



***How To Become
a Christian***

What to say

What to do

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FAITHFUL SHEEP MINISTRIES

Welcome to this short book "***How To Become a Christian***".

Short it may be, but it contains nothing less than your passport to peace with God and His gift to you of eternal life.

Our hope is that the Lord will graciously use these words to bless and encourage you in His service.

For details of our other titles and ministries, please visit our website at www.fsmins.org.

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INTRODUCTION

What is the Christian Faith all about? And why should we go with this Faith rather than with any of the other Faiths on offer these days?

For answers to these questions, we go to the Holy Bible, which claims to be the unique "Word of God" - the one and only Instruction Manual given to the human race by Almighty God our Creator.

Please accept for now that there is abundant evidence in support of that claim, and do your best to give your careful attention to what follows. For here is "the Bible in a nutshell" - a summary of God's statements, answers and promises concerning what our lives are really all about.

To keep things as short and clear as possible in these pages, not many Bible references are included in these pages. Suffice it to say that every statement made in this booklet is drawn from what God tells us in His Bible. In times to come, as and when you go on within the Christian Faith, you will become much more familiar with what the Bible says, and where the Bible says it.

Here are some words of the Lord Jesus before we get started - "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (St Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 7, Verse 13-14).

May the Lord guide, encourage and bless you as you consider this great step.

So let us now make a start on "the Bible in a nutshell" - the substance of the Christian Faith.

Chapter One

THE BIBLE IN A NUTSHELL - The Substance of the Christian Faith

1) GOD EXISTS, FACT.

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all creation owes allegiance to Him.

The ultimate purpose of all creation is to give "glory to God in the highest" - no more, no less.

We exist to live in fellowship and friendship with Almighty God our Creator, to know Him, love Him, honour Him, serve Him and worship Him, and to spread His love by caring for one another.

2) GOD COMPLETED HIS CREATION, AND IT WAS "VERY GOOD".

God's creation was finished. It was "very good". Peace reigned, between God and His creation, and within creation itself. There was no violence, no bloodshed. All was good and right, as the Lord God wished.

He set Adam and Eve over His creation as managers and stewards. All was entrusted to them, for their use, their joy, and their blessing.

There was one Rule: To remember that God was their Creator, and their Boss, they were not to touch the two trees in the centre of the Garden, let alone eat of their fruit.

If they disobeyed this Rule, God told them they would die.

They would die spiritually, in the sense that they would no longer be living in fellowship and friendship with God their Creator. And eventually they would die physically too, and spend eternity in that lost state which they had brought about by their disobedience - set apart from the God who had created them and who still loved them.

3) BUT THEY BROKE THAT RULE!

It happened like this.

First, Satan, a powerful and wonderful angel at the start, had rebelled against God, wanting to be God himself. He and his followers - fallen angels who joined his side - began to fight against God where ever, and how ever, they could.

Second, Satan deceived Eve in the Garden. She ate of the fruit which God had forbidden, and she gave some to Adam her husband, who ate it too. Eve did not know what she was doing, but Adam knew full well what he was doing. Eve was tricked, but Adam blatantly sinned.

Satan had scored a great victory - God's perfect creation was messed up, and still is messed up.

Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden. As God had warned, they died spiritually and they began to die physically. God put a curse on His creation because of this human sin.

This disease of sin has since spread from Adam and Eve down through us all. It means that all of us, in our natural state, are cut off from God our Creator - He loses out, and we lose out.

As sinful human beings, we from our side are helpless to solve this problem - we fall short of God's requirements, we face His punishment and, left to ourselves, we are in deep trouble. We are in a state of "death", spiritually and physically. We are doomed to exist apart from God, both now in this life, and also in the next one beyond the grave.

**If that sounds like Bad News, you're quite right - it is!
But don't stop here, there's more, much more.**

4) BUT! - even as the Lord God punished Adam and Eve, He made a Promise, that one day He would solve the problem (see Genesis 3.15).

God would solve the problem by creating a Special Offspring of Eve. This Figure would be harmed by Satan, but would then crush Satan, fully and finally.

The way back back to God would be wide open once more, for any who accepted the Solution that God had provided.

5) God our Creator has kept His Promise - He has solved the problem for us, by giving His Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Son of God, that is, with no human father, and the Son of Mary, His human mother. This matters! This is crucially important!

