

What Must A Person Do To Become Part of God's Family?

by David Y.



Well, first of all, you can forget about what most Christian churches have taught concerning the "Gospel message". They speak of "getting saved" but they present a "formula" that is non-existent anywhere in the Bible! Nowhere does the Bible instruct people to say a "sinner's prayer" or "ask Jesus into their heart." Nowhere does the Bible even instruct someone to "attend church", let alone "go down to an altar and get saved."

All that having been said, there can be no doubt that the Bible does talk about "being saved" (John 10:9) and the importance of "becoming born again" (John 3:3). The "salvation experience" is a real happening and does involve "repentance" (Luke 5:32) and "water baptism" (Matthew 3:11) as well as "baptism in the Holy Spirit", but none of these things, by themselves, are *the Gospel* that transmits a once "lost" soul into the family of God.

The first thing we must do is take the bulk of "religious tradition" out of the picture. We must strip away all the "stuff" that man has placed in the path of salvation. Man's efforts to "help God" only clouds the issue and make things more difficult and confusing. The Bible presents a Gospel that is very simple with a choice that's clear and not convoluted with mountains of confusing details, rules and regulations to try and observe in hopes of attaining His approval. The fact is that God has already cast His approval upon those who do not deserve it because He loves them. God Himself chooses to show mercy upon those who don't deserve it and haven't asked for it. The Bible even plainly reminds those of us who have already believed in His Gospel:

Romans 5:5-8 (NLT) - And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

That statement right there lets us know that God's goodness was NEVER based on our measuring up to His perfection or following some prescription of repenting first, saying a special prayer or committing to some ongoing ritual observance. It says that while we were still going our own way, He chose to give His life for us; to save us from ourselves and the sin that had separated us from Him. It wasn't because we asked Him to or because we did anything to make Him want to grant us mercy, He simply did it out of Love! The typical version of the "gospel" presented by many in organized religion is, "you're gonna go to hell, so you better repent and ask God's forgiveness so you'll be spared." The implication is that God is holding a colossal grudge against man, when in fact, the Bible tells us that Jesus **forgave** our sins while those He loved were in the very process of torturing and killing Him!!! That places the act of God's forgiveness BEFORE our act of believing in what He did for us. It leaves us without any reason to reject Him, since He has made every effort to show us how much He loves us.

Luke 23:33-37 (NIV) - When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified Him, along with the criminals--one on His right, the other on His left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

I love how the Message paraphrase of the Bible quotes the following famous passage of Isaiah (which is a prophecy about Jesus coming to die and thus take upon His own shoulders the sins of the world). It is an amazing testimony to the great love and steadfast purpose God had set in motion to save *all of us who will believe* in Him. Here is a picture of a God who, though He is completely God, He humbles Himself - even to the point of rejection, ridicule and death at the hands of the very people He created - to show us how greatly He loves us despite our foolishness. God takes away the punishment that should have rightly been ours and forgives our sin. HE makes the FIRST move! HE takes the initiative. It's hard to imagine how anyone would resist this kind of love.

Isaiah 53:1-12 (MSG) - Who believes what we've heard and seen? Who would have thought GOD's saving power would look like this? The servant grew up before God--a scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look. He was looked down on and passed over, a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand. One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum. But the fact is, it was our pains he carried-- our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him--our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed. We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And GOD has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him, on him. He was beaten, he was tortured, but he didn't say a word. Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered and like a sheep being sheared, he took it all in silence. Justice miscarried, and he was led off-- and did anyone really know what was happening? He died without a thought for his own welfare, beaten bloody for the sins of my people. They buried him with the wicked, threw him in a grave with a rich man, Even though he'd never hurt a soul or said one word that wasn't true. Still, it's what GOD had in mind all along, to crush him with pain. The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin so that he'd see life come from it--life, life, and more life. And GOD's plan will deeply prosper through him. Out of that terrible travail of soul, he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he did it. Through what he experienced, my righteous one, my servant, will make many "righteous ones," as he himself carries the burden of their sins. Therefore I'll reward him extravagantly-- the best of everything, the highest honors-- Because he looked death in the face and didn't flinch, because he embraced the company of the lowest. He took on his own shoulders the sin of the many, he took up the

cause of all the black sheep.

