

Center for Global Ministries

Discipleship Materials

Liberty University

Year 2009

Step 1: What does it mean to “believe?”

Don Fanning
Liberty University, dfanning@liberty.edu

How to be sure you are a true believer

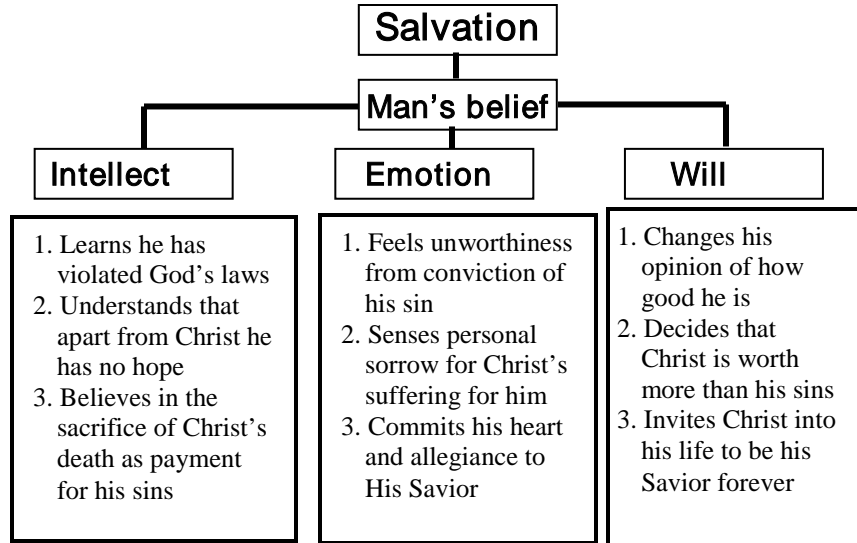
The two essential steps to spiritual growth are:

- (1) An **understanding** of God’s plan of salvation
- (2) **Personal security** of your own salvation

Becoming a Christian means to receive **by faith** the Lord Jesus Christ and His death as the **gift of God** for the forgiveness of your personal sins. Receiving Christ involves three aspects: **intellect, emotion and will.**

Our relationship with Christ can be illustrated by the marriage relationship, which also calls for those same three aspects. A man can be intellectually know a lot about the life of his girlfriend, but that does not make them married. Also he can feel strong emotions and love her with all his heart, but true marriage requires more. It requires the involvement of the will as well. The couple is not married until they make a commitment before a judge or a minister and witnesses. This **commitment** makes all the difference.

It is the same in our relationship with Christ. It is not enough to believe in Christ intellectually; nor is an emotional experience sufficient. Both are important, but no one becomes a Christian until, by an act of his will, he receives the Lord Jesus Christ personally to be a permanent part of his life as Lord and Savior.



To begin with, he must understand what is God’s plan of salvation for mankind. He must study the Bible to learn the truths about salvation.

THE GOOD NEWS:

The word, *Gospel* means "*good news.*" Christ came to earth announcing *good news* for mankind. Read **John, chapter 10, verse 10.**
¿What did Christ want to give to men?

It is not just any life, but an *abundant* life, (“extraordinary, remarkable, fulfilling”) which God wants to give us.

In **John 3, verse 16**, what was God’s motive in sending Christ into the world? _____

Because of His love, God sent Christ into the world so that man would “not perish, but have _____.”

This is the *good news*: Christ came to give man **abundant life** and **eternal life.**

However, WITHOUT CHRIST, man is in a serious dilemma:

THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN:

Read **Romans 3:23.**

This verse tells us three things:

- 1) Who are included in condemnation because of sin?

- 2) What is the means of comparison in the verse?
 - Men with other men
 - Men with the glory of God
- 3) What is the result of the comparison in this verse?

If we compare ourselves with other men, we may seem more or less good. The Bible tells us that we will be compared to the "*glory*" or the perfection of God’s holiness. All men, then, are found to be **sinful**, "*destitute*" (that is to say, **inferior, lacking or incomparable**) to the glory of God. We are all sinners before a Holy God. **Psalm 51:5** says, “Look, I was guilty of sin from birth.” This is our **natural** condition; we are born this way.

3. We are also sinners because of **personal choice.** In the Old Testament, **Isaiah 53:6** says, "**All we, like sheep, have gone astray,** we have turned **every one to his own way.** ." Consider this question: Do you always do everything you know is right? Yes No
Have you ever told a lie? Yes No

Step 1: Understanding the Gospel

What did that make you? A _____ .
Have you ever taken something that was not yours? Yes No
What did that make you? A _____ .
Have you ever lusted after a person in your mind? Yes No
Jesus said that to lust after a person is adultery. Then what does that make you? An _____. These are just three of the ten commandments!

