



CHANGE

YOUR

LIFE



# Change Your Life!



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# Change Your Life!

“In order to change we must be sick and tired of being sick and tired,” someone once said. In other words, until we are no longer willing to accept the bad results of our actions, we won’t make the effort to change. Are you sick of how things are going in your life? Do you see the need for change, but wonder what to do?



If you are like most of us, sometimes you have that nagging feeling that things are not quite right. Your relationships aren't what you would like them to be. Your life is in the doldrums, and too much of what you do seems pointless. You feel stuck in habits that aren't really satisfying and perhaps are downright self-destructive.

On not-so-good days, things can be much worse. Failure and suffering seem to come at you from every direction.

Even if you feel comfortable and satisfied most of the time, when you stop and analyze it, life may seem like an exercise with no ultimate purpose or direction. Is there more to it than this?

It's time for a change—a fresh start. But the flood of conflicting self-help books and change-your-life programs doesn't seem to really help in the long term. Where can you turn?

## **Transformation**

What if you discovered a process that promises a complete personal makeover—a transformation? One that provides real hope of a much better life now and in the future?

The Bible outlines such a process.

The same Creator God who designed caterpillars to change into magnificent butterflies offers to transform our lives as well. He wants us to experience a life full of meaning, brimming with satisfaction and overflowing with joy.

At first it may sound too good to be true, but the Bible reveals that God has an incredible plan that leads to our becoming children in His eternal family. His promise is absolute and trustworthy, but in order for us to be part of that plan, some things are going to have to change. The transformation won't be easy, but it will be more than worth it. The difficulties we face as we make those changes “are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

## **What is the process?**

What is the process of change? God describes it in detail in the Bible. It begins with repentance and faith, which lead to baptism and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Why are these things necessary, and how do we do them?

Let's explore the Scriptures and read the surprising truth about what God says about how to transform your life!

# Recognizing the Real Problem: Sin

We must recognize the source of our troubles before we can even start on the path of change. The ultimate problem is spiritual, and it goes by the biblical name *sin*.

Everyone knows there are serious problems in the world today, and most of us have guesses and opinions about various causes of all the suffering and evil around us. However, it can all seem so complex and unsolvable.

Yet God is able to see through all the complexity and confusion to give us a clear picture of what has gone wrong in the world—and in our lives. The answer is simple, though the solution is very hard.

The underlying cause of all the world's problems, and of the troubles in our lives, is *sin*.

