

Kingdom Faith mini books

01

how to know Jesus

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What is a Christian?

Ask this question and you will receive a variety of answers, many of them inaccurate. People have to be free from wrong ideas of what it means to be a Christian before they can appreciate the correct answer! Having asked this question of many, here are a few of the typical answers received:

“A Christian is a good person.” That should certainly be the case, if we mean by this a person who seeks to live a good life as a good citizen. However, that could be said of many people who definitely would not want

to claim they are Christians. In this sense you could have a good atheist, a good humanist, or Buddhist or a follower of any other religion.

“A Christian is someone who goes to church.” This would be true of Christians; they do “go to church.” However, going to church does not make a person a Christian! Many people go to church, either occasionally or even regularly and are not necessarily Christians.

“A Christian is someone who prays.” This should certainly be the case. But many people who are definitely not Christians pray to their ‘gods.’ The followers of all religions pray in some form or other.

“A Christian is someone who does good deeds.” Again this should be true of any Christian believer. But, good deeds are not confined to Christians. So the fact that someone does good deeds for others does not make him or her a Christian.

“A Christian is someone who believes in God.” This also would be true of a Christian, but others who are

not Christians believe in God in some form. Jewish people believe in the same God as Christians, but most of them would not claim to be Christians!

We could continue with many such statements. One thing is common to all these answers. They all suggest that Christians are people who do certain things: They seek to live good lives, they participate in church services, they pray, they do good deeds, they believe in God. **Yet not one of these activities makes a person a Christian. There are no activities that can make someone a Christian.**

The truth is that **a Christian is someone for whom God has done something. Only God Himself can make a person a Christian.** As a Christian the believer will engage in certain activities, but none of these activities can make a person a Christian!

So we will need to understand what God has done already that will enable people to become Christians. We will also have to discover what their response is to be to what He has done!

Why we were created

Humankind is the pinnacle of God's creation; He kept the best until last! This is because He wanted to bring into being a creature that would reflect His own character, a being made in His image. God is a spiritual being. So He created man with a spirit; this is what marks people off from every other creature on earth.

His intention was that men and women would be able to have fellowship with Him - spirit to spirit. He wants to reveal His nature to them, but also to share Himself with those He had created.

Because by definition God is perfect, without sin, He first created man perfect, innocent, without sin. The story of Adam and Eve shows how before they were guilty of sin, they were able to have fellowship with God in the garden paradise in which He had placed them.

Sadly this innocence did not last. First, Eve was deceived by the devil and then Adam chose to sin. Eve had lost her perfection when she was deceived, and Adam made the fateful decision to join Eve in her imperfection, instead of remaining true to God. He had a choice between the imperfection of Eve, or the perfection of God.

When Adam made that wrong decision, He immediately lost his innocence, his fellowship and unity with God. Now he was a sinner. Having disobeyed the command God had given him not to eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, he felt guilt and shame for the first time, and tried to hide from God as a result. Now the purpose for which He had created man had been frustrated.

As a consequence of this disobedience, Adam and Eve were excluded from the garden paradise. **When they lost their innocence, they not only lost their relationship with God, but they also lost their place in paradise!** They had tasted evil and were barred from re-entering the garden paradise. And so they lost access to the tree of life, of eternal life, of God's life, that was in the garden.

This exclusion from the garden demonstrated God's judgment on sin. This had such far-reaching consequences that it had to be judged and condemned by God! Intended to live in unity with God, sinners were now outcasts!

Not the end of the story

God had created human beings in love. Because His nature is to love; everything He does, He does in love!

Despite their sin and failure, God wanted to restore them to fellowship with Him. He wanted to remove their guilt and the judgment and condemnation that guilt deserved! For instead of the perfect nature for which God created man, now every successive generation would be born with a sinful nature with a disposition like that of Adam, choosing to please self rather than to please God!

Their sin had resulted in spiritual death, separation from God, instead of living in unity with Him!

In His fore-knowledge God knew that Adam and Eve would fall from grace, and so He had a plan to undo the wrong they had done. First, He gave His people, Israel, a series of commands called 'The law.' These commands they constantly failed to keep, because they had inherited Adam's sinful nature. There were times when Israel truly wanted to obey, and other times when they had no desire to do what God wanted. But even with their best efforts they constantly failed to keep the Lord's commands!

God was demonstrating that it was impossible to obey Him, to please Him and to live in fellowship with Him with this sinful nature - no matter how much people tried to do this. So God had a plan that would enable people to be restored to fellowship, to relationship with Him. There was nothing men and women could do to achieve this, so God would have to take matters into His own hands. He would have to do for His people what they could not accomplish themselves!

They could only be restored to unity with Him if He was to deal with their sinful nature and give them a new nature instead, a spiritual nature; His own nature in them!