In James 4:17, we learn, to him who *knows to do good* and does not do it, to him it is sin..." We often know what is right, but our actions are contrary to our conscience, therefore, we sin because we are sinners.

Perhaps someone might think that his sins are not so bad. Read

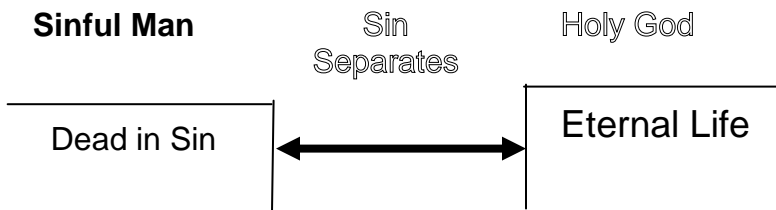
James 2:10.

- 1) How many sins make one guilty? _____
- 2) Therefore, if one is guilty of one sin, he guilty of _____

So there is no difference; we are all guilty.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS of our sinfulness is found in **Isaiah 59:2**. If a person is a sinner, what, then is his relationship with God?

It is sad that in our day many admit to being "sinners" in general, but they do not understand the seriousness of their condition: they are **SEPARATED** from God, and therefore **LOST**. Multitudes do not see themselves as God sees them.



The Punishment for Sin

In **Romans 6:23**, Paul shows us a great contrast. What is the consequence (*the wages*) of being a sinner? _____

Step 1: Understanding the Gospel

What is the result of receiving "the gift of God?" _____

Death is the punishment for sin, which means **SPIRITUAL DEATH**. Adam and Eve, the first human sinners, died **SPIRITUALLY** when they decided to disobey God (Genesis 2:17). This was not a physical death, but a **SPIRITUAL** death, that is they were immediately separated from God's life and communion with God.

Read **Ephesians 2:3**.

What is the condition of each person **BEFORE** God gives him eternal life?

In **2Thessalonians 1:8-9**, Paul graphically describes the meaning of eternal separation. Who are those who receive this punishment? _____
What is the punishment? _____

Punishment for SIN must be given to all sin

Read **Hebrews 9:27**. What type of death is referred to here?

- Physical death
- Spiritual death

If this is physical death, what immediately follows it? _____

No one escapes death, and no one escapes judgment. Notice that there is no second life in which to become better (reincarnation is false) nor a second opportunity, nor an option to pay for your sins later (Purgatory).

When a person dies, his eternal destiny is **SEALED**. Therefore, each person must stand before God, the Judge, and receive the consequences of his sin.

In **Romans 2:16**, what will God judge? _____

Nothing that is spoken, done or thought will escape his scrutiny. Everything will be openly judged. Because God is holy and just, He must judge everything.

Why do we not find much hope in **Romans 2:11** for those who think that they are an exception or someone special? _____

God never shows partiality or preference for "special" people. He is just. The **guilty** must pay for their sins.

In his sinful state, it would be impossible for anyone, on his own, to achieve communion with God and eternal life. However, there are many who think they will go to heaven because they are good sincere people (members of a church, baptized, tithe, give to the poor, etc). Based on what

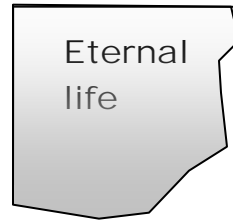
Step 1: Understanding the Gospel

you now know, why are your own good works insufficient to bring you eternal life? _____

Sinful Man



Holy God



Salvation is a Gift

Since we do not deserve salvation and it is impossible to earn it by our own merits, **the only way** to get it is to freely receive God's gift. We should give thanks to God, because this is precisely what God is offering us: salvation as a free gift. This is why the message is called the GOSPEL, "*Good News.*"

Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**. In verse 8, what is God's motive for giving us salvation? _____
Not of _____ . . . it is the gift of God.

"Grace" is the motive for giving something undeserved. We can only accept or reject that which is given. Why does it have nothing to do with us and our efforts? _____

Because God is a God of love, He wants to give us salvation as a gift since we can never deserve it, but, how can He give us salvation and still be JUST? This is a *dilemma*.

Step 1: Understanding the Gospel

Christ made the payment for sin

Praise God! He had a marvelous plan to rescue us from our desperate state, but the price was tremendous.

