if we say that we know God, yet do not consistently seek to live like Christ by obeying Him (walking in darkness), God says we are liars and the truth is not in us (I John 1:6 and 2:3-4).

So, if you make a decision to accept Christ, you must understand that you are choosing a life-time commitment of seeking to be like Jesus in the way that you live. This is what getting right with God is all about—becoming more and more like Jesus! We certainly hope that you will choose Jesus!



WHY SHOULD I GET WET?

There are sometimes questions regarding baptism that need to be answered. The questions usually come from three basic areas: 1) What is baptism, 2) When should someone be baptized, and 3) Why should someone be baptized?

Let's take a look at each of these questions.

WHAT?

The process of baptism is very simple. You begin by just standing, sitting, or kneeling in some water. Someone then lowers you under the water and then brings you back up out of the water. This would literally be called immersion.

Because some faiths sprinkle water on people instead of immersing, the obvious question is whether this is acceptable. Our only answer comes from the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible does such a thing take place. Baptism was always immersion.

The word itself came from the dyeing industry around Thyatira where they would "baptize" a garment to change its color. The Greek word *baptizw*, meant to immerse. If sprinkling of any kind was to be practiced, the Greek word *rantizw* was available for use; however, it was not used. This practice began as more of a convenience and because of the practice of "baptizing" infants.



WHEN?

To deal with this question, we will need to look at it from two perspectives.

1) We need to deal with the age issue. Should infants or young children be baptized? Let's first of all look at where this concept and practice came from. Around 400 A.D., a man named Augustine came up with the "original sin" theology which basically said that every man inherits the sin of Adam at birth and is thus separated from God from the beginning of his/her life. This naturally caused parents to be concerned about their children should they die before making a decision for Jesus. Out of the four steps to accepting Christ, the only one they could control was baptism, thus, the beginning of sprinkling of infants.

However, if we look in the Bible, we will see that children are never seen accepting Christ. It is also interesting that God never tells us what to do to keep a child safe. Did He just forget this important point and now children suffer eternally? No. Children are safe in the arms of God until they can understand the gospel and respond to Jesus for themselves (II Samuel 12:22, 23; Matthew 18:10). Because of this, older children (those who can understand separation from God due to sin and the commitment necessary to bridge that separation) and adults are able to accept Christ.

2) When we should be baptized, either immediately as a part of accepting Christ or later in our walk with Christ.

We hear statements such as baptism being an outward sign of an inward grace, or that one must grow in Christ (i.e., be good enough) before being baptized. Many churches use baptism as a way to join the church. Each of these minimizes the importance of baptism as something that is done later in your walk with Christ.

All of these positions lack one thing... they are not Biblical!

The Bible is clear that believing in Christ for salvation and baptism are *always* together, not separated. There is no time gap... they go together.

Consider these references:

Acts 2:41 3,000 were baptized after believing on the first day of the church, while verses 38 and 39 make it clear this will be the way it's done, i.e., all people who come to Christ will come in this way.

Acts 8:26-39 tells us this road from Jerusalem to Gaza is a desert road, and we know the only water along this road was oasis water.

This means that the eunuch and Philip climbed down into people's drinking water to do this. Apparently Philip and the eunuch did not think it could wait until later! Verse 35 says that Philip "preached Jesus to him" and the eunuch wanted to immediately be baptized. Verse 36 tells us that the preaching of Jesus did include the need for baptism.



Acts 9:18 After his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road, Saul (who was later given the name Paul), after deciding to accept Jesus, was baptized.

Acts 10:47, 48 Cornelius and those with him were commanded to be baptized, becoming the first Gentile converts.

Acts 16:13-15 Lydia and her household believed and were baptized.

Acts 16:16-34 The Philippian jailer and his entire household believe and were baptized—in the middle of the night!

On top of all this, just before Jesus left the earth, He gave His disciples the "great commission", telling them to make disciples, baptize them, and then to teach them. Jesus apparently felt it was pretty important to make this a huge priority for His followers.

The Bible is clear—belief and baptism are always together. Thus "when we believe" is the right time to be baptized. If you believed some time back and were not baptized, then this should be a priority to you to fulfill what God asks you to do in the Bible.

WHY?

The Bible gives a number of reasons to be baptized:

Acts 2:38 Tying repentance and baptism together, it says that this provides:

- 1) Forgiveness of your sins, and
- 2) the gift of the Holy Spirit.



Romans 6:1-7 These verses show us that baptism (by immersion) depicts the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. In the same way that He went through these things, we are to die to our old self of sin, be "buried with Him in baptism", and be raised to walk in newness of life (live like Jesus).

So, we do not just try to be a better person (religion), but rather we bury the "old man" in the water and become "new" in Christ (relationship). It is like a new birth and a new beginning for us.

Galatians 3:27 We "put on Christ" when we are baptized.

I Peter 3:21 Baptism is not an outward cleaning but saves us through an inward cleaning. It is an appeal to God for a good conscience and asks God to take away the guilt of our past sin that Christ paid for, wiping our inner slate clean.

What...

When...

Why...

These are the Biblical answers to these three questions.

The only question left to ask is..."What will you do now?"

That is between you and God.