Because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and not by a human father, Jesus was free from the inherited disease of sin that the rest of us are born with, which we inherit via our human fathers from Adam our original father.

Jesus was thus entirely without sin Himself. He was the first and only human being on this earth since Adam sinned, to be *without sin*. God our Father had created a human being who was perfect, innocent, sinless, in full fellowship with Himself. *The only way that that had been possible was for God to lay aside His divine glory - and enter into this creation Himself.* Jesus is fully God, and yet fully Man.

Jesus was thus the one unique human being who was NOT dead spiritually and NOT dead physically. His whole life was lived entirely in fellowship with God His Father - just the way things were in the Garden of Eden before Adam sinned.

But to carry out the plan of Almighty God His heavenly Father, Jesus had to step into our shoes - into the place of sin, punishment and death.

This explains why Jesus underwent that dreadful death on that dreadful cross. For this was the only way that God our Creator could smash the grip of our sin, and bring us back into fellowship and life, away from our being cut off and living in a state of death.

Somebody, who deserved no punishment or death Himself, had to stand in for everyone else. The only Person who could do that was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus took on to Himself on that cross *God's punishment for OUR sins*. That punishment is what we all deserve, because we have sinned and disobeyed; we are separated from God, and live in a state of spiritual and physical death before Him.

But Jesus, who deserved NOTHING of this Himself, *took our place*.

It is because He deserved no punishment or death Himself, that the effect of His self-sacrifice can be universal - for anyone. It means any one of us can claim *His* punishment and death as counting for *our* punishment and death.

**We came across the Bad News earlier.
Now we are in the realm of the Good News.
It is more than that - it is the
BEST POSSIBLE NEWS THERE COULD EVER BE!**

6) After His death on our behalf, *God the Father raised His precious Son Jesus from the dead.*

This wonderful historic fact and miracle is at the very heart of the Bible. The truth of the whole Christian Faith ultimately depends on this one single event.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is *the ultimate sign that all these things are true - that Jesus really is who He says He is.*

7) Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can trust Him.

Any of us can now ask for God's forgiveness by claiming *Jesus' punishment as counting for OUR punishment.*

That means we recognise that the debt we owe to God because of our sinfulness *has been settled - by Jesus and not by us.* God forgives us, and accepts us back into His family.

No wonder this is called the Good News!
--

8) We then gratefully serve God as our Father, through the Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We become one of Christ's disciples, one of His "faithful sheep".

We become a member of Christ's family, the Church, where we worship Almighty God together, and encourage one another along the path of Christ.

We become "ambassadors for Christ" - representing Him "out there" in the world by our lives, making Him known, letting others know of the Good News that is there for any who wish to accept, and building His Kingdom, right here, right now.

9) Meanwhile Satan and his cronies continue their rebellion, but God will have the final victory over all who stand against Him, as Satan knows all too well.

So there is "the Bible in a nutshell" - and the Good News that it contains for us all.

Chapter Two

ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST AS THE LORD OF YOUR LIFE

If you want to accept this Good News for yourself, for the first time or for the hundredth time, by putting your faith in Jesus Christ and being forgiven and restored, here is a three-part prayer you could use:

1) First, you address God the Father:

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father,

I acknowledge that You are the Creator of the universe, and the Creator of me.

I acknowledge that You are perfect and holy, and that I am imperfect and unholy.

I acknowledge that my sin cuts me off from You.

I acknowledge that I can do nothing of myself to bridge this gulf.

But now I praise You -

I praise You that in your mercy You have bridged this gulf.

I praise You that You have given us Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I praise You that He has died for the sins of the whole world.

I praise You that He has died for my sins.

So now I humbly surrender to You, as I ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come into my life, right here, right now -

2) Second, you address the Lord Jesus Christ:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, I acknowledge before you that you died on that cross for the sins of the whole world, including for the sins of me.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy please now come into my life, as my Saviour, my Master, and my Lord.

Make me one of your disciples, one of your faithful sheep.

Teach me your ways. Shape this life as you wish, to bring glory to Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen, Lord Jesus - so be it".

3) Third, you come once more, humbly and gratefully, to God your heavenly Father, now as one of His redeemed children.

