

"CHRISTIANITY"
(What's The Big Deal?)

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"You must be born again! Otherwise, you cannot enter the gates of Heaven. If you are not saved, you will spend eternity in Hell! Through God's grace, you have been set free. Accept Jesus as your Savior and you will receive everlasting life."

Can you imagine how strange those statements must sound to a person who is unfamiliar with the Bible and knows very little about God and Jesus. It would be similar to telling someone in the darkest regions of Africa, all about

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electricity. How in the world could you explain the wonder of it all?

I was born on a farm just five miles outside of town. But we didn't have electricity in our home until I was nine years old. If someone were to have expounded upon the wonders of being able to flip a switch and all those bright lights would come on -- or just turn a dial on the wall and you have heat in the winter and cold air in the summer -- I know I would have been somewhat skeptical.

You see, I didn't know much about electricity because I had never really experienced it in my life. As a result,

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I wouldn't be very receptive to discussing it with anyone -- especially someone who seemed to know so much more about it than I.

Most of us are uncomfortable discussing things we don't know much about. Yet, as Christians, we are to tell others about Christ -- that is what Jesus instructed us to do.

Many times, in talking with others, we do more harm than good, because we just assume the person we are talking to is familiar with the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. For whatever reason, that is not always the case.

So, we need to back it down a notch or two when we are sharing the gospel with others.

Let's start at the very beginning. God created the heavens and the earth. Then God created man in His own image, to rule over all creatures on the earth. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, therefore God created woman from the rib of the man. The story is told in *Genesis*, the very first book in the Bible.

Adam was the man God created and Eve was made as a helpmate for Adam. Adam said, "This is now bone of my

bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." *(Genesis 2:23)*

That is why, when a man and woman are united in marriage, they are considered as one --- one flesh.

Now Adam and Eve were off to a good start. They were the only human-beings on earth and they're living in the paradise called "The Garden of Eden."

It was truly beautiful; with lots of fruit-bearing trees, animals, and a plentiful supply of clean, clear running water. Everything they needed was right there at their command.

God told Adam, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

(Genesis 2:17)

You see, when God created man, He gave him freewill -- the freedom and ability to think, and make choices on his own. But along with that freedom, God also made man responsible for the choices that he would make.

So at this time, God's only rule for Adam and Eve was, "Don't eat the fruit from that tree!"

This is no different than it is for us today. We have the freedom to make our own choices, but just like Adam, we too must pay a penalty when we make the wrong choices in life.

Adam and Eve were created completely innocent. God's one rule had not been broken, so at this time, there was no sin in the world.

Can you imagine living in a place where there is no sin? Where nobody does anything wrong? This was a perfect world. But, as you might expect, when people have the ability to make choices, even a perfect world, doesn't stay perfect very long.

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One of the creatures that God created was a serpent. The serpent asked Eve, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

Eve replied, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

The serpent told Eve, "You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (*Genesis 3:1-5*) Needless to say, Eve saw that the fruit was pleasing to

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the eye. And it was desirable for gaining wisdom. So, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to Adam and he ate it, and for the first time, they realized they were naked, so they sewed some fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

The course of human history was forever changed by that one act of disobedience.

The Bible tells us that it was satan, in the form of a serpent, that brought evil into the world. Satan was a fallen angel and his desire from the outset was to be greater than God. But that's a story we can tell at another time.

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Satan, in the form of a serpent, not only caused Eve to doubt God's word; he also persuaded her to break the one rule that God had required of them. In addition, she persuaded Adam to do likewise! That is how sin was born.

When we don't listen to God, and we go about our business doing what ever we choose to do, even if we know it is against God's rules - that is SIN!

So, as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience -- that original sin, God banished both of them from The Garden of Eden. God said to Adam, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree, about which I

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commanded: 'You must not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it all
the days of your life. It will produce
thorns and thistles for you, and you will
eat the plants of the field."

"By the sweat of your brow you will eat
your food until you return to the
ground, since from it you were taken;
for dust you are and to dust you will
return." *(Genesis 3:17-19)*

Now, when you have to roll out of bed
every Monday morning and go off to
work, you can blame Adam. His
disobedience is the reason we all have
to work by the sweat of our brow.

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You see, we all are descendants of
Adam --- that's right. We all came
from Adam and Eve, and they fouled it
up for all of us!

Wouldn't it have been nice if Adam and
Eve had just followed the rules? All of
us would be living a blissful life of
peace and harmony in that paradise:
The Garden of Eden.

Well, it didn't happen, so put it behind
you and let's move on with our lives.

As time went by, and more and more
people inhabited the earth, more rules
and laws had to be established to
protect us from one another.

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Remember, as a result of Adam and Eve's original sin, we are all born as sinners --- yes, you and me. We are all born as sinners and we are incapable of living a sin-free life on our own. And when we sin, there is a penalty that must be paid.