How could He achieve such a miraculous plan? What would it take to replace that sinful nature with His own nature so that His people could have an entirely different relationship with Him as their Father? **He decided to adopt people so they could become His children. To accomplish this they would need to be born again!** Their natural birth made each person one of the people He had created. **Their second birth would transform their lives and bring them into a Father/child relationship with Him.**

How did He achieve this? Humanly it was impossible, but with God nothing is impossible! Such a situation required a radical answer. This God provided through the life, death, and resurrection of His own Son. **In Jesus God came into this sinful world, lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father, and then offered His life in sacrifice on behalf of all sinners.**

Without that sacrifice nobody could be born again, be restored to unity with God and to the heavenly paradise which He intended for His people. So we need to understand why Jesus needed to die on a Cross, and what this accomplished for the whole of sinful mankind.

The victory of the Cross

God is holy, perfect, and complete in Himself. For anyone to be at one with Him, he or she would have to be made totally acceptable to Him. Sin separates people from God; it forms a kind of barrier between God and man. That barrier would have to be removed, otherwise it would be impossible for anyone to relate to Him personally.

Because it has such dire consequences, God could not shrug His shoulders and say that sin did not matter. His righteous judgment upon sinners, those who choose to

sin, is that they deserve death, to be eternally separated from Him. However, in His love for those who form part of His creation, He did not want such a judgment to befall them!

This means that God needed to produce a way in which all the sins of sinful humanity could be forgiven, completely removed from the lives of sinners in such a way that it would seem that they had never sinned in the first place! This would make them sinless, blameless before Him. **Then they could be made totally acceptable to Him and could enter into a relationship of being one with Him in His love and power!**

The extent of such a plan is staggering in itself. The fact that God has already succeeded in fulfilling this plan is a testimony to His love and power. The whole plan is centred around the person of Jesus!

No sinner could remove the sin and guilt of other sinners! This could only be accomplished by someone who was without sin Himself. As the whole of humanity

had been born with a sinful nature He would have to become man Himself if He was to achieve His objective.

Before His birth Jesus was the Word that proceeded from the mouth of God. When God spoke creation into being, the Word that went out of His mouth to accomplish this was Jesus. This Word would become a human being. Then it would be possible for those who had previously no relationship with God, to be able to hear His voice and receive teaching about the truth.

To fulfill His plan Jesus would have to be thoroughly human. He was coming to share the weakness of our humanity, to be tempted in the ways in which we are tempted, but without falling into sin! **So Jesus had a human nature, but not a sinful nature.**

God caused Him to be conceived in the womb of a virgin by His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. So through Mary He had a human nature; through the Holy Spirit He had a divine nature! He was both thoroughly human and yet with a God nature!

The fact that He was born as a little Child and not a conquering king shows the full extent to which He shared in our humanity. For thirty years He lived in obscurity, waiting for the time when His heavenly Father would enable Him to begin His ministry on the earth.

Jesus had to wait for the Father's commission, because in sharing in our humanity He made it clear that He could initiate nothing Himself to reveal the nature of God's heavenly Kingdom from which He had come. Although He was the Word of God made human, He would only speak what the Father gave Him to speak. He would only do what He saw His Father doing; what the Father was instructing Him to do. **He had to live in complete dependence and obedience to His Father.**

Because He shared our humanity completely, He had a human will. But because He also had a God nature, He desired to fulfill the will of the heavenly Father. He understood that He had to do this perfectly. He made it clear that He had not come to earth to pursue any will of His own, but to fulfill the will of His Father in heaven.

This meant He had to live in perfect submission to the authority and will of His Father.

His ministry began when He was thirty years old. He came to the River Jordan where a prophetic preacher called John was baptising people, to signify the washing away of their sins. Because Jesus was without sin He did not *need* to be baptised. He *chose* to do so because He was identifying totally with the sinful humanity He had come to save from an eternity lived in Hell, in complete separation from God.

When He came up out of the water, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus as He was praying, to equip Him for His ministry that was now to begin. A voice was heard from Heaven, proclaiming Jesus to be God's Son, the long-awaited Messiah or Christ.

Jesus began to teach the people about the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God. Both titles can be used interchangeably. He made it clear that **God wanted to make His Kingdom available to all who turned to Jesus with repentance and faith, to give**

them this Kingdom as a gift! There was no way that anyone could earn such a gift by their own works. No matter what they did, their works would never free them from the sinful nature that separated them from God. They could never do anything to deserve such a wonderful gift. **They could only become part of the heavenly Kingdom by the grace of God alone, by His free gift to them, despite the fact that they deserved to receive nothing from Him!**

Jesus wanted to give this gift to those who believed in Him and chose to follow Him. They needed faith to believe that there was nothing they could do themselves to accomplish acceptance from God and His desire to save them from the consequences of their sinful nature. **They would have to trust Jesus alone to save them, to become their Saviour.** To accomplish this they would need to repent as well as believe.

