

Do You Believe in Jesus?

You might say this: "I believe in Jesus and I believe He is real and I believe in everything that He has done and what He went through." Well, I have news for you, Satan believes all of that and he's certainly not going to heaven! James points out in his letter that "*Even the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19).*" Just because you know about Jesus, that doesn't constitute faith or a relationship with Christ. True faith is abiding, it's relying and trusting; putting your full weight of trust upon Jesus for salvation (and Satan and his demons refused to do that).

The issue is not of believing something; such as you may believe this is a historical event that took place. The real issue is, having to come to understand:

1. Your condition. You are not going to be saved by His provision until you understand your condition. The Bible says that you have sinned and you have fallen short of the glory of God. The Bible also says that there are none righteous, no; not one. So this identifies who you are. You are a sinner and you are not righteous.

2. The Bible also says that the consequence of sin is death. So you have to understand that you are DEAD spiritually until the day you come to understand your condition and are ready to receive God's provision. Now His provision for these two things is that He went to a cross nearly 2,000 years ago to take away your sins totally. He took away all of them – past, present and future sins. He took them away from the eyes of God never to be seen again. He's not dealing with you on the issue of sin anymore. But there is a consequence to sin called DEATH and you need LIFE and His RESURRECTION was what provided that life for you.

"I am the resurrection and the life and whosoever believes in me (in other words puts their faith in that truth), will not perish but have everlasting life (Jn.11:25)."

When you finally come to understand and accept your condition; that you are a sinner who is spiritually DEAD and accept His provision for that which is spiritual LIFE; then when you do that by faith, you will be **born again** of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God comes to live in you and you are made alive – spiritual re-birth. You will be a new creation. You will be a child of God. Your mom and dad gave you physical birth and now God has just given you spiritual birth. Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)."* Just as the first birth is necessary for physical life, so a second (spiritual) birth is necessary for divine life and this new birth is from God through the Spirit. This new birth or regeneration (Titus 3:5) is the act of God that gives eternal life to the one who believes in Christ. As a result, he becomes a member of God's family (1 Peter 1:23) with the new capacity and desire to please his Heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Attitude of Faith

We are saved by grace through faith. We can express our faith in various ways, but it's still the heart that responds in faith. In Romans 10:9-10 it says, *"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* So what Paul is really saying here is that it's not so much the words but the attitude of our heart. It's how your heart responds and how your heart has responded that will be reflected in the words that you use. Salvation can be a formula approach, but it's how the heart responds that really counts. Salvation is simply:

1. You have to believe with your heart.

2. Your heart has to respond to the gospel message – His death, burial and resurrection.
3. You have to believe that Jesus is Lord and that He was raised from the dead and when you call upon the name of the Lord in however way you do: the Scripture guarantees and promises that you will be saved.

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9)."

When we receive Him as our Lord and Savior and invite him into our heart, we become children of God.

Do you believe this?

If you want to begin a relationship with God, you can do so right now by asking Him to come into your heart and to be the Lord of your life. Jesus said, *"Behold, I stand at the door (of your heart) and knock. He who hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..... (Rev. 3:20)."*

If you believe in your heart and want to make this commitment but you are not sure how to put it in words, this may help:

"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying for the forgiveness of my sins and for offering me Your righteousness and Your resurrected life. I now accept by faith Your gift of salvation and I ask You to come into my heart and to be My Lord and Savior and my very best friend. Through Your Holy Spirit, teach me about Your love and grace and about the new life that You have given me. Please begin the work of making me into the person you want me to be. Amen"

These words will not save you, there is nothing magical in them;

anyone can repeat a sentence. It is when you believe with your heart and put your faith in Christ Jesus; that's what saves you. There is no magic formula in what to say or how to say it but it's your attitude and expression of your heart that really counts.

If you truly believe in your heart and you prayed this prayer, the Spirit of God has come to dwell within you forever and you have begun the great adventure for which you were created as a child of God. Now you and I are brothers or sisters in Christ. Welcome to God's family. Welcome to Christ's body of believers.

The true Church of Jesus Christ is not compromised of programs or buildings made with the hands of men, but of Christ Himself within the heart of every true believer. You don't need any institution or priest to mediate between God and you. *"There's only one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5)."* *"Jesus is God who made the world and everything in it (John 1:3).* *"Since He is Lord of heaven and earth, He doesn't live in man-made temples (Acts 17:24)."* The Kingdom of God is inside of you and not just in buildings of wood and stone.