You ask for His forgiveness, and for the infilling of the Holy Spirit within your life. You are given access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, from now on, and forever:

"Heavenly Father, as one of your just-redeemed children, saved by the blood of Jesus, I now confess my sins before You, humbly asking for your forgiveness and cleansing.

Please fill me anew with Your Holy Spirit, and set me on the path of faithful discipleship.

I ask these things through your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen, Lord – so be it".

If you have prayed these prayers from your heart, then PRAISE THE LORD!

You are forgiven and restored, a child of God, and your life is on track to become what it was always meant to be.

Just let this sink in. You are changed, you are new, you are different. You are now the Lord's, and He is now the Lord of you.

Chapter Three

"JESUS CHRIST IS LORD" GOING FORWARD IN DISCIPLESHIP

And now it is a question of allowing the Holy Spirit to get started within your life, as He sets about making you into who you really should be.

There is one immediate step you now need to take: become involved with good, godly, Bible-believing, Bible-responding Christian people in a local church.

By your faith in Jesus Christ you are one of God's family, and God's family is called the Church. You need them, and they need you.

The sooner you are in amongst good Christian people - your brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus, who are walking the same path as you, with the same hopes and fears and successes and failures as you, the better.

Until you are properly involved with other Christians in a local church, you are like a newborn lamb wandering around by itself in the wild. We can see why a lamb in that situation is very vulnerable - how it needs to be in amongst the safety of the flock!

You must neither rush this search for the right church, nor dawdle over this, for you need to get it right. The right church for you will be a huge help, but the wrong church will mean you never grow in the Lord.

In your own simple prayers, ask the Lord to lead you to the place where He wants you to be, and which will be right for you.

Over the next few weeks, ask around. Visit a few local churches. Listen, look, talk. If and when asked, say you are a new Christian who is looking for the right church in which to settle - and see what happens!

When you have found the right place, ask your brothers and sisters there to help you with learning to read the Bible and learning to say your prayers.

Get cracking. Keep going. In Christ, and in Christ alone, all is well, and all shall be well. You now belong to the One who has "the words of eternal life", who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life, who is "the Resurrection and the Life".

You have responded to God's call of mercy and forgiveness by putting your faith in Jesus Christ as your own Lord and Saviour. You have passed through the narrow gate on to the path of life.

The path will not always be easy, but it will always be the right path to be on - because it is true.

May God bless you and keep you in His care.

Chapter Four

"JESUS CHRIST IS LORD" SOME KEY BIBLE PASSAGES

The Holy Bible is "the Word of God" - God's Instruction Manual for the human race.

God the Holy Spirit has written the Bible, *through* about forty different human authors. The Bible contains 66 "books" within itself, which cover 4,000 years of human history since creation, and which deal with different peoples, nations and cultures. Yet the whole Bible hangs together as one remarkable whole, with many signs within it that it simply is not, and even cannot be, just another human book.

Within its pages God tells us about Himself, about the Lord Jesus Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about us, about creation, about right and wrong, about good and evil, about the past, about the present, and about the future.

There is no other Book remotely like the Holy Bible. It is in "a league of its own" in terms of its content, teaching and authenticity.

Any follower of Jesus Christ needs to take their Bible very seriously - to know it, to understand it, and to apply it in daily life.

Here are a few key Bible passage for you to look up at this stage. (As you become more established in the Christian life, it is best to read the Bible systematically, perhaps using notes, and perhaps with fellow Christians too. Such Bible-reading habits need to come if you are going to grow as a Christian, but here are some passages to get you started, to give you a good grounding in the Bible).

Try to use a Bible that you are comfortable with, that is easy to understand. Perhaps have two or three different English translations

within reach, so you can compare any tricky verses or phrases. You could have a pencil and notebook to jot down anything that strikes you. It is best to be quiet and alone, and unhurried.

Before you read, ask God the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are reading, and what He is telling us for our blessing and guidance today.

1) Genesis Chapters 1 - 11 - These chapters are the foundation of all the Bible. Contrary to popular opinion these days, these chapters are NOT to be taken as just poetry and myths.

They tell of creation - by God, recently (about 4,000 BC), in 6 days, complete and finished; of the Fall and the promise of the Messiah; of the worldwide flood sent by God as judgement (about 2,300 BC); of the genealogies of the first families; of the Tower of Babel, the division of languages, and the scattering of the people across the earth.

