

Turning to Jesus Christ

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After all that has been said in the book “Questions—I have Always Wanted to Ask”, we must now ask how we can get access to the Bible. How can the uninitiated read and understand the Bible? After an evangelistic meeting a young intellectual came for counselling, honestly wanting to understand the Bible.

In the course of our conversation I managed to help him overcome several of his objections and he replied that he would now read the Bible in the light of the philosophical thought trends with which he was familiar. I replied: “You can do that, but then you will not find the living God who revealed Himself through Christ, but the impersonal, pantheistic God of the philosophers. Philosophers have read the Bible from within the framework of their own thinking, but they did not find the God who becomes our salvation only through Jesus. You can have access to the Bible and to the living God tonight if you give your life to Him. Do you want to do that?” The young man stayed and took the advice I offered.

At this point I would like to outline my part in that conversation, using this one case as an example to show the reader the way to faith in Jesus.

P1: Recognize yourself

Let us read Romans 3:21 together: **“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Rom 3:22-23). This scripture shows us that we are lost in the sight of the living God; we cannot come to Him because sin separates us from Him and we possess nothing which commends us to Him. In brief: we lack all merit before God. Since the Fall, there is a chasm between the living God and sinful mankind. Do you agree with God's diagnosis?

P2: The only way out

There is only one way out of this dilemma, and it is entirely God's doing. His Son was punished on the cross for our sins. Jesus came to save what was lost (Matt 18:11). Salvation is found in no one else (Acts 4:12). Can you accept this fact as well?

P3: Confess your sins

We will read 1 John 1:8-9: **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** Jesus has the authority to forgive sin. If we trust in His promise and confess our sin to Him and ask His forgiveness, we can be assured of His faithfulness. We can rely on the fact that He will truly set us free from the burden of our sin and its eternal consequences. But thinking about this is not enough. You have to act! Are you willing to do that? Let us now tell the Lord Jesus all this in prayer (this is the basis for a freely formulated prayer):

“Lord Jesus, I have heard about You today and I understand why You came into this world. In your boundless love you have also taken hold of me. You see all my sin—that which is revealed to me now and also that which is as yet hidden from me. You, however, know all things, every culpable deed, every wrong stirring of my heart, You have recorded everything.

I am an open book to You; the way my life is, I cannot stand before you. So I ask You now:
Forgive all my sin and cleanse me thoroughly. Amen."

We have told the Lord everything that is necessary for now (1 John 1:8-9). God Himself vouches for His promise. How much of your guilt do you think He has forgiven? 80 % ? 50 % ? 10% ? It is written: "[He] **puriff[ies] us from all unrighteousness**" (1 John 1:9). You have been forgiven completely! Yes, all of it, 100%! This is fact, not just an assumption, a possibility or a hope! The Bible is adamant about this, we must be certain of this fact. Let us read 1 Peter 1:18-19 and 1 John 5:13 in this context.

P4: Surrendering your life

The Lord Jesus has forgiven all your sin. Now you can entrust your whole life to Him. In John 1:12 we read: "**Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**" All those who invite the Lord Jesus to take over the control of their lives receive the authorization to become children of God. Becoming God's children is not a reward we receive for any of our good deeds or because we are pious or because we go to a particular church. We become children of God if we have entrusted our lives to the Son of God and are willing to follow Him in obedience. Let us affirm this in a prayer:

"Lord Jesus, You have forgiven all of my sin. I can hardly grasp this yet, but I trust in Your promise. And now I ask You to enter my life. Lead me and guide me on the way that You show me. I know that You want the best for me and so I want to entrust every area of my life to You. Let me get rid of everything that is not right before You. Give me new habits with You, which are under Your blessing. And give me an obedient heart so that I will do what Your Word says. Help me not to pay attention to various influences and all manner of human opinions, but open up Your Bible to me so that I might understand Your Word correctly and live accordingly. You shall be my Lord, and I want to follow You. Amen."

P5: Accepted

The Lord has accepted you! He has bought you at great cost to Himself, He saved you. You are now a child of God. A child is also an heir: heir of God, heir to the heavenly world. Can you imagine what is taking place in heaven right now? "... maybe joy?" Certainly! In Luke 15:10 we read: "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Your conversion gives rise to great joy in heaven. All of heaven is involved when one person takes the message of the gospel seriously and accepts it into their life. The Bible calls this process of turning to Jesus conversion; we give Him our guilt and He removes it. At this point in time we become born again: He gives us new life. Now we are His children. Conversion and rebirth belong together. They are the two sides of one and the same coin.