This repentance is in two parts. First of all their sins have to be forgiven, for God cannot become one with sinners, but only with those who have been freed from the consequences of their sins. **Second, they would**

need to surrender their lives to God so that He would be the Lord of their lives.

Such repentance and faith would enable people to receive the new birth, the second birth, the heavenly birth. **They would be born again and be given a new nature, a divine nature so, like Jesus, they would become totally acceptable to God and able to live at one with Him, sharing in His divine life.** Without this new birth, Jesus made clear that people would not be able to see the Kingdom of God, let alone become part of this heavenly Kingdom! **They had to be born again!**

Their natural birth had given them a human nature; their new birth would give them a God nature, a divine nature. In other words, **Jesus would not only be with them but would come to live in them by the power of His Spirit!**

We are beginning to see how far reaching and radical God's plan was that was being fulfilled through His Son Jesus. But why was it necessary for Him to die on a Cross for the outworking of His commission from

the Father, to make it possible for all who repent and believe to become part of His heavenly Kingdom? Could He not simply have taught people about the Kingdom and asked them to become His followers?

No, Jesus had to be crucified because God is just! His judgment on sin had to be executed, literally! Death was God's just and righteous judgment on all sins, whether big or small, because any sin has this dire consequence of separating people from knowing God personally!

If a sinner was to die for other sinners this would not eradicate their sin, or the judgment that they deserved as sinners. However, if someone who is without sin took the judgment sinners deserved upon himself, then this would free them from the death they deserved. Jesus was the only One who could achieve this.

However, because He was sinless, innocent of any guilt or sin, He did not deserve to die, so He had to make His life a willing sacrifice made on behalf of all sinners. The crucifixion demonstrates the judgment we all deserve,

and that Jesus never deserved! He took upon Himself the punishment that should have been ours!

But if He had to die for us, why on a Cross, the most painful form of death? Could He not have been run through with a sword, or killed in some other way? No, He had to die the death of a condemned criminal, even though He Himself was innocent. Pilate, who condemned Him to death, knew He was innocent and was reluctant to condemn Him! But Jesus had surrendered Himself to His accusers because He knew what His death would accomplish. He took upon Himself the condemnation that we deserve because we have all sinned and have grieved God in the process!

This demonstrates the mercy and love that God has for us. We deserve nothing from Him. Yet in His love for us, He sends His Son to die the death of a condemned criminal for us! As a result, all our sins can be forgiven, because Jesus has already paid the penalty that our sins deserve.

So the punishment of all sinners of every generation

was laid on Jesus. They could be set free from the guilt and punishment they deserved, and be made totally acceptable to God. Then they would become His children by virtue of the fact that they had received the new life He came to make it possible for them to receive!

Once you are born again you are no longer a sinner with a sinful nature that rules your life, determining the decisions you make, the way you think, and what you choose to say and do! **You are given a new nature that will enable you to know God personally as your Father and to live in ways that please Him rather than grieve Him.**

Even more radical

However, the way for God to make it possible for believers to live at one with Him was even more radical than simply sending His Son to die for them. He wanted to provide a solution to the conflict that would inevitably arise between the old life, that was bound by sin, and the new life imparted by God's Spirit.

God's purpose was not to try and improve the old life; that would be impossible. You cannot improve the sinful nature. No, **His intention was to replace the old life with an entirely new life. Not improvement, but**

replacement! So the old life would have to die before the new birth could take place!

Now we can understand more of the radical nature of the Cross. Not only did Jesus die for us and for all sinners, but **He took us to the Cross with Him.** All of sinful humanity was present in the crucifixion! So the Scriptures affirm clearly that we are crucified with Christ, because it was our punishment that He was taking upon Himself.

The apostle Paul said: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." At the time of the crucifixion Paul (or Saul as he was then) was not a follower of Jesus. But when he became a Christian, he understood that his new life had only been made possible because Jesus had taken the person he used to be to the Cross with Him. So when Jesus died, Saul of Tarsus died with Him, not physically but spiritually speaking. This enabled him to become the new person who had been born again and who became one of the greatest followers of Jesus. Paul wrote about one third of the New Testament.

So you are able to say that you were crucified with Christ. **The person you were no longer exists once you have been born again. You then become a new creation, a brand new person, with the Spirit of Jesus Christ living within you.**

You sometimes hear people say that if they could start their lives all over again they would not make the same mistakes as they did in the past. This seems wishful thinking; yet this is precisely what Jesus has made possible! The new birth means precisely that: A new beginning has taken place!