You can see that all else in the Bible, and indeed all else in human existence, flows from these chapters. But unfortunately most people write off these chapters as being poetry and myths, rather than stone-cold, historical facts.

It will probably be a shock to you to learn that we have not evolved over millions of years, because we have all been taught since primary school that that is what has happened. God tells us otherwise, in a calm, clear and straightforward manner.

The fact is: on both *scriptural* grounds and on *scientific* grounds, there is every reason to take early Genesis just as we find it, as a historical record of our beginnings. You will find that as you do that, everything will make so much more sense, even though some people may snigger at you, thinking you are mad.

(To explore these Genesis issues further, you can download for free our book "Six Days, Darwin or Both?", at fsmins.org / Publications.

Using a non-technical approach for the typical Christian to understand, this book addresses full-on the claims of Darwinian evolution, the various compromise solutions that try to uphold both Genesis and evolution, and the complete reasonableness of our accepting just what early Genesis tells us).

This question of our origins is one of the main "elephants in the room" today - written off by most Christians as a sideshow for a few weirdoes. It is nothing of the sort. It is crucial to the Christian Faith, to our witnessing and evangelism, and indeed to all human existence.

2) I and II Samuel - This is an account of the people of Israel in the Promised Land, getting it right sometimes, and at other times getting it wrong.

We see here God's love for His people, the "children of Israel", despite their persistent disobedience. God sends His prophets to guide them and warn them. When the people obey, they are blessed, and vice-versa. Nothing has changed - these are still the principles by which God works with His people today.

3) St Luke's Gospel - This is the Gospel that emphasises God's special love for "the little people", the ones who are often overlooked by a world that thinks it knows better.

4) The Acts of the Apostles - This is "Part II" of Luke's Gospel, outlining the first years of the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the growth of the Christian Church. It is quite a story! - and as with the rest of the Bible, God speaks into our own situation today through these words.

5) St John's Gospel - This is the Gospel that emphasises the central, crucial Lordship of Jesus Christ, with lovely statements such as - "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life", "I am the Light of the World", "I am the Good Shepherd", "I am the Bread of Life", "I am the Resurrection and the Life".

Jesus means these things, and has shown them to be true and trustworthy both by His death on our behalf, and by His glorious resurrection.

6) The Epistle to the Romans - meaty! One of the richest, deepest Epistles of the New Testament. Take it in 4 parts: Chapters 1-4 / Chapters 5-8 / Chapters 9-11 / Chapters 12-16.

7) The Epistle to the Philippians - a typical, short "pastoral letter" written by St Paul to the new little church in Philippi, giving his teaching, his love, his prayers, his hopes. It is filled with practical Christian guidance.

These are just a few sample passages. The more you read of the Bible, the better.

On the next page is a short Checklist for you to use should you wish, for any Bible passage you are reading. You might like to print this off and keep it as a bookmark within your Bible.

Not all the points on the Checklist will apply all the time, but will help you explore more deeply into what you are reading.

For the Background details, you could use a book such as the "Lion Handbook to the Bible" to help with this, or just google the title of the Bible book and "background details"). Heaps of information will appear - just keep to the basics at this stage.

A Short Bible Passage Checklist:

Pray before you read, using a prayer like this:

"Lord God my Father, by your Holy Spirit please now help me to read your Word with care, and to understand what You are showing me through these words. Thank you Lord. I praise You, and pray to You, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, and my Lord and Saviour. Amen".

1) Background: What is the context of this book or passage? - ie:

When roughly was it written? Who, humanly, wrote it? Who was it written to, or for? What were their general circumstances at the time?

2) Contents: What does this passage tell us of? - :

Almighty God - perhaps revealed as Father, Son or Holy Spirit / perhaps His plans / His love / His judgement / His promises
God's creation

The "Old Covenant", based on the law of Moses

The "New Covenant", based on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

Good and evil / Right and wrong

Behaviour to follow / Behaviour to avoid

Sources of opposition and difficulty / How to overcome these

For the original hearers of this passage, anything about:

Times past for them / Times present for them / Times to come for them

For us today and me today, anything about:

Times past for us / Times present for us / Times to come for us

So: What is the Lord telling us and me here? Why has He included these words in His holy Word? Is there anything in particular which has struck me, which I now need to respond to in my life?

**"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path"**

(Psalm 119.105)



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