God views your relationship with Him as permanent. Referring to all those who believe in Him, Jesus said to us, *"I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one snatch them out of My hand (Jn.10:27-29)."* This means life that will last forever, being with God forever. It is not life that is conditional on your behavior; what you may do or not do. It is eternal, and that means everlasting. It is a life that is capable of enjoying the things of God down here on earth, and a life that will be equally suitable to our heavenly home. Jesus promises that you shall never perish. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and He cannot fail. He assures us that you cannot lose your salvation because you're in His hands. His hand is almighty. It created the world, and it even now sustains the world. There is no power that can snatch you away from His grasp.

You're His forever. So, rest in this assurance.

How to pray

Far too often, prayer is viewed as a "magic formula." Some believe that if we do not say exactly the right things, or pray in the right position; God will not hear and answer our prayer. This is completely unbiblical. We are told in 1 John 5:14-15 to have confidence when we come to God in prayer, knowing He hears us and will grant whatever we ask as long as it is His will. God answers prayer requests based on whether they are asked according to His will and in the name of Jesus (to bring glory to Jesus – John 14:13-14). God is more interested in the content of our hearts than the eloquence of our words. God's desire is for prayer to be a real and personal connection between Himself and us.

Many have found this to be a useful pattern for prayer: **"ACTS"**

A – Adoration

C – Confession

T – Thanksgiving

S – Supplication

Adoration – Adoration is simply praising God for who He is and what He has done. The key to adoring God is getting to know Him. The more you learn about God and what He has done for you, the more natural it becomes to praise Him. God has given us His word to help us appreciate Him more so that we can please Him with our lives and praise Him with our lips.

Confession – A growing sensitivity towards your own sinfulness and your continual dependence on Christ's righteousness as the basis of your acceptance with God (1 Tim. 1:15-16). If you have done wrong or hurt someone, be honest and acknowledge it to God. It is what God wants you to do instead of making excuses or blame shifting. As you experience God's forgiveness, you can't

help but be filled with an attitude of.....

Thanksgiving – You have so much for which to be thankful for (Psalm 103). God's forgiveness for all your sins (v.3). God's great compassion towards you (v.13). God's provision for your needs and even many of your desires (v.5). God is worthy of your thanksgiving. Finally, you need to bring to God your.....

Supplication – Praying for your needs and the needs of others. Pray specifically and avoid praying in generalities like "God bless so and so." Pray expectantly (Matt.7:7-11). Pray submissively (Realize that God ultimately knows what is best - Matthew 26:39).

If this could be helpful for you, here are some of which I include in my prayers:

Dear Heavenly Father;

I want to thank you for taking care of Diane and I. For being there for us. For providing for us. For protecting us from harm and evil. Thank you Heavenly Father for our health, for our home, for our friends and family; for the food that you provide and even the bed we sleep on. But most of all I want to thank you for Christ Jesus and what He accomplished for us on the cross of Calvary nearly 2,000 years ago. It's all of what He did for us and none of us or what we do.

I want to thank you Heavenly Father for your only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, who left His royal robes of heaven, to come down to earth to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins and to offer us hope, salvation, reconciliation and life eternal.

Thank you, Lord Jesus for sacrificing yourself on the cross of Calvary for my sins and for all the sins of the world. Thank you Lord Jesus for your resurrected life, that we too have life eternal through you. Thank you, Lord Jesus for not leaving us alone on

this earth when you ascended to heaven, but promised to send the Holy Spirit to indwell believers and to guide believers through their lives.

Thank you, Holy Spirit for teaching me God's word and revealing truth to me. Thank you, Holy Spirit for comforting me when I'm down, anxious, depressed, insecure or just going through my trials and tribulations. Thank you, Holy Spirit for counseling me and guiding me through this life; for renewing my mind and convicting me when I do wrong. Thank you, Holy Spirit for interceding on my behalf and praying to God the Father for me in words that I could not express.

Dear Heavenly Father; I do plead the very precious blood of Jesus over my mental and physical health; to protect and preserve my mental and physical health. I do pray for your healing hands Heavenly Father to protect me from illnesses and diseases such as..... (whatever your concerns are).

Dear Heavenly Father; I do plead the very precious blood of Jesus over all the things that you put me in stewardship of. Help me to be a good steward of your resources and to manage your resources well. I pray for your wisdom, guidance, and help in doing so.

Dear Heavenly Father; I do plead the very precious blood of Jesus over our home to protect it from fire, earthquake, etc. (whatever your concerns are).

Help me Heavenly Father to overcome my iniquities and to grow in faith and trust and to grow in a relationship with you Heavenly Father through your only begotten Son Christ Jesus. Help me Heavenly Father to walk with you, to talk with you, and to confer with you. Help me Heavenly Father to get to know you better each and every day.

