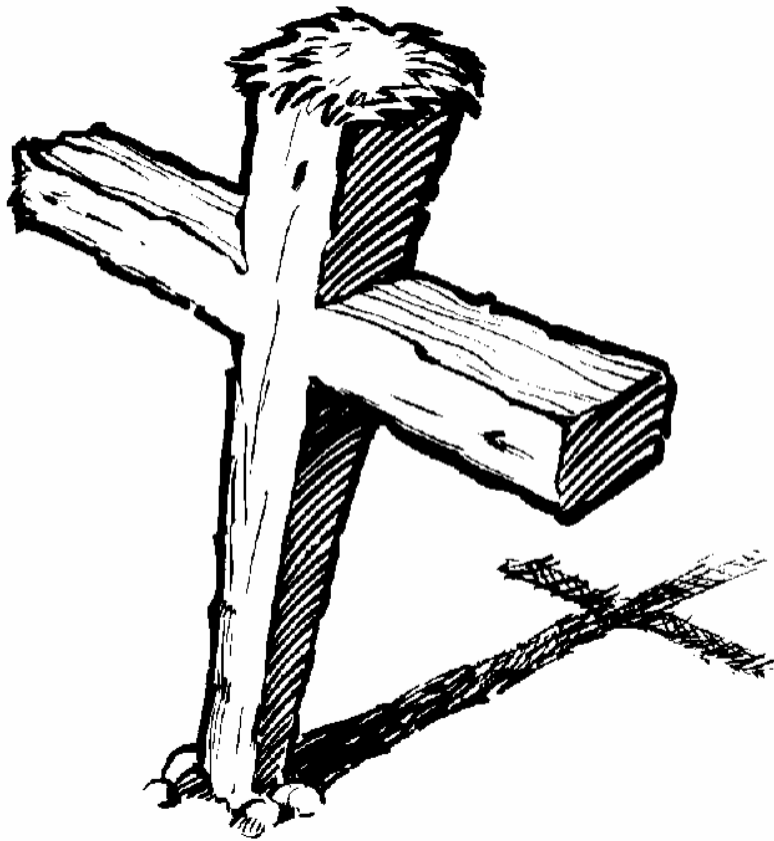


Becoming a Part Of



God's Family

Park Central Church of Christ

I am so glad that you are interested in becoming a Child of God. This is the most important step you will ever take and it should not be taken lightly. This booklet has been prepared to help you understand what it means to be part of God's family and how you can do that. Nothing makes God happier than when one of His children decides to come to Him. In fact, the Bible tells us that all of Heaven rejoices!

In John 14:6 we read that Jesus said, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" That means that Jesus is the only way to get to heaven. This booklet is designed to help you see how to start your walk down the road towards Christ.

I would like for you to take some time with a person you trust, like your parents, grandparents, someone in the church, or even me and talk about this big step in your life. I will give you some scriptures to read and talk about I hope that you will. Allow enough time to read all the scriptures, discuss the answers, and write down any questions you might have.

When you have completed all the pages, please call me and let's set a time to get together and talk about what you have learned.

I pray that God will help you as you search for His will for your life.

In Him,

Jeremy Houck <><

God's Plan For You

Did you know that God has chosen you to be part of His family? In fact, He wants everyone to be part of His family. But God wants for you to choose to be part of His family. He wants to have a close relationship with you. His plan not only promises you eternal life in Heaven, but He wants you to have an exciting and fulfilling life here on earth.

Listen to what the Bible says in Ephesians 1:5: *“Because of His love, God has already decided to make us His children through Jesus Christ.”*

That is God's plan for you! This plan is for everyone. It includes people who live in other countries, speak different languages, and have different color skin.

The Apostle Paul would write in Romans 1:16: *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Here are some verses to talk over:

Ezekiel 18:21-23

1 John 4:7-10

John 3:16

Houston We Have A Problem!

As you can see God loves everyone and God wants everyone to be saved. However, we created a problem when we decided to disobey God.

Paul writes in Romans 3:23: *For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!*

That's everybody, that includes you and that includes me. God lead Paul to write that every single person on the face of the earth is a sinner. You, your friends, your parents, even preachers have all sinned. As a matter of fact there was only one person who ever lived on the earth that never sinned, His name was Jesus. Everyone else has fallen into the trap of sin.