What incredible love God demonstrates for us through Jesus giving His life. It is God's great joy to make it easy for anyone to know Him, if they so desire. That's why the Gospel does not and cannot involve formula, rules or regulations. It simply involves one thing; **BELIEVING** on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:15-21; John 11:25-26; John 12:46; Acts 10:43; Acts 16:31; Romans 4:24-25; Romans 10:9-13; 1 John 5:1). If we are genuinely impacted by what He did and believe it, **THAT IS ENOUGH!**

John 6:29 (NLT) - Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the One He has sent."

There may be some religious folks who are concerned about the simplicity of my emphasizing *belief* as the only condition upon which Salvation can be realized. My opinion is that this is largely because, for many, their own "belief" rests largely in a religious system (i.e. Christianity) more than Christ as GOD. Religion always acts as though God can do nothing without its many programs, rituals and performance-based activities. Religion asserts that man is incapable of receiving spiritual birth or growth without its wisdom guiding the process. Religion is wholly arrogant and false in this regard. The Bible teaches us that God reveals Himself to those He calls and He also leads them into all truth.



John 6:44-45 (NLT) - "For no one can come to Me unless **the Father who sent Me draws them** to Me, and at the last day I will raise them up. As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be **taught by God.**' Everyone **who listens to the Father and learns from Him** comes to Me." (**vs. 47-48**) "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. Yes, I am the bread of life!"

Matthew 16:13-17 (NLT) - When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." Then He asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because **My Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.**"

1 John 2:26-27 (NLT) - I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. But you have received the Holy Spirit, and **He lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know**, and what He teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as He has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.

Believing, as simple as it is, is still a very big deal. This is not just a response of "yes, I believe Jesus existed". While that's a good start, it is not the full quality of the matter. The original writings of Scripture clearly define belief. It means to be fully persuaded of and to place total confidence in the object of that belief (i.e. God in Christ Jesus). This is belief! It's not merely "believing" that Jesus was a good teacher or some guy that walked around trying to do good, but it is believing wholly in His Message and that He is God, Savior and Friend. It doesn't mean you won't ever still have questions or even struggle with aspects of doubt... but something has touched your heart in such a way that you genuinely believe the Message of Jesus and that He has chosen to reveal Himself to you personally. Without belief, Salvation cannot be realized and therefore cannot be obtained. Good deeds do not earn a person heaven... nor does attending church, following a guru, or involving one's self with religious service. This is why I say that religion is futile to this process with all of it's great ideas for "how to get people saved".

And what about repentance? A lot of religious people think that in order to be saved, a person first has to repent of their sins. One of the main problems with this logic is that the typical religious use of the word "repentance" today is actually different than the way the Bible describes it. In religion, "repent" generally means to "to confess sorrow" for your sins, but this is NOT what the word means! Biblical repentance means to change your mind and turn around to go the other way; However, the Gospel is still not defined as "repenting" for sin.

Repentance (the biblical kind) really follows AFTER a person encounters a personal revelation of the Truth and believes the Gospel; whereby God showed His love in sending Jesus, who was perfect, to die in the place of imperfect people and pay the ultimate price for their sin so they could become free. As the Bible says (Romans 2:4), "it is God's kindness that leads us to repentance." Notice that His KINDNESS is demonstrated FIRST. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love Him because He FIRST loved us." Repentance is a response that follows a changed heart. Perhaps it's not much different then when a person comes to a realization that they have deeply hurt someone they love (or even that they were, once before, oblivious concerning and later find out that this person still acted with undeserved kindness toward them). There is a natural instinct to want to make it right and to respond to such kindness... Especially, when they are confronted with the reality that the person they hurt still acted with forgiveness toward them and showed them kindness even without any guarantee of a change of heart in the other person. Sincere love compels a man to repent and motivates him to want to change course. God knew this from the beginning. The way to win our hearts back to Him was NOT to manipulate us or place stricter controls on us (ordering us to start towing the line and attempting to measure up), but to demonstrate His amazing Love that shines in the midst of darkness.