God has provided the bridge of the cross of Christ as the only way to achieve communion with God and to have eternal life.

Read **1 Timothy 2:5**.

How many "*mediators*" are there between God and man? _____

If **THERE ARE NO OTHER** mediators but Christ, there is no use putting your confidence, no matter how sincere, in any other person. Christ is the **ONLY MEDIATOR**.

For this reason, in **John 14:6** Jesus told us that **NO ONE** comes to the Father, but by Him.

In **Romans 5:8** what was our spiritual condition before God when Christ died for us? _____

He did not wait for us to get better. God loved us so much that He sent His Son into the world to pay **OUR DEATH PENALTY** on Calvary.

Read **2 Corinthians 5:21**.

Who did not have sin? _____

What was Christ was made? _____

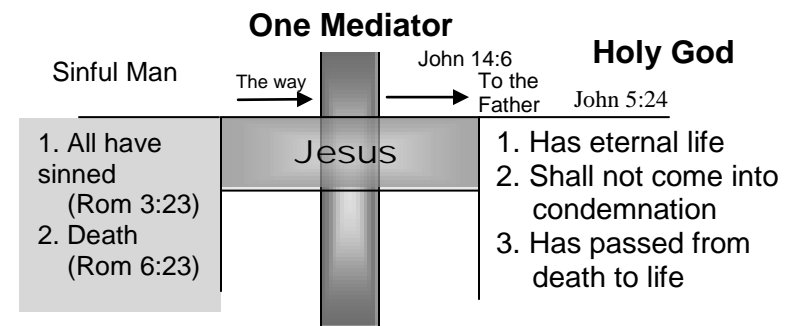
What would be the benefit for us? _____

In **1 Peter 2:24**, what did Christ carry in His flesh on the cross?

In reality, by insisting on doing good works or presenting ourselves as good persons in order to impress God, or try to deserve heaven, we are effectively rejecting the price that Christ paid on the cross of Calvary.

So perfect was the price that Christ paid that now, He can freely offer us three marvelous things. Read **John 5:24** and write the three things:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____



Salvation must be received as a gift

Read **John 1:12**. How do we get the salvation that God offers us?

"As many as ... _____"

To whom was the promise offered? _____

What is the promise? _____

We must personally receive Christ into our lives. We must understand intellectually what He did, and accept his *gift*, but comprehension in itself is not enough. We can feel desperation and sadness for our sins, but that is not enough. We must **PERSONALLY INVITE HIM** to enter into our lives. This invitation is a commitment to Christ.

Read Revelation 3:20. What does it mean to "open the door"?

If we open the door to our lives, what does Jesus promise us?

- (1) _____
- (2) _____

As soon as we invite Christ into our lives, He has promised to come in immediately and, will sup with us, in other words, He will have communion with us forever.

Jesus Christ is "*received*" by faith (Ephesians 2:8), that is to say, by **believing** in the Word of God and by **committing** to trust in His promises He will fulfill His part by forgiving and accepting us as His children.

Any sinner who recognizes what Christ did on the cross and is willing to depend only on the death of Christ as payment for his sins, has Jesus' promise to be his personal Savior forever. His life can then be lived in gratefulness to Christ for His salvation.

Review #1 Salvation

1. What is the meaning of the word "*gospel*?" _____
2. What is the consequence of sin in Romans 3:23? _____
We are _____ of the glory of God.
3. Another consequence of being a sinner is found in Isaiah 59:2.
It says sin, **S** _____ us from God.
4. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is _____
D _____.
5. What happens immediately after physical death according to Hebrews 9:27? The **J** _____
6. The only hope man has is to have eternal life before death. Is it possible to better ourselves enough to merit eternal life? Yes No
7. In Ephesians 2:8-9 eternal life must be received as a _____
G _____.
8. In 1 Timothy 2:5, the Bible tells us how many mediators there are between God and man.
How many are there? 1 2 3 more than 10 many
9. According to John 5:24, what three benefits do we receive when we receive Christ as Savior?
(1) We have **E** _____ **L** _____
(2) We will not come into **C** _____
(3) We have passed from **D** _____ to **L** _____.
10. How do we appropriate these benefits? There are two verses that indicate what we should do:
John 1:12, We must **R** _____ Christ.
Revelation 3:20, We must **I** _____
Christ to enter into our _____.

If someone were to ask you, "Where would you go if you were to die today?" how would you respond?

***Congratulations
if you have truly received Christ!***