God called Moses to be the leader of the Jews --- God's chosen people. They were being held in bondage by Pharaoh, the Egyptian Ruler, and were being used as slaves by the Egyptians.

God later called Moses to the top of Mt. Sinai and gave Moses the laws for the people: "The Ten Commandments."

In those days, men would bring animals to the Priests to be slain as "payment" for the forgiveness of sin. The blood of the animals was an offering to the Lord. According to the Law, there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. *(Hebrews 9:22)*

Altars were built and ceremonial services were performed by the Priests. However, people continued to sin and it just became a ritual; i.e., go live a life of sin and periodically bring sacrifices to the altar, get forgiven, then go back to living a life of sin all over again. These were just ceremonial external washings. *(Hebrews 9:10)*

God was saddened by the people's continued disobedience. So God decided upon a new covenant -- a new way to obtain forgiveness of sin. God spoke to the Prophets, and even David wrote about it in Psalm 40:6 *"Sacrifice and offerings thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required."* As a side note, God always announces His plans before He acts upon them.

The Prophets, who were inspired by God, began telling everyone that a time would come when God would send a Messiah (The Anointed One) to bear our sins once and for all! This Messiah would be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of man. *(Hebrews 10:10)*

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Prophets such as Amos (760 B.C.), Hosea (750 B.C.), Isaiah (740 B.C.), Daniel (530 B.C.), and even David, who was not a prophet, told of the coming Messiah.

"The Messiah will be led like a lamb to slaughter." *(Isaiah 53:7)* This is just like the Priests used lambs for sacrifices in that day. "The Son of Man will come and His Kingdom will never be destroyed." *(Daniel 7:13-14)*

That Messiah is Jesus. And this is how the birth of Jesus came about as told in the first chapter of Luke:

"God sent the angel Gabriel, to visit a young girl named Mary. At that time Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph."

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"Mary and Joseph had not had sexual relations --- Mary was a virgin."

"Gabriel told Mary, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of The Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And his kingdom will never end.'" (Luke 1:30-33)

"An angel of the Lord also appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him, 'Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.'" (Matthew 1:20-21)

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When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded of him and he took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her (no sexual intercourse) until she gave birth.

The child was a boy, just as the angel had said, and they named him Jesus. *(Matthew 1:24-25)*

This is exactly as the prophets had foretold over seven hundred years earlier! There is no doubt. Jesus is the Messiah ---- The Anointed One. The one sent by God to be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of man. This was the new covenant. *(Hebrews 7 & 8)*

In the Bible *(John 3:16-17)*, Jesus tells us;

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"For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus), that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him would be saved."

*"God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood."
(Romans 3:25)*

Jesus' ministry and teachings, while on this earth, are thoroughly documented all through the Bible. His ministry began when He was about 30 years of age. *(Luke 3:23)* And just as the prophets had foretold, Jesus was crucified on the cross approximately 3 years later.

Jesus was crucified and died as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Yes, you and me!

He was then wrapped in burial clothes and placed in a rock tomb. But three days later, when people went to visit the tomb, the tomb was empty!

God had raised Jesus from the dead. And over the course of the next forty (40) days, Jesus walked and talked with many different people at various locations. And then, as the Disciples watched, Jesus ascended through the clouds straight up to Heaven where he is now seated at God's right hand.

(Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:1-11)

So, you may say, "If Jesus died for my sins, I am home free --- I don't have to do anything!"

Well, in the Bible Jesus said; "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.*" (Matthew 6:33)

You must seek Him. You have to ask Jesus to come into your heart. Remember earlier, I talked about God giving us all "freewill" to make our own choices in life? Well, you must open your heart and ask:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)

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Adam and Eve had the freedom to choose --- but they chose to disobey God. **Make sure you make the right choice!**

You may ask, "If God loves me so much, why would he require me to even make the choice?"

Well, think about this; it's human nature to place greater value on things we choose for ourselves. Most of us don't like other people telling us what to do - or - deciding what is best for us. We want to make our own choices.

God made us and knows how we think. I believe that's why you must ask Jesus.

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So, it is now all up to you. You can choose life through Jesus Christ. Or, you can choose death by rejecting Jesus' plan for salvation. It is your choice!

At this point, you are probably thinking, "How do I ask Jesus to come into my life?" It's as simple as A, B, C.

A --- Admit Your Need:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

We are all born sinners. Admit it to Jesus by praying, "Lord, I am a sinner but I repent (turn-away) from sin. Lord, please forgive me of all sin."

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B --- Believe on Jesus:

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

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)

Just pray, "Jesus, I believe in my heart that you died on the cross for all my sins. I also believe that you arose from the grave on the third day and later ascended to Heaven; where you are seated at the right hand of God, and that you will return again on Judgment Day."