Now, for those of you who think I have watered down the Gospel by not talking about hell here, listen... Hell is not part of the Gospel. "Gospel" means "GOOD NEWS". Yes, I fully accept that Hell is real and you will never find me trying to get around that detail. This is not some kind of "New Age" or Universalism gospel I am preaching. Yes, the Bible refers to a literal place of just punishment for the wicked and unrepentant. Yes, Jesus even referred to Hell many times. Yes, God is absolutely just and good, and therefore unrighteousness and evil must ultimately be vanquished. (We expect no less of our worldly governments; that they punish injustice.) But the good news of the Gospel is not that everyone is going to hell... No! Everyone is NOT going to hell! The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus forgives sin and has made Himself a bridge - over Hell (if you will) - to get back to God. The power of hell has ultimately been vanquished. God's just punishment for sin has been satisfied through the sacrifice Jesus paid when He shed His own sinless blood and died (in our place) on

the cross. His Grace overcomes our imperfection and sets us free from the spiritual consequence we would otherwise require... if we can accept this truth and believe that Jesus provides the only way to God through Himself. So it's simply a matter of receiving a freely offered gift.

Romans 5:15-16 (NLT) - And what a difference between our sin and God's generous gift of forgiveness. For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift. And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

Romans 6:23 (NLT) - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Acts 13:38-39 (NLT) - "Brothers, listen! In this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is freed from all guilt and declared right with God..."

Most everybody realizes that they don't really deserve God's unmerited favor. In fact, I have often spoken with folks who don't profess Christianity but have no hesitation saying outright that they know they are going to hell. It really breaks my heart when I hear people say that. Many have been influenced by organized religion and false notions that it's the bad things we've done that keep us out of heaven (or likewise the good things we do that earn us rights to enter). In many circles of religion that amounts to following religious rules and rituals to earn passage to heaven. But the truth is, NOTHING we do by our physical efforts (good or bad) merit us acceptance (or rejection) by God in themselves. The only way we can be refused by God is if we refuse Him. That just makes plain sense. God extends His love and says, "I'm forgiving all your lawless deeds. I'm wiping away the consequence for every evil you've ever done, ever thought about doing, or might do in the future. I'm forgetting about your imperfection and I'm opening my arms, wide open, to you. Can you trust Me in this? Do you believe what I have said to you?" So the next move is simply ours... We can say yes or we can say no thanks. The consequence is obvious to most people, but God has made a way possible, through Jesus, to avoid any such consequence. That is GOOD news!

By nature we are imperfect and rebellious. But God, himself, chooses to reach out to us instead of destroy us because He loves us. We do a pretty good job on our own of destroying ourselves anyway... but He wants to heal us too. He chose to accept us as sons and daughters by permitting the blood sacrifice of a perfect life (His Son, Jesus). The sacrifice paid for every sin ever committed or that will ever be committed. So God accepts us not because we are good, but because JESUS is good. It is the righteousness of Jesus that causes God to overlook our sin and see only the perfect, sinless life of Jesus and the sacrifice He made out of love for us. God doesn't want people to come to Him because they are afraid of going to hell. He wants them to understand that it is because of His great love that they don't have to ever worry about such a thing!



Too many people have the idea that God made up an "either-or" choice to manipulate us and threaten us. This is a misguided view of the Gospel. In the first place, what would it benefit God to draw converts to Himself that don't really love Him and don't want to be with Him? If that was all He wanted, He could have easily destroyed every rebellious soul and made subservient clones to do His bidding. God doesn't need to manipulate anyone; He's God. The reality is that Hell was already the consequence before the choice to be saved from it was introduced. This whole thing started down the dark path when man first chose to leave God's cover and kindness and go his own way. Even then, God - who had given man every good thing on earth imaginable - told man that going his own way would lead to trouble. God did not seek to control man but gave him a free will and man corrupted himself and death is the inevitable consequence of his own decision - not God's. Without God intervening into this mess, our destination was already set from the beginning. We, in essence, already made our choice long ago... But God jumped in and said, "No! I will not lose you that easily. I will not

forsake the Creation I made and that I love so much! There will be a way out!!! I will make Myself the Way! I will pay for man's sin with my own blameless blood so He will understand how greatly I love Him." And this is the Gospel! God throws us a line; a way out... THE way out! What do you think happens if you are on a cliff, about to fall to your death, and someone throws you a line but you refuse it? Is the person who threw you the line being unfair? Would you shout at that person and say, "Unbelievable!!! Are you now trying to manipulate me by saying grab this line or else you'll plunge me to my death? You call that help? You call that love? What kind of loving person would give me a choice like this?" You see how crazy that is? Yet this is how so many people react to God's love. But God is throwing the line out to all who will believe that line is there for them! Those who grab on will have life!

