

RIVER BIBLE COURSE

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HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

River Bible Course - Message to Seekers

Becoming a Christian is one of the simplest and yet one of the hardest things that anyone can do. It is easy because God does not ask us to do anything. In fact, he even asks us **not** to do anything - only believe!

Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.
Exodus 14:13 (KJV)

Perhaps this is what makes it so hard - the fact that it is so easy. Why isn't Christianity like every other religion? Shouldn't we have to try to please God by improving our act? Shouldn't we, at the very least, have to go through some kind of ceremony or join a particular church? No, we don't

become a Christian by doing things like that. It is true that believers get baptised. But even baptism is performed **after** a person has become a Christian: it is not the act, which makes us one. So what we do to become a Christian isn't something done outwardly, but is something that is done in the heart.

Step 1

The first step to becoming a Christian is to admit what we are. Yes, this is the hard part. Who me? A sinner? We think ourselves to be about as good as the next person. We excuse ourselves by comparing personal sin with those who are guilty of worse things than we have done.

But self-justification is a delusion. It is a delusion because all of us will stand before God one day. The simple fact is that we **all** fall short of God's standard. And this is what God is asking us to recognize in our heart. When we finally do acknowledge our sin we are close to becoming a Christian.

A Pharisee and a tax collector both went to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee stood alone and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people who steal, cheat, or take part in adultery, or even like this tax collector. I give up eating twice a week, and I give one tenth of everything I get!"

The tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even look up to heaven. But he beat on his chest because he was so sad. He said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

I tell you, when this man went home, he was right with God, but the Pharisee was not. All who make themselves great will be made humble, but all who make themselves humble will be made great.

Luke 18:10-14 (NCV)

Step 2

This brings us back to the point of it all. How do we become a Christian? We must **believe!** It's basic. How can anyone pretend to be a Christian if he doesn't even believe that God exists? However, it means more than that. We must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. What this means, in effect, is that Jesus Christ carries all of the authority and power that God does. He is as much 'God' as the Father is God. Do you believe that? Do you realize that you are making Jesus Christ your God?

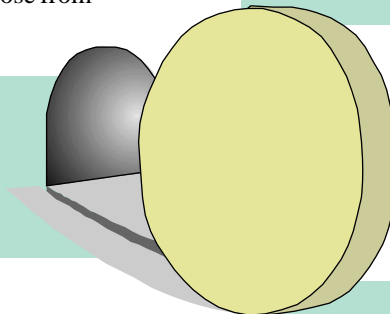
To prove exactly who he was, Jesus went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. He performed great miracles in the sight of the people even commanding the forces of nature to obey him. Finally Jesus Christ rose from the dead because not even the grave could hold him down.

Jesus ... said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshipped Him.

John 9:36-38 (NKJV)

So you will be saved, if you honestly say, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others.

Romans 10: 9-10 (CEV)



Now he offers eternal life to those who believe ...

- believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.
- believe that his death was the sacrifice which paid our penalty for sin.
- believe that Christ rose from death so that we also will be raised to life again.

This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.

John 6:40 (NRSV)

Step 3

However we are fooling ourselves if we think that our way of life need never change. When the preacher says, "we are saved by grace" (undeserved mercy) - by God's free gift without having to do anything for it - that does not mean our life can go on the same as it has been going.

On the contrary: becoming a Christian involves a complete turnaround in our deepest motives. It's called **repentance**; it is a decision to turn away from self-centered sinful living.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:7 (KJV)

This is not the same thing as just trying to do better, feeling sorry, or even giving up certain obvious sins. Repentance is a radical 'change of mind' away from our **entire** sin-motivated way of life! It is a decision to reject the 'old self' with its inherent twist toward sin and hostility toward God.

What shall we say to all this? Are we to remain in sin in order that God's grace (favor and mercy) may multiply and overflow? Certainly not!

Romans 6:1-2 (AMP)

Of course, God knows that no one is strong enough to lift themselves from the weaknesses of their human nature. But he will forgive the person whose heart has decided to turn. We do the repenting; he does the rest! Yes, the power comes from God and not from ourselves. But we are the ones who have to make that initial decision.

Step 4

Finally, in order to become a Christian, we must **receive**. Again it seems so simple that it's almost too hard to understand. What do you mean, receive? A Sunday school teacher once told his class of children, "I've got a dollar in my pocket and you can have it if you want." Then he asked, "Do you believe that there's a dollar in my pocket?" All the children put their hands up. They believed. "Well," he said, "who believes that whoever comes up to the front will get the dollar?" They all put their hands up again. They believed. "OK," he dared. "Come on up. The first one to come will get it." None of the children moved. Was this for real? Would he actually give them a **real** dollar?

A small boy suddenly stood up and walked to the front of the class. The teacher pulled his hand out of his pocket and gave him the dollar - yes, a real dollar. He **received**.

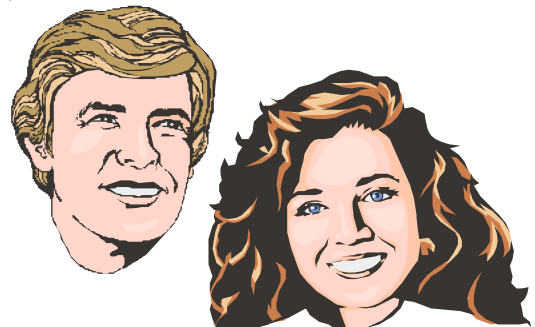
Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

John 1:12 (NIV)

enter into a living relationship with Him, and receive the legitimate right to be a son or daughter of God.

So it is, that although we have believed, there remains one thing to do in order to become a Christian. Many people believe but are not yet saved. This is because the last step is to actually ask Christ into our life. These are the four steps to becoming a Christian.

If you do these things, the Spirit of Christ will come into your life; you'll



Prayer

Father in Heaven,

I realise that my life is sinful and selfish in your sight, and that as a result, I am very far from you.

But I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he died for me that I might not be rejected if I asked to be received into relationship with you.

Therefore I confess my sin and ask that you forgive me. Not only for the things that I have done, but for my whole sin attitude against you I repent - I change my mind. With your help I determine to turn away from my old way of living.

Now, I receive Jesus Christ into my life as my Savior and Lord. I believe that through Him I have eternal life, and entry into your presence and, even from today, a living relationship with you.

Thank you,

Amen

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

Revelation 3:20 (NRSV)