



Introducing the life changing message of Jesus

Christianity is about knowing God personally.

The starting point of Christian faith is that there is a God who wants us to come back into restored relationship with him.

Jesus referred to God as father and his teaching centres on inviting us to begin a relationship with God as one of his dearly loved children. Jesus provides the way to begin that relationship

Connecting with God centres on recognising what he has done for us rather than what we do for God - religious acts or moral deeds don't make you a Christian.

A Christian is someone who has moved from knowing about God theoretically to knowing God directly.

Now this is eternal life:
that they may know you, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
(John 17:3)

3 Questions about God.

Is there is a God?

Belief in a God requires acceptance of a reality outside the observable material world. By definition God is a distinct and conscious entity with authority in the world. You can't know God if he is just a figment of our vague hopes and imaginings.

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, & the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." Karl Marx

In fact, you can't know God either if God is simply a force or unexplained power. Einstein, for example, was happy to accept God as 'a illimitable superior spirit' but didn't accept that God was personal and therefore knowable.

But the question is, how can the order and design and fine balance which enables life on earth be explained if the forces that enable it aren't conscious and knowable? The theory that everything is a result of chance doesn't explain our world or satisfy our search for meaning, purpose and happiness. The desire of our hearts is for a fulfilment and joy but we find that no lover or career or achievement on this earth can ultimately satisfy - if anything they arouse an anticipation which is elusive.

"My heart was restless till it found its rest in God" Augustine.

The breakthrough comes when we see that the emptiness we know comes through being separated from the relationship with God we were created to know. Without that relationship we continue on a cycle of unfulfilled desires which can lead to blame and a loss of compassion or joy. God's message is clear:

"Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest." Jesus

The question therefore on the existence of God comes down to what we think about Jesus. The truth of Christianity stands or falls on the claim of Jesus to be God. Jesus demonstrated that claim to be true not only by performing many documented miracles but ultimately by rising from the dead having been crucified and sealed in a guarded tomb for 3 days. The risen Jesus appeared to many people as historians record and the foundation of Christianity is that the risen Jesus is alive now and is the Lord of the universe.

The whole of Jesus' teaching contains his claim to be God. So the question left for us to answer is what do we make of the claim by the historical man Jesus to be God - our answer changes everything!

CS Lewis: "I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus. 'I'm ready to accept him as a great moral teacher but I don't accept his claim to be God'. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level of a man who says he's a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool - you can spit at him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

What's God like?

Christianity is founded on a person rather than a philosophy. Jesus isn't just a prophet who points us to God or reveals truths about God, he is God. His every word, attitude and action therefore gives us insight into the compassion and mission of God towards people.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Jesus' life had a compelling attractiveness about it - he cared about people, hated hypocrisy and was willing to serve people. But Jesus' actions also had a unique authority about them - he calmed storms and healed people of disease with just a word. At the time people were amazed not only by the power of Jesus' actions but also by his powerful teaching on the fullness of life which is found in restored relationship with God. His great love for people and desire for them to know the God's love infused all he did and said.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

What does God think of us?

God created us to relate to him and as Jesus puts it, 'love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.' (Mark 12:30). The problem is that we tend to make ourselves boss of our lives and treat God as a 'magic genie' who provides what we want - especially when we're really in need of help. In fact, whether we completely deny the existence of God or just ignore God for much of the time the situation is the same - that rejection of God is what the Bible calls sin and it causes a separation in our relationship with God. The thing is that God is completely holy and pure and can't just ignore the wrong we've done to him and his world. In fact it's because God is good and loving that he can't tolerate evil. The opposite of love is indifference.

"To imagine God's situation, imagine a judge who also is a father, who sits at the trial of his guilty son. A judge knows he cannot let his son go, for without justice no society can survive. How much less can God merely suspend justice for us - who are loved, yet guilty of rebellion against his loving authority?" Tim Keller

It is therefore because of his great love for us that God sends his Son to live a perfect life as a man on this earth. Then, instead of receiving his deserved reward (eternal life) Jesus took the punishment of death that each of us owed. When we accept the gift of Christ's death for us, our sins are paid for and we swap our verdict of guilty for his verdict of innocent. So God accepts us as his forgiven restored children based on what Jesus has done for us rather than anything we do. God delights in giving eternal life as a free gift of his grace. God's favour isn't performance related but available to all.

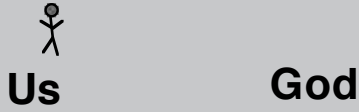
The message of Christianity

In the beginning

“God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule.” (Genesis 1:26)

Our true value as human beings comes from knowing our identity as human beings created in the image of God. Being made in the image of God means having the spiritual capacity to relate to God as his child and having the purpose of caring for God’s world as his earthly rulers.

We matter to God.
He made us and wants to have a relationship with us.



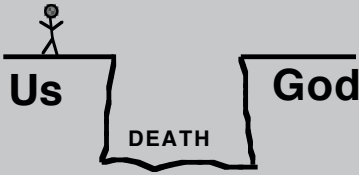
A diagram showing a stick figure labeled 'Us' on the left and the word 'God' on the right. There is a gap between them, representing a relationship that needs to be bridged.