Now it is clear from the Bible that when people have put their faith in Jesus and have been born again, they should then be baptised in water. John the Baptist had been baptising people for the forgiveness of their sins. To be baptised as a Christian was noticeably more significant. It was the funeral service of the old life! Going into the water and being submerged signifies that the old life has died and has been buried, finished with forever! When the newly baptised believer comes up out of the water, he or she does so as a new creation.

The old has gone and the new has come! The new believer can now live a new life.

However, God knows that this new Christian will need to be empowered to follow Him, and to be able to live this new life. No matter how hard a person can try to fulfill the will of God, this is impossible by depending on his or her own natural life. To live the life that will please God can only be lived by God Himself living in us.

When Jesus came up out of the water after His baptism, God's Spirit came upon Him as He was praying. The Spirit of God, the life and power of God, was given to Him for the outworking of His ministry. Jesus could now fulfil His purpose as the Christ, the Messiah, meaning the Anointed One.

God's purpose is to anoint you with His Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit of God to be imparted to you, to live within you to enable you to live the new life, not in your own strength, but in His!

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit, the life, and power of

God, of Jesus Christ; and He will come to live in you to empower you to live this new life. You will not have to strive to please Him by depending upon yourself. Instead you will be able to depend on the life of His Spirit within you! Christ in you, the hope of glory! **This wonderful gift to you will enable you to please the Lord by the way He enables you to fulfill His will for your life!**

He is not only prepared to save you from the old life of sin, failure, and self-dependence. He desires to give you a brand new life with the person of Jesus Christ actually within you by the power of His Spirit! He wants you to live full of His Spirit that is so much more powerful than your natural human life. **Christ in you, expressing His life in and through you,** not as an end in itself, but so the life of God's Son can flow out of your life, causing you to become a blessing to many people!

The Holy Spirit

When you give your life to Jesus, He gives His life to you. That is a great trade in! It is like trading in a rusty old car and receiving in return a brand new Rolls Royce without any cost to yourself, except letting go of the old car! Jesus has paid the price for you through His sacrifice on the Cross, making it possible for you to be born again, and to receive the new life of His Spirit.

Your natural birth gave you your human nature, which sadly is a sinful nature; your new birth gives you a new nature, God's nature, to live in you! What an amazing

gift! When you are born again you are given this new nature; and as with Jesus, God wants your life to be *full* of the Spirit. Then you can live daily in the power of His Spirit, not relying solely on your human life and power!

So we need to understand the nature of this wonderful gift, and what practical effects this gift is to have on your life.

The Holy Spirit is God. The Bible speaks of the three persons of God, the three ways in which the one and only God has chosen to reveal Himself to us: As the Father who loves us, the Son who gave His life to save us, and as the Holy Spirit of God who lives within us. So the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both God the Father and God the Son.

The Holy Spirit is the person, the life, and the power of God given to live in you to enable you to fulfill God's will for your life! The Lord knows you could never please Him with your old sinful nature, no matter how hard you tried! It is a remarkable sign of God's love for you that He should want to come and live in you in

the person of His Spirit; this is the mercy and grace of God, His desire to give you everything, although you deserve nothing!

Because He is the person of God, the Spirit shares the same characteristics as the Father and the Son. **He wants to reproduce these in your life, so that your new life reveals the character of Jesus**, just as He revealed the character of His Father during His earthly ministry. This does not happen by you trying to imitate Jesus, but by allowing the life of His Spirit in you to be expressed in your life.

Paul speaks of these qualities of the Holy Spirit's life in you as the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He describes this fruit as consisting of God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. One fruit with nine flavours! When you consider this list you realise that you would like to see more of these qualities in your life, that your life would be much richer and more satisfying if this was the case. You can see also that others who know you would like to see more of these qualities in you! Most important

of all, **God wants to produce more of these qualities in your life.**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, enabling you to love God with all your heart, and to love others as He has loved you. He will even enable you to love your enemies!

The love of the Holy Spirit is not like human love that is based on emotion or desire. **God's love is always constant, no matter how you feel or what circumstances you are faced with. It is a love that is expressed in giving, out of a desire for the welfare of those who are the object of this love. It is with such love that God loves you. He wants to give more and more of Himself to you out of His concern for your welfare.**

He is the Spirit of joy. His joy is much greater than human happiness that depends upon our response to what we experience. Like His love, God's joy is always consistent. **You will be able to rejoice in the Lord, even in the midst of the most trying of circumstances,**

because Jesus is much greater than any problem that you could ever face. When you rejoice in Him, you proclaim His victory over your difficulties!