The Bible says that our sins have caused us to lose our relationship with God. They create a huge valley that separates us from God. Imagine standing on one side of the Grand Canyon, and God is on the other side. There is no way that you could jump to get across to Him, no matter how hard you try or how long you train! You would need help.

That's how sin works. It separates us from God because God is perfect and we aren't! We all need help to get back to Him. And while that may sound like we are hopeless, we have hope. But right now we need to understand that everyone is on the same page. We are all sinners.

Here are some verses to talk over:

Romans 7:15-20

Romans 5:12

Galatians 5:16-17

James 1:14

James 4:17

Every Problem Has a Consequence

Now that we understand that we have a sin problem, we need to see exactly what that sin problem will do to us. Again we need to turn to Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome. In Romans 6:23 we read "*For the wages of sin is death . . .*"

I know that sounds a little harsh but you need to know the truth. Wages are something that you earn. When you get a job, you get paid after you work for a certain amount of time. When you get that paycheck, those are your wages.

That's exactly how it works with our lives in God's eyes. When we turn our backs on God by sinning, we earn death as a punishment! Right now you might be thinking that sounds like a pretty stiff penalty, but stop and think about how you feel when somebody gossips about you, steals from you, lies about you, and turns their back on you when you thought they were your friend. Now think about how many times people do that to God!

Remember that everyone has a free choice. Nobody has to sin, they choose to. God gives us that choice! We all have the right to choose God or sin, and we already know that everyone has chosen sin! We all earn the right of death, and this is more than just physical death. This death is the separation of us from God forever! We all need help from somewhere else because there is nothing that we can do to earn back that relationship or take away our sins.

Here are some verses to talk over:

Isaiah 59:2

Psalms 37:28

Micah 3:4

Better Than Christmas

In the last section we read the first part of Romans 6:23, but now it's time to look at the rest of the verse. Romans 6:23: *"For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

I told you that it would get better. Can you believe that after all we do to God, He still wants to give us a gift!? Do you remember a Christmas when you hadn't been good all year? Maybe you were thinking, "Man, I'm sure the only thing that I'm getting this year is a lump of coal or a rock or something!" But then on Christmas morning, I'll bet there were some presents waiting for you, even though you didn't deserve them! That's because somebody loved you enough to forget about all those things that you did wrong.

That's exactly what God is willing to do! Even though we turn our backs on Him over and over again (remember that's what we do when we sin), He loves us so much that He is still willing to forgive us and forget about our sins.

We sure don't deserve this gift, and we can't earn it. But God tells us in the Bible what we need to do to get this gift! What an awesome God!

Here are some verses to talk over:

Psalm 103:11-12

Acts 17:30-31

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

1 John 1:9

What Jesus Did For You

Okay, picture this with me. Think of your best friend in the whole world. This is the buddy that you do everything with – play sports, share food, talk about your deepest secrets, share clothes, shop . . . everything!

Now imagine finding out that friend is a total fake. He or she is only pretending to be your friend, and is really stealing from and gossiping about you behind your back. All right, now you are probably ticked off and are never going to talk to or do anything with that so-called friend again, right!?

With this in mind, read what Paul writes in Romans 5:8 *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*

Jesus knew that the people He created were going to reject Him, torture Him, and eventually kill Him, but He loves us so much that He still came and sacrificed His life for us on the cross, making eternity with God a possibility instead of a dream. Can you believe that! What an incredible God we have!

Here are some verses to talk over:

John 3:16-17

John 1:1, 10-14

Ephesians 2:8

Luke 11:13

What Can I Do To Say Thank You

Faith. You've probably heard that word before. Faith is a two-step process. It's not easy, but it is rewarding. In fact, faith is the only way in the entire world to please God according to Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

The first step to having faith is believing. I know it's tough to believe in something or someone that you can't see, but consider these questions.

Do you believe in the wind?

Do you believe in your own brain?

You never really do see any of those things, but I hope you believe in them because they are real. You can't really see the wind, but you can see the results of the wind. The same goes for God. You are able to see tons of things that prove God's real if you just look around.