The broken world

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

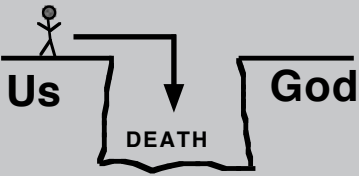
A perfect God created a perfect world where He had a perfect relationship with perfect people. But people broke their relationship with God. Sin is building your identity and finding your greatest meaning, significance and security in something besides God. The world became a broken place: God remains perfect but everything else is polluted by brokenness.

Our problem is that we have all rebelled against God by trying to run our lives without reference to him. That rebellion breaks our relationship with God. Furthermore, God’s justice means that our rebellion will lead to the death of being separated from God forever



A diagram showing a stick figure labeled 'Us' on the left and the word 'God' on the right. A gap between them is labeled 'DEATH', indicating a permanent separation.

We start doing things to get back to him (like good works, going to church, giving to charity etc.) There is nothing wrong with these but we still fall short of God’s perfect standards - we can’t earn our right to God’s forgiveness and a restored relationship with him.



A diagram showing a stick figure labeled 'Us' on the left and the word 'God' on the right. A gap between them is labeled 'DEATH', indicating a permanent separation.

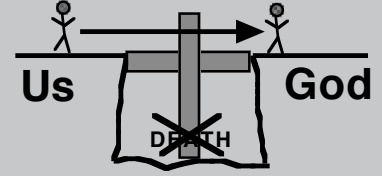
The dawn of hope

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (Romans 8:1)

Christianity isn’t about trying to prove ourselves before God but about receiving God’s healing of forgiveness. God sent his perfect Son to restore the world. Jesus Christ dies as a substitute for broken humanity. On the cross, God deals with my sin by placing it on Jesus. He dies to pay for it and clear the debt. Now, through faith in Jesus, people can be restored to a relationship with God. Salvation frees us from a prison of condemnation and gives us the status and security of being a completely forgiven, unconditionally loved and eternally cared for child of God.

‘I’m more flawed and sinful than I ever imagined and more loved and accepted than I ever dreamt possible.’

The good news is that we matter to God so much that He did for us what we could never do for ourselves. He bridged the gap between us and him by sending Jesus to die in our place on the cross so we could approach God and know restored relationship with him.



A diagram showing a stick figure labeled 'Us' on the left and the word 'God' on the right. A gap between them is labeled 'DEATH'. A cross is placed over the gap, bridging it, symbolizing the restoration of the relationship.

The new beginning

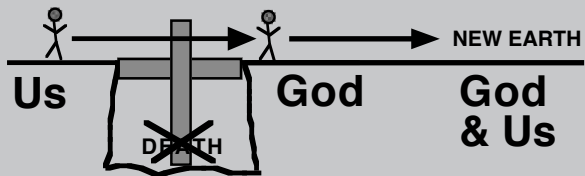
“Now the dwelling of God is with human beings, and he will live with them. They will be his people . . . There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:3–4)

God pays for our forgiveness so we can live with him in a new creation he will make for us:

- planet earth put back as God intended without chaos or decay.
- On the Last Day Jesus will return to the earth to set everything right:
- people already restored in relationship with God will be made perfect and will live on a perfect new earth fulfilling the purposes he intended for them to enjoy in the beginning.

Christian hope is based on God’s invitation to live in his restored world with him forever.

Jesus died for our sins and three days later rose again to conquer death. He promises that just as he received a resurrection body, on the Last Day he will return and all God’s people will receive resurrection bodies and go with him to a perfect resurrection earth.



A diagram showing a stick figure labeled 'Us' on the left and the word 'God' on the right. A gap between them is labeled 'DEATH'. A cross is placed over the gap. An arrow points from the cross to the right, towards the words 'NEW EARTH' and 'God & Us', indicating the path to a new beginning.

3 steps to a relationship with God.

Admit your need

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)

Do you accept that you have been living as your own master and made something other than God the ultimate object of your devotion? Do you accept therefore that you have sinned against God and fallen short of his perfect standards? If so, you need to admit your brokenness to God and ask for his forgiveness.

Believe God’s grace

“To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12)

Do you want to know restored relationship with God? Jesus Christ came to save you from your brokenness and to restore you into forgiven relationship with the Creator of the Universe - is that the new start with God that you want to receive? Faith is transferring your trust in your own efforts to the efforts of Christ. Becoming a Christian is about believing that you are accepted by God because of what Christ did rather than any of your own achievements.

Connect with God daily

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7)

Do you want to know God more each day? Like any relationship, growth comes by investing time. We hear from God by reading his word in the Bible and speaking to him in prayer.

A prayer you could use to mark the beginning of your Christian life: **Lord God, I admit I have done wrong by ignoring you and living by my own rules. I recognise I don’t merit your approval, but believe that Jesus has done everything I need to be accepted into your family. Thank you for your forgiveness. Please give me an assurance of your love, help me to follow your ways and make me the person you want me to be.**

If you have prayed that prayer or would simply like to ask some questions then please contact us. We’d love to hear from you and send you a book and a DVD. We’d also like to invite you to hear more and ask your questions in an informal setting at iGod (an evening introducing the essentials of Christianity) or Christianity Explored (a course looking at the life and teaching of Jesus). You’re always welcome at any of our services - no previous experience necessary!



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