He is the Spirit of peace. God's peace is described as being "beyond our understanding." This peace gives you a deep and satisfied sense of well-being. We are then at peace with God and with ourselves. This enables us also to be at peace with others, even when there may be difficult relationships to cope with.

Many would admit to needing more patience. As this is a quality of God's Spirit, to need more patience indicates a need for more of God's Spirit to be revealed in a person's life.

The more you live in dependence upon God, the more all these qualities will be expressed in your life, including that of self-control!

The self-life is the old life centred on pleasing self, an essentially selfish and sinful life! Once you have the new life of the Holy Spirit you can choose to deny any

temptation to go back to the old life, living to please yourself, for **you are empowered by God's presence within you to live the new life that pleases Him.** Jesus said that anyone who follows Him will have to deny their old self to do this; for then the Holy Spirit will express His life in and through you.

Paul describes these qualities as fruit because they grow in you as long as you continue to live in relationship with God.

He is the Spirit of Truth who guides you into the truth of who God is, of what He has accomplished for you through Jesus, and how He enables you to fulfil His will through the power of the Holy Spirit within you.

He is your Counsellor, the one who becomes the voice of God within you. He reminds you of what Jesus has said, and is always ready to speak words of faith to your heart, words that are most relevant to your situation! He enables you to have God's wisdom so that you know what to do and what decisions to make.

Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit does not act

independently of the Father and the Son. When the Holy Spirit speaks into your heart, it is the Father and the Son speaking. For there is always complete unity between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. When you become a child of God, He wants to lead and guide you in the way He wants you to go!

Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive God's power when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This same promise applies to every believer today. So when you receive the gift of God's Spirit you will receive His supernatural power, which is so much greater than the natural human power that you already possess. You are empowered by God Himself to fulfill His will for your life.

The new life is a gift from God. The Kingdom of Heaven is a gift to you; and the Holy Spirit is His gift to enable you to live as one who belongs to His Kingdom!

He is the Spirit of power. This Kingdom is not a matter of talk, something we can simply speak about,

but of power, God's power! The Kingdom of God is, "Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." So the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to live the life of God's Kingdom here on earth. **Jesus will enable you to rule over your circumstances rather than to think of yourself as a victim of your circumstances!** It is amazing to think that God is ready to make such power available to you! But He does this only when you have surrendered your life to Him; He does not want to put such power into the wrong hands! This is not power to be used only for yourself, but to enable you to fulfill His purpose for you to love others as He has loved you!

The New Testament speaks of a number of different ways in which this power is expressed in the lives of believers in very practical ways. We will not speak at length about these now, for it is not possible to see how such things can take place in your life until you have received the gift of the Spirit yourself. Then these different manifestations of the Spirit will become available to you. It is enough to say here that **God gives you knowledge when you lack it, wisdom when you need it, prophetic words to encourage you, and will**

even give healings and miracles in response to your faith as a believer!

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of faith. He inspires faith in the hearts of Christians, even when previously there was a complete lack of faith. The way He does this is by speaking words of truth into your heart, words of Scripture that are appropriate to you at that particular time. Hearing God in this way inspires faith!

All these different ways in which the Spirit will work in your life point to the fact that you will never be alone; that He is always with you, ready to work within you. He will never leave you to your own devices. He will not only be with you always; **He will be within you ready to express His life of love and power through you.** Jesus is described as the Author and Perfector of our faith. By His Spirit He will speak words of faith to your heart. When you believe Him and act on those words, His supernatural life and power will be released into your situation.

He is also the Spirit of worship and of prayer. He will

fill your worship with His presence and the power of God. He makes your prayer in the Name of Jesus both powerful and effective. In fact, He will enrich your life in so many ways. You will have the option of trusting in yourself or in the Spirit of God within you; of doing things in your own strength or in His power!

The Body of Christ

When you give your life to Jesus so many wonderful things take place. **God takes hold of you and places you into Christ.** To enable the disciples to understand what this means, Jesus used a vivid illustration when speaking to them at the Last Supper that took place on the evening before His crucifixion.

Jesus described Himself as the True Vine. All the disciples were familiar in seeing vines growing. A vine consists of a root system, the main stem, the branches of that stem, and the fruit, the grapes that grow on the

branches. Because Jesus is the Vine, He is the whole plant.

He likened the disciples to the branches of this Vine. So they live in this Vine. In Jesus! The heavenly Father is the One who tends the Vine, to ensure that it is exceedingly fruitful. So He cuts out of the Vine any branches that do not bear fruit, those who simply want to draw life out of the Vine but do nothing to serve the One in whom they live. Even the fruitful branches the Father prunes so that they will continue to bear more fruit. It is necessary to prune a natural vine every year so that the new growth will produce new fruit!