So forget most of what organized religion has taught you about the so-called "Gospel" of Jesus (whether it be about trying to earn God's favor through good deeds, keeping religious rituals, or making a decision because you're afraid of hell). Rather BELIEVE the Truth that really sets you FREE!!! Believe in the Love God is extending to you and has even already shown you! In 1 Corinthians 15, one of the envoys of Jesus (a man called Paul who used to be very religious himself and left it all behind to follow the Truth) plainly told us what the Gospel is:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

Can you believe this Gospel? If your heart is convicted by this Truth, all you need do is believe it. Let LOVE compell you, convict you, counsel you and motivate you. Don't let anyone manipulate you. Be convinced in your own mind first! Count the cost yourself. Consider for yourself the implications of believing this Message and being willing to identify yourself with it. If you do, you will never be the same again! Love will lead you to the very heart of God your Heavenly Father. Once in His eternal embrace you will come into a new life; one where the old is washed away, along with the sins and failures of the past - all erased and forgotten. The once murky waters of sin will be replaced with clear and clean living waters of life. God's forgiveness is completely yours! That daunting sense of spiritual emptiness

(the kind the plagues the deepest part of your soul) - GONE! And like a key that unlocks a door, this new relationship with Him will grow your spirit and take you to new places you have never been; a journey a faith that is fulfilling and real. It will help you overcome the things you have long been slave to. It will teach you to love those you may have found it difficult to love or forgive before. You will begin to discover that God has a real voice that speaks into the deepest part of your heart. He Himself will lead you by the hand; closer than any family member, lover or friend. You'll find help, assurance, strength, peace and security in time of trouble and confusion. That doesn't mean life will be easy, but you will have someONE to lean on that loves you so completely and has so much purpose in store for you.

The call to faith in God also does not mean that every answer will be known immediately. Nor does it mean that you will never have periods of doubt or struggle or that you won't ever experience pain or sorrow. Life remains what it is; however, through it all, the Lord walks with us through each circumstance and He promises to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). As time goes by you will learn to hear His still small voice speaking to your heart words of comfort and counsel. Even when loved ones pass away and we feel the pain of loss, the sorrow is not like those who have no hope in God (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) for we trust that all those who have believed in Jesus are in His care and we will see them again. God's love sustains like nothing else in this life, especially through the hard times.

There is also a spiritual struggle involved with following Jesus... There are unseen dark forces at work in this world; They are demonic beings who are in rebellion to God and want to do everything possible to pull you away from Him. Their tactics involve fear, shame, hate, envy, strife, and enticements of lust, wealth, pride, self-interest, and popularity (among others). But take courage... Their strength is thwarted when true believers choose to submit their trust to God. God gives us His Holy Spirit to remind us and encourage us with the instruction of Jesus, to comfort us in sorrow, give us hope to endure through suffering and tribulation, wisdom to make right choices, peace to calm our anxieties, and strength to overcome the offending darkness! In short, don't worry because God's got your back! He takes care of His own!

James 4:6-8 (NLT) - But He gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but favors the humble." So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.

Isaiah 54:17 (NLT) - But in that coming day no weapon turned against you will succeed. You will silence every voice raised up to accuse you. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the LORD; their vindication will come from Me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

Romans 8:28 (NLT) - And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.

John 14:26-27 (NLT) - But when the Father sends the Advocate as My representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

Luke 10:19-21 (CEV) - I have given you the power to trample on snakes and scorpions and to defeat the power of your enemy Satan. Nothing can harm you. But don't be happy because evil spirits obey you. Be happy that your names are written in heaven! At that same time, Jesus felt the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, and he said: My Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I am grateful that you hid all this from wise and educated people and showed it to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that is what pleased you.