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C --- Commit Yourself to Jesus:

*"But as many as received Him, to them gave
He power to become the sons of God."
(John 1:12)*

Just pray, "Lord, from this day forth, I
commit my life to you. I will do my
best to follow your teachings, be
obedient and live my life in accordance
with your will for me."

If you were sincere when you prayed
that prayer, you are now "born-again."

All your sins have been forgiven and
the Holy Spirit has now come into your
heart to empower you to live this new
life for Christ.

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This is not to say that you will never sin
again. We are still human and we do
make mistakes. However, now that you
have committed yourself to Jesus, you
will not purposely continue living the old
sinful life you once knew.

Now when you make a mistake, you will
immediately recognize it and will be
truly sorry. So when you mess up,
admit it --- tell God you are sorry and
ask for His' forgiveness.

God loves you and He knows you are
still growing in your Christian Walk. He
knows what you did. And, He forgives
you, the very minute you ask.

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You are His child. He wants only the best for you. So get up, dust yourself off, and move on down the road. He also knows what is in your heart.

God loves a contrite heart - being sorry for what you did. He doesn't punish you when you are trying to live for Him.

He forgives you of that indiscretion and continues to guide, protect, comfort and nurture you as you continue on in your life journey.

The big change that takes place, when you are born again, is that the Holy Spirit (The Counselor) comes into your heart. *(John 14, 15, & 16)*

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Before you were saved, you were on your own. But now, you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you. The Holy Spirit guides, protects, instructs, and cautions you in your daily walk with Christ. You are now empowered with the Holy Spirit. This "power" enables you to make wiser choices.

You no longer walk alone!

But, to sustain and strengthen your Christian Walk, you need to develop the discipline to read your Bible each day.

"So then, Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

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You will gain strength in your walk and grow in wisdom by reading God's Word. Make reading the Bible part of your daily routine.

Daily prayer is also essential. Think about it --- you cannot develop a close personal relationship with someone unless you talk to them on a regular basis. Talk with Jesus every day and build upon that personal relationship.

The Apostle Paul said, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6-7)

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One mistake we all make is to think that a particular problem may be too small to ask for God's help. So we attempt to solve it ourselves.

That is not what God wants you to do. He wants you to involve Him in everything you do -- big or small. God already knows what you are going through. He loves for you to talk with Him and seek His guidance. He will not fail you --- but you must talk to Him.

Also find a good local Church that preaches and teaches the Word of God. In other words, their teaching should line-up with the Bible. Association with other believers is essential to your continued growth as a Christian.

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It may seem difficult at first. But it gets easier as you learn to let go of the problem and turn it over to God. You will be amazed at the results and you will find that your life is less complicated when you include God.

A friend once told me, "Forget about all the things you think you will have to 'stop doing' if you accept Jesus into your heart. Instead, just concentrate on building a personal relationship with Christ. You will soon see that all that other 'stuff' takes care of its self."

That proved to be so true! Follow that same advice. Spend time sharing your thoughts and concerns with God. You will make the right decisions in life.

Over time, you will become more Christ-Like in all your actions and your thinking. Keep seeking perfection, and don't be upset when you foul-up. Never, Never Give Up!

The Bible tells us; "*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*" (Isaiah 41:10)

Wow - what a promise! Now, do you see why Christianity and being a Born-Again Believer of Jesus Christ is a big deal?

***You can't truly live without Jesus!
He is the giver of life, and the only assurance you have for eternal life.***

Jesus provides the hope for tomorrow that enables you to live today. Your life will now have meaning and purpose. God made you for a specific purpose. Ask God to reveal that purpose to you ---- and then pursue "your purpose" with all your heart, mind, body, and soul.

Do you still have some doubts? Are you thinking; "What if I don't choose Jesus? What if I just live my life and take my chances? Maybe there is no God. Maybe when I die, that's all there is!"

Well, we both are in agreement on one thing --- **YOU ARE GOING TO DIE!**

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One day, this earthly life will end for all of us. But, how are you going to feel when you die and witness first hand:

- There is a God
- The Bible was correct
- There is a Heaven
- There is a Hell
- You are separated from precious loved ones who chose Jesus

You are sitting in the middle of Hell. You are separated from God. You are separated from the people you love. And, there's nothing you can do to change it --- it's too late! You had a chance while you were living, but you chose not to accept Jesus --- you rejected the "free gift" of eternal life!

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I hope that doesn't happen. Please don't make that tragic mistake. Now is the time to choose Jesus. Don't wait!

There is no assurance of tomorrow. Have you ever lived a tomorrow? The only certainty you have is this moment.

Eternity is a long, long time to spend in a place called Hell!

Choose Jesus now --- Don't delay!

Ask Jesus to come into your heart right now. It will be the best decision you will ever make. Please do it now. God Bless You!

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www.commonmanministry.com

The Common Man, PO Box 456, Bixby, OK 74008