The fruit gives glory and honour to the Father because this is fulfilling the will and purpose He has for the branches. **So God the Father takes hold of your life when you give yourself to Him, so that for the rest of your life you will be able to draw life everyday from Jesus, and produce the fruit that will please the Father, giving you a tremendous sense of fulfillment and satisfaction!** You will not need to fear being cut out of the Vine, for to remain in Him will enable the sap

of the Holy Spirit to flow through your life and produce the fruit. **The lasting fruit is produced by the life and power of the Holy Spirit, God's precious gift in you.**

Paul used another vivid illustration to describe the life you will have as a believer in Jesus Christ. He described believers in Him as being part of the Body of Christ. This is a good description of born again people.

In a human body there are many different parts. They all work together for the good, the welfare, the health of the whole body. Each part has its distinctive functions: The eye to see, the ear to hear, the mouth to speak, the heart to beat, the leg to walk and so on. Each individual believer is like one part of this body. That part does not have to try to be like other parts; it simply has to fulfill the particular function it has for the health of the whole body. The eye want to be a good eye, not an ear!

This can seem obvious but it points to an important truth. **When you place your faith in Jesus, God places you in this Body because He has a particular purpose for you. You will have an important contribution to**

make for the life and well-being of the whole Body.

Nobody else can fulfill the part God intends you to play because the other parts are occupied in fulfilling their own distinctive purposes!

So God's purpose for your life will be fulfilled within this context of living in His Body. **The Blood of Jesus will continue to flow through your life to ensure that you are forgiven and made fit for use. The life of God's Spirit will continue to flow through your life to equip and enable you to fulfill that purpose!**

Of course, there are certain things that every member of the Body does to remain spiritually healthy. Every member is called to develop his or her relationship with Jesus through prayer. This is not a matter of repeating formal prayers, for when you know Jesus personally you will be able to speak to Him freely from your heart. You will also be able to hear from Him through His Spirit and through the words of Scripture in particular.

Every member is called by God to love the other members of the Body so that the whole Body can

function together in unity. It is amazing to see how this works in the natural human body. The same principle is to be seen working in the Body of Christ! This can only be the case when each of the members of the Body is not concerned only about his or her own welfare, but is equally concerned about all the other members of the Body to which he or she belongs.

This is why when God gives you the precious gift of the Holy Spirit He fills your heart and life with His love, the love that is consistent and faithful, that does not change with emotion and circumstances. The love that is concerned about the welfare of others. The love that is expressed in giving and serving others, in encouraging them and whenever necessary being merciful to them; forgiving them instead of taking offence if they do anything that offends you!

This Body exists to be God's instrument in causing His life to flow out of the Body to touch the lives of others living in the world. **Those who are living in spiritual darkness are able to receive the light of the life of Jesus Christ that will transform their lives, giving**

them an eternal destiny in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus Christ is the Head of this Body. It is from the head in a natural body that all the limbs take their direction. When you choose to move your arm something is taking place in your head that is transmitted through the various parts of your body between the head and the arm, enabling the movement to take place. The arm needs to be in relationship with the head and with the other parts of the body; otherwise there will be paralysis and the movement will not take place.

Jesus is the Head and He wants to direct your life as part of His Body. He wants you to be in good relationship with Him and with the other members of the Body of Christ. There is no such thing as an independent Christian who does not belong to the Body, just as there cannot be a fruitful branch of the Vine unless it remains attached to the rest of the Vine!

The new commandment that Jesus gave to go with the new life that He was enabling believers to receive, is to love one another as Jesus has loved us. He loved us to the extent of laying down His life for us. In the same

way, **we are to love one another by living for one another, not simply for ourselves.**

This is yet another wonderful truth, for to be part of the Body of Christ means that **you belong to a group of people who are devoted to you for your welfare, just as you are devoted to them for their welfare.** We can all love, support, and care for one another in the ways that are appropriate in the various situations in which we find ourselves.

The Church

The True Vine and the Body of Christ are both biblical descriptions of what God intends for His church. Now here we have to face some uncomfortable facts, for the church does not always appear to be what God intends. **The church is to be the assembly or gathering together of groups of people who have been born again, have this new life of the Spirit, and are filled with the life and power of God. People who love one another with God's love, and are therefore seeking the welfare of all who belong to the Body, so that the church may fulfill the purposes of God in the world.**

This is to bring more and more people into the life of God's Kingdom so they can enjoy all the blessings and benefits of this Kingdom, not only in this life but for all eternity!

God never intended His church to become an institution where people only meet together for a series of religious services. He did not come to start yet another formal religion; He came with the precious gift of God's Kingdom and the empowering of the Holy Spirit to enable people to live the life of this Kingdom here on earth!