Romans 8:35-39 (NLT) - Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 6:10-17 (NLT) - A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

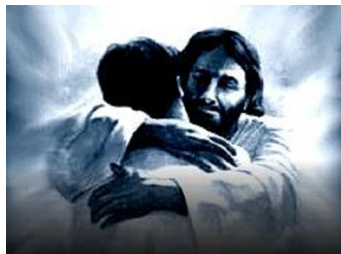
The choice to follow Jesus is one that can cause the road to feel a little lonely at times; because often friends or family do not understand and may pull away. But occasional feelings of loneliness does not mean we are ever alone! God gives strength for the journey and the power to love and forgive those who may cause you hurt because they don't understand the Path you have decided to follow. They may think you are crazy, weak, or foolish. But God will give grace for you to be able to love those who are hurtful and to see them through different eyes. The seasons of loneliness can actually work as a catalyst to pull our hearts even closer to God and make us stronger in faith for the future. That increasing strength of heart serves to make us a beacon of encouragement, hope and light to others who may not yet know the peace and resolve we have found in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Often times when family and friends pull away, it is just a matter of time before the find themselves returning to us again because they want to know what makes us happy, strong, and so full of hope. Periods of struggle become opportunities for faith to shine brighter than ever before. And even if we sometimes falter in faith, God promises to ALWAYS remain faithful! That's good news because it means you have grace to grow and learn and discover as you

move ahead on the Path. There is no fear when you exist in His love because God is pulling for you all the way; even when you fall down, He is always there to lift you up. As a child of God, you ARE FORGIVEN! There could never be a more faithful friend who loves you more and despite whatever failures still remain will still embrace you with open arms and no condemnation.

2 Timothy 2:13 (NLT) - If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny himself.

1 John 4:14-19 (MSG) - Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God. God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day--our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life--fear of death, fear of judgment--is one not yet fully formed in love. We, though, are going to love--love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

Romans 8:1-6 (MSG) - With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being--here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud (fear of condemnation). A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death. God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that. The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us. Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them--living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.



Words alone cannot describe the changes that will come when your heart is made one with the Creator of the Universe. Lastly, there is the hope of a life beyond this one, spent in God's embrace and in the presence of all those who have come to believe this Gospel as well! Amazing things are stored up in the heart of God for those who love Him and respond to the Love He has already extended to us. Consider these things! They are radical things! They may be uncomfortable things, in the sense that they are now unfamiliar to you. Don't be afraid... God is GOOD and loves you beyond imagination!

Believing the Gospel has nothing to do with joining a church, getting stuck in some weird cult, or agreeing to follow weird diets or rituals and formulas. It's not a multi-level marketing program or a funky fad that is likely to fade over time. It has to do with God making His home inside your heart! It's a REAL and TRUE relationship with the Creator of the Universe that will grow and mature as each day passes. I met the Lord at the young age of 4 years old and now, at 38, I am still following Jesus and do not regret a day! I promise you THIS IS REAL! God in His great love and mercy has already reached out to you and waits for you to place your hand back in His. Will you? Won't you? I hope you will! I've never regretted a single day knowing God and, as I said before, I've been walking this path for more than 30 years now. Won't you believe the Gospel of Jesus? Won't you be a part of His Family? This is NOT an invitation to join a religious club, a church, or some spiritualistic program... It's an invitation to real life in a true relationship with God Himself who created you, who loves you, and who wants to open your heart to a truth that really will set you free! What have you got to lose? If you sense His Spirit speaking to your heart, then just believe.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (GNB) - There will be the shout of command, the archangel's voice, the sound of God's trumpet, and the Lord himself will come down from heaven. Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first; then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. So then, encourage one another with these words.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (GW) - But as Scripture says: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him."

John 14:1-3 (NLT) - (Jesus said) "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in Me. There is more than enough room in My Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am."

2 Corinthians 5:1-7 (MSG) - For instance, we know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven--God-made, not handmade--and we'll never have to relocate our "tents" again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move--and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less. That's why we live with such good cheer. You won't see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet! Cramped conditions here don't get us down. They only remind us of the spacious living conditions ahead. It's what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going.