Dear Heavenly Father; It's such an honor and a privilege to be a

child of God. What a great loving and Holy God we do worship: an omnipresent, all-knowing, and all-powerful God of the universe that created me and everything else in this world.

Help me Heavenly Father to serve you by serving others. May the fruit of the Spirit shine through in lovingness, kindness, compassion, understanding, patience, and humility. Help me Heavenly Father to treat others as I would want to be treated.

Dear Heavenly Father; Help me today to resist the tempter, the deceiver, the evil one and to resist the evil spirits that will come against me today. Help me to take all evil thoughts captive to the Lord Jesus Christ and have Him deal with them.

Dear Heavenly Father; Help me today to focus on Christ Jesus and heavenly things and not get caught up in the things of this world. Help me to invest in the kingdom of God with all the gifts, talents, time and all the things that you have bestowed upon me. Bless me with oratory and communicative skills, being able to communicate and express myself, being able to present the gospel message to others. Bless me with boldness and courage to stand up for Christ Jesus.

[So much of prayer is personal, and it should express your heart and attitude. Talk to God as you would talk to your best friend. Mold your prayers around your praise, gratitude, concerns, desires and needs, as well as needs of others. I do hope that part of which I pray could give you ideas and be helpful in formulating your own prayers.]

In the closing of my prayers:

Dear Heavenly Father; It is my desire and I pray it is your will, that You might dispense your ministering angels to go forth (Psalm 91) before me today, to remove all obstacles and obstructions from my pathway, causing men to give favorably to me today, and to

push back to the outer reaches the evil which will try to come against me today. I ask all these things in the name of your precious Son, Christ Jesus. Amen.

It is very important that when you pray; you close off your prayer in the name of Jesus. Jesus said, "*And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. And you may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it (John 14:13-14).*"

Prayer fulfills the purpose of God in salvation

The purpose of salvation is to restore lost people to a relationship with God our Heavenly Father. Through the cross of Jesus, the barriers to that relationship were removed. When we begin to trust God once again and turn from our sin, He comes into our lives to begin a new relationship of love with us. Our faith and love towards God will lead us to recognize His presence with us, to talk to Him, to listen to Him, and to sense Him.

In conclusion, this is prayer! We express our thanks, our needs, our faith, our love, and our hopes; with God in prayer and we receive from Him: answers, assurance, peace, strength, power; revelation of who He is and what He wants to do. (Matthew 7:7-8; John 16:13; Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 1:17, 18).

One final thought

Please remember that our relationship with God is not a legal binding relationship, it is a love relationship. Ten thousand "don'ts" will never make you one iota more like the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Himself who makes you like Him. But you need to spend time with Him. You must find the right time, better still make time, and make it a priority. Set aside some quiet time and a place for daily study and prayer. A place; where you can focus on Him.

A place of isolation; where you can shut the door on the world, and open the windows to heaven.

This quality time could be 20 minutes, 60 minutes or 5 minutes if that is all you have that day but some time is better than no time. You may want to read a few chapters of Scripture or many chapters some days or maybe just one chapter. That decision will be entirely yours. I think what's most important is that this should be your very best quality time. Don't give the Lord your leftovers.

A good book to begin with in your Bible would be the Gospel of John, the fourth book in the New Testament. As you read, underline verses you find particularly meaningful or using a journal or pad of paper; write down inquiries and observations. It might be helpful to answer these two questions from each chapter: “What did I learn about God or Jesus?” “Are there things discussed that I should begin practicing or avoiding altogether?” This will help you see that the Bible is very practical to your life today. After you finish reading the Gospel of John, just keep going all the way to Revelation.

As you start reading Scripture, you are going to have many thoughts and questions that come into your mind. Don't be afraid to ask God to help you with these thoughts and questions. Talk to Him as you would to a friend, as you read His word. Ask God to increase your faith and your understanding of the Bible. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you – who He is and how you can respond to Him. It is more important for you to hear from God, even more than for God to hear from you. God already knows all about you, but you need to know a lot more about Him.

Prayer is such a vital aspect to a healthy walk with God. Think of it; we can talk with God anytime, anywhere, any mood, any season of temptation or joy. Because He is always with us we can always converse with Him. Prayer is simply talking to God.

No religious tones or words necessary. Psalm 62:8 tells us to "*pour out your hearts to God.*" The Lord desires to hear from you. He wants to be part of your everyday life. Each day take some time to share your life with Him.

Getting to know God is an exciting experience. I pray that these simple suggestions will help you have a daily quiet time in the presence of our loving, almighty and powerful God. May God bless you in your new adventure as a child of God!

Love Oscar