Sadly, the experience of church for many who are not yet filled with the new life is one of formal, often boring services that do not seem to be particularly relevant to the circumstances of their lives. Instead of finding that their experience draws them to a living relationship with Jesus Christ, the very opposite seems to be the case. In some churches it is clear that the truth of God's Word is not preached with faith, and the participants do not seem to radiate the life of which the gospels speaks!

It is good that this is not a description of all assemblies, for there are churches where the Word of God is preached and believed, where the members radiate the life and love of Jesus. Where the worship is filled with the power of God's Spirit, His presence there can be discerned, even by visitors who do not know the Lord. These churches radiate the light of God's Kingdom, not only because they meet on Sundays, but because the members are intent on living as true disciples. Their activities during the week are as important as their assemblies on Sundays. Each member is being encouraged to develop his or her particular calling from God.

Obviously new believers need to become part of an assembly or local church that seeks to be a biblical expression of the Body of Christ, a church where they will be fed with the truth, encouraged in their faith and receive the love and support they need as new Christians. In such an environment they will soon discover the particular purpose God has for their lives, and they will be able to receive from God the anointing they need to be able to fulfill those purposes!

It is important to realise that in giving yourself to Jesus you are committing yourself to becoming a member of the Body of Christ, with all that this implies. **In His tender love and compassion, God will lead you step by step in the way He wants you to go.** He knows you will thrive spiritually by being part of a local expression of His Body that is vibrant with His life, and where the people are dedicated to God's Kingdom purposes. In such a context you will be loved and accepted, and will come to love and accept all the others who form part of this assembly!

It is not God's intention for you to judge any church that does not seem to fulfill what God intends. Rather you will want to pray for a movement of God's Spirit to breathe the new life of His Spirit into every congregation, regardless of any denomination and affiliation!

What the Lord has in store for you as a member of His Body is a life of knowing that God is pleased by the fruit He is able to produce in your life through the life and power of His Spirit. He wants to place alongside

you other believers who will help and encourage you so that, in due course, you will be able to help and encourage others. As a result God will be blessed and honoured in your life, not only by the praises you sing, but by the life you live!

What now?

How can the life of God's Kingdom become a reality in your life and experience? How can you not only be born again, but also filled with the life of God's Spirit? How can your life be filled with love for God and for others? How can you be confident that He will fulfill the plans and purposes God has for your life? How can you be blessed because you live daily in a living relationship with Jesus, a relationship in which you will experience answered prayer?

You may never go to church or be part of a congregation

at present. It may be that you have been part of a formal church that does not seem to radiate the life which we have been describing. Maybe that you consider your life to have been so sinful that God would want nothing to do with you, that you could never become acceptable to Him.

No matter what your present situation, the way forward is the same for everyone as Jesus made clear: Repentance and faith! So how can you put this into practice? How can you repent? What do you need to do to express faith in Jesus?

There follows a simple way in which all these questions can be answered. Countless numbers of people have done what I am about to suggest to you, and to great affect in their lives. People have been born again, filled with God's Spirit and have often received healing from God by using this simple method. In other words, experience has proved that it works!

Write a letter to Jesus. This letter will be in two parts. **First, write down all the things for which you are**

conscious of needing forgiveness. It is important not only to think about these things, but to write them down for reasons that will become clear.

This does not suggest that you are to remember every sin. If that was the case you would need to write a book, not a letter! There will be things that you are conscious of immediately for which you recognize your need of forgiveness, things for which you feel guilty every time something happens to trigger the memory of those things. These are the things that if you could have your life over again you would never choose to repeat!

God wants to free you from all the shame and guilt attached to these events. So write them down. You can say to God in this letter: **“Lord, help me to remember now anything that has had a negative impact on my life, so You can free me from the consequences of these sins.”** You will find that certain things will come to mind as a result. Write them down.

You can begin your letter by saying: **“Lord Jesus, I am giving You my life and I ask You to forgive anything that has been opposed to Your will.”** Then begin to list

the sins and offenses that God will forgive.

Obviously you will need to set a time apart when you can do this thoughtfully and sincerely. However, you will find that this begins a process and during the following days you will become conscious of further things you need to add to the letter. I usually suggest that this is written over a period of a week or so. When you return to the letter it will only be for a short time to add the further things for which you need God's forgiveness.