P6: Thanksgiving

Salvation is God's gift to us. Only through His love has this path of salvation been made possible. We cannot contribute anything to this act of redemption. Everyone who receives a gift, says "Thankyou!" Let us do that now. Formulate in your own words a prayer of thanks. Tell the Lord Jesus now: ...

P7: What now?

The Bible compares the state you are now in to that of a newborn child. As a newborn child clearly belongs to its family, you also belong to God's family. Newborn children find themselves in a critical phase of life which is characterized by infant mortality. This phenomenon is present concerning our faith, too. Through conversion, the child is born. There is new life. Now nourishment, care and attention are absolutely necessary for this child. God has made provisions and has done everything

so that you can develop in the right direction. The death of our infant faith can be avoided if we follow God's advice. The following aspects are not only important for a life as disciple to Jesus, they are indispensable prerequisites for everyday life with Jesus. If we adhere to these five points, we have God's guarantees that we will reach our designated goal:

1. God's Word

You have made your decision based on God's Word, the Bible. The Bible is the only book authorized by God. No other book equals the Bible in authority, truth, amount of information and origin. Reading God's Word is absolutely necessary to nourish your new life. In 1 Peter 2:2, this aspect is emphasized and clearly expressed: ***"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk."*** Make time each day to read the Bible in order to get to know about God's will. Preferably, start by reading one of the Gospels (for example, the Gospel of John). Let reading the Bible become a pleasant and everyday habit. You never forget to have breakfast and brush your teeth. Be as consequent in reading the Bible and make it an essential part of your day.

2. Prayer

Speak with God every day. He speaks to us through His Word, and He wants us to speak to Him. It is a great privilege to tell Him everything. According to the Bible, prayer can only be to God who is now your Father and to Jesus, your Saviour, your Good Shepherd, your friend—your everything. The Bible does not tell us to direct our prayers to anyone else. Prayer will give you strength. It will change you in a positive manner. Everything in your daily life can become a subject for prayer: your sorrows, pleasures, plans. Thank the Lord for all that you find moving. Pray for other people and their difficulties. Pray to the Lord that the people surrounding you will also find faith. Prayer and reading God's Word trigger a "spiritual circulation" which is necessary for a healthy spiritual life.

3. Obedience

When reading the Bible you will find many useful instructions on all areas of life and how to live with God. Translate all that you have understood into action and you will be blessed by the Lord. God takes pleasure in us being obedient children who live according to His Word and heed His commands. The best way to show our love for the Lord is by obeying Him: ***"This is love for God: to obey his commands"*** (1 John 5:3). This world offers different paths but the Bible sets a standard which is blessed by the Lord: ***"We must obey God rather than men!"*** (Acts 5:29).

4. Fellowship

God created mankind with a need for fellowship. Thus, you should look for other Christians who have surrendered their life to God, and keep in touch with them. These are the people with whom you can pray and talk about your faith. If a glowing coal is taken out of a fire, it will soon grow cold. As a rule, our love for Jesus will also grow cold if it is not kept alive through fellowship with other believers. Join a Bible believing church and take an active part in this community. A good evangelical church where people believe in the whole Bible is so important for our Christian walk. Don't neglect fellowship!

5. Faith

After our conversion and rebirth it is important that we continue to grow spiritually. Paul wrote to Timothy: ***"But as for you, continue in what you have learned"*** (2 Tim 3:14). At the end of his life Paul could say: ***"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"*** (2 Tim 4:7). Let us follow his example and remain faithful, too.

Conversion is not an end, but the beginning of a new life. You are now able to be God's co-worker (1 Cor 3:9). Help to ensure that others might also experience salvation in Jesus. Conversion has two consequences: firstly, our earthly life takes on a whole new meaning and secondly, we become God's children, heirs to eternal life.

Let us note: We cannot gain access to the Bible if we remain neutral observers. We have to become 'insiders'. A person who has surrendered his or her life to God in Jesus Christ in conversion, and experienced salvation, is such an insider, having 'boarded the lifeboat'. Individual spiritual counselling differs from case to case. The above conversation, however, reconstructs the most essential aspects of a conversion: we need to recognize our sinfulness, admit our sin, and surrender to Jesus Christ. This is where the process of spiritual growth begins.

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