The first step to receiving God's gift is believing that Jesus is God's son, that Jesus died to pay for your sins, and that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Here are some verses to talk over:

Hebrews 11:1- 6

1 Timothy 6:12

Matthew 10:32

Faith Always Leads To Action

The second step to faith is action. That's what Paul is saying in Romans 10:9-10 *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

We do several different things as we act on our faith. The first thing we do is make a confession, or tell God how sorry you are for the sins that you have committed. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9

The next thing we do is called repentance. To repent means that you have a change of heart. It is very similar to making a U-turn in a car. You realize that you were walking the wrong path in life and now you want to start walking towards God. This happens when we become honestly sorry for the sins that we have done against God. Repentance only happens when we are truthful with God. *"Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out."* Acts 3:19

The next step is how we accept the gift that God has given us. Have you ever wondered what that thing in front of the building was? When I was little I thought it was a swimming pool or even a bath tub. But it is a place that something special happens. But there is nothing special about the baptistery; it's what you do in the baptistery that is so special.

Think about what happens when a person dies. We have a funeral where the person is placed in the ground and completely covered with dirt, or buried. That's kind of what happens when a person is baptized, but instead of being covered with dirt we are completely buried in water.

Listen to how Paul describes it in Romans 6:4: *We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

We are told that we enter into "death" just like Christ did, and then as we rise up out of the waters of baptism; we too get a new life just like Jesus when He came back from the dead. We also get some pretty cool gifts on top of eternal life with God in heaven. We get our sins forgiven for the first time and we get God living in us (The Holy Spirit) to help us in our new lives as Christians.

However, according to the Bible, these two things don't take place until baptism. That's why baptism is so important, and so incredible! Baptism shows the beauty of what God is accomplishing in us. It shows on the outside what is going on in the inside.

Jesus is so interested in having a relationship with you that He gives us a clear command. In the Great Commission He said *"Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them..."* Now why do you think that Jesus would say that you needed to be baptized?

Baptism is an object lesson, a symbol of an incredible spiritual truth. A truth that shows your willingness to publicly agree that you need to be forgiven and transformed. That you need to die to your old ways and raise up to live a new life.

Baptism is a physical symbol of the death and burial of the old, and the rebirth that occurs when someone becomes part of God's family. That is why we are immersed, underwater. The word "baptize" actually means to "dip under."

Baptism makes us obedient to Christ and it shows that we are willing to make a commitment to become part of God's family. When you become part of His family you are called by a new name: Christian. A Christian has a special relationship with God. God is your Heavenly Father and you are His child.

This wonderful new life in Christ means...

Our sins are forgiven. And when we sin we can pray to God and He will forgive us.

We belong to Jesus. We are called "Christian," which means "belonging to Christ."

We are part of Christ's body - - the church - - the family of God.

The Holy Spirit lives within us to help us and to guide us.

We will live for Jesus and tell others about Him and His wonderful love.

We are promised eternal life in Heaven.

All of this is available because God loves us. Not because of anything that we did, or can do, but because of what God did.

Here are some verses to talk over:

Acts 2:38

Mark 16:16

John 3:5

Colossians 2:12

1 Peter 3:21

How Are People Saved In The Bible?

I want to follow God and have Christ as my Savior. In order to do that I want to make sure that I am doing everything I can to follow God. In the same way I don't want you to be baptized because I said you needed to, I want you to do what the Bible says. If I ever say something that disagrees with the Bible then I want you to know that the Bible is always right. In the same way if anyone ever tells you something that disagrees with the Bible then the Bible is still right. So in this last section I want you to take a look at how the Bible says that people are saved and added to the church.

Read Acts 2:37-41

What happened?

Read Acts 8:26-39

What happened?

Read Acts 9:1-19

What happened?

Read Acts 10:34-48

What happened?

Read Acts 16:11-15

What happened?

Read Acts 16:25-34

What happened?

Read Acts 16:11-15

What happened?

Matthew 28:19 says that Baptism is just the beginning: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"

The great thing about Baptism is that it is the beginning of a wonderful journey. After your baptism your new church family promises to give you guidance, nurturing, love, and teaching. You see when you give your life to Christ you are claiming that you don't have it all together and you realize that you cannot fix it on your own.

I hope that you realize by now that the Bible is full of people who were baptized the very first time they heard the Gospel. They didn't know everything about being a Christian, and there weren't perfect. They simply decided that they were going to trust God and rely on His grace.

So today let me encourage you to:

Put your faith in Jesus. Baptism is a show of Faith in Jesus' ability to save you.

Focus on what Jesus did for you and claim the promise in scripture that says you are buried with Him and you will be resurrected with Him.

Start over because God promises you that Baptism makes you a new person or creation. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Finally you need to accept the grace of God by being baptized into His name.