Why write these things down? For this reason. You can think of one thing after another, but it is only when you see them written down that you can see what a sorry mess that your life has been spiritually! You will see not that it is a good idea to seek God's forgiveness, but that **you have a desperate need of His forgiveness so that you can come into the place of knowing that you are totally forgiven and made completely acceptable to God as a result.**

In the second part of your letter write down all that

you are giving to God. He wants to become Lord in every part of your life. Wherever He is Lord there will be blessing and fulfillment. So you can say: **“Lord, I am giving You my life”**; **then be specific.** Offer Him your heart, your soul life, that is your mind, your emotions and your will. Offer Him your body so that every area of your life can be used for His glory. Offer Him your relationships, your family and your friends, your work life and your leisure life. Surrender your natural gifts to Him so that they can be used for His glory. Give Him your future, your money, your property. This is not because He wants to take away from you. The very opposite is the case, for Jesus stated clearly that **God will always give back to you far more than you can give to Him. He will give you, “Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.” But He can only multiply what has first been put into His hands.**

Again, during subsequent days you will become conscious of further ways in which you will need to surrender yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Add these to the letter. It is better to keep the two parts of the letter on separate sheets of paper so you can add

the future sins that need to be forgiven on one sheet, and the further ways in which you need to give your life to Him on the other.

You might have heard of others coming to Christ in a more superficial way than this. I am telling you the thorough way that will enable you to have a meaningful relationship of love with Jesus and become a true disciple. So the more thorough you are, the better!

Once you are confident that your letter is complete, what are you to do with it? **You will need to set a time apart to speak it out aloud to Jesus.** You can do this on your own. If you know a pastor, or devoted Christian who you can trust, you may choose to do this while they are present. The advantage of this is the person can give you the assurance of God's forgiveness and then pray for you to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

However, if such a person is not available you can do this on your own, and the Lord will surely hear your prayer and will answer you. I have never known of anyone who has written such a letter to Jesus who has

not been greatly blessed as a result.

During the first part of your letter it will be important to forgive any who you need to forgive because of the ways they have betrayed you or hurt you by the things they have said about you or done to you. Jesus makes it clear that if we expect God to be merciful to us and to forgive us, we need to be merciful to others and forgive them. He said: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy!"

Once you have spoken your letter to Jesus destroy the first part. All these sins will have been forgiven and no longer exist. So burn it or tear it into small shreds and dispose of it. You will never need to visit any of these things again. You may remember some of them from time to time, but there will no longer be any guilt or shame attached to them!

Beware of the enemy. The devil is the accuser who tries to encourage people to feel condemned. He doesn't want to let you go from his influence so that for the rest of your life you will be under the influence of the

Holy Spirit. If ever he tries to accuse you of things you have done in the past that have been forgiven you can say to him: "Satan, I am forgiven and there is no condemnation for me because I belong to Jesus, which is more than can be said for you! So goodbye!" He is under condemnation and will never belong to Jesus!

You can keep the second part of the letter in a safe place. If you choose to do this, you can return to it every so often to remind yourself of what you have surrendered to Jesus. Sometimes we tend to take back what we have given, and this reminder helps us remedy that temptation!

When you have read your letter to Jesus, ask Him to fill you with His life, the life and power of His Holy Spirit. Jesus said that all who ask receive. The heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. You will have a sense of peace that you are now forgiven and accepted by God. You may feel truly joyful and liberated. You may simply have the sense that all is now well between God and yourself.

When the Spirit of God comes upon you, there may be a sense of joyful release taking place within you. However, do not measure your experience against what you hear others have experienced. God deals with each one of us personally and in the right way for each one. Jesus told us to believe that we have received whatever we ask when we pray. So thank Him for the precious gift of His Spirit, regardless of any feelings or experiences you may or may not have.

You may have been told by someone that when you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that God gives you another language with which to pray, one which you do not understand yourself. Such a gift enables the Holy Spirit to pray in you and through you in a way which is beyond your understanding! So, as with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, this is a very precious and useful gift. However, do not be discouraged if you do not manifest this gift immediately. Simply thank God that He has answered your prayer and He has given you His Spirit and that you will, in due course be able to speak and pray in this other language.

You will certainly find that a number of significant things have changed in your life, whether you speak in tongues immediately or not. Every one of these is evidence of the new life of the Spirit that is now active in your life!

Even if you have spoken your letter to Jesus privately, you may want to ask a pastor or friend who has been filled with the Holy Spirit to pray for you with the laying on of hands. This can help you to know that you have received the Lord and the fulfillment of His wonderful promise.

Now you have become a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come! The sinner that you are has died and has been buried with Christ. As you take your place in the local expression of the Body of Christ, you can ask to be baptised, as this is the funeral service of your old life. **Now you can live the life of God's Kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now you can live for the glory of God by fulfilling His purpose for your life as He unfolds this before you.**

What a God! What a Saviour! What great mercy and grace! And what a great life you can now live with the expectation that you can reign eternally with Jesus in His heavenly glory! Amen! It shall be so!

After you have written your letter to Jesus, contact us using the details below to receive your free copy of the sequel to this mini book: *"Your journey to heaven."*

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