## What is sin?

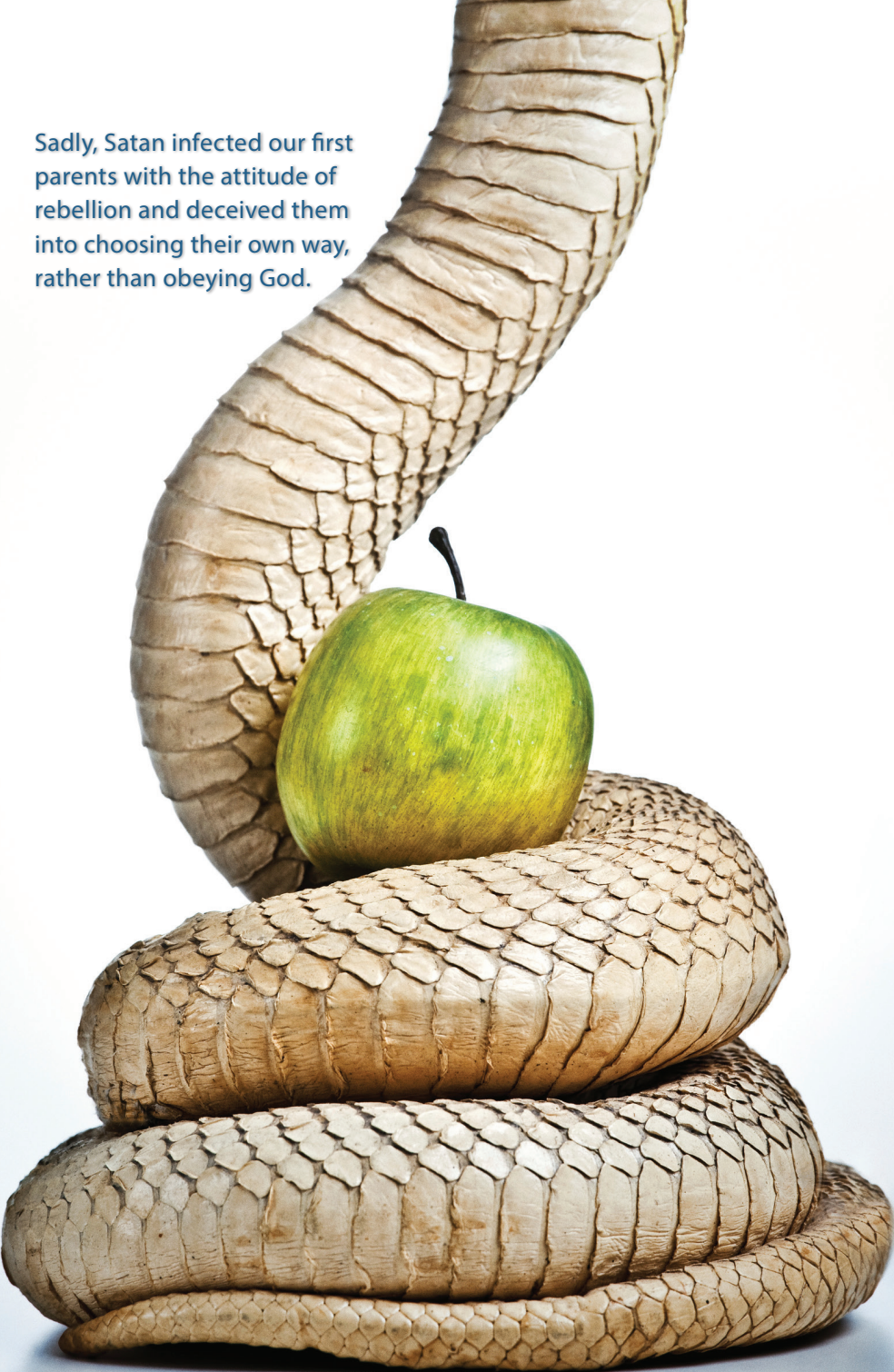
Sin is breaking God's laws in our thoughts and actions (1 John 3:4). God designed perfect laws that are life-changing, that help us to grow in wisdom, give us understanding, bring

us joy and fill our lives with reward and purpose.

Consider how David, a man after God's own heart, described God's law in Psalm 19: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (verses 7-11). (We encourage you to read our booklet *God's 10 Commandments*, which describes these beautiful laws and

Sadly, Satan infected our first parents with the attitude of rebellion and deceived them into choosing their own way, rather than obeying God.





the effects of obeying and disobeying them.)

Although God's laws are good and beneficial, the Bible describes an angel who rebelled against God and disobeyed His laws (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:14-16; Revelation 12:3-4). He became Satan, the enemy of God and the one who brought the horrible stain of sin and suffering into the universe.

### **Sin spread to Adam and Eve and all humanity**

Sadly, Satan infected our first parents with the attitude of rebellion and deceived them into choosing their own way, rather than obeying God. And even more sadly, he has been able to subtly but effectively lead all of humanity into sin as well.

His pervasive mind-set makes it seem that a little lie is harmless, that a quick peek at pornography isn't that bad, that misusing God's name won't hurt anybody and that a little bit of cheating is okay since everyone else is doing it. He seeks to influence us to think God doesn't care or is unfair—or doesn't exist at all.

He appeals to our sense of independence, luring us deeper and deeper into the clutches of disobedience and bad habits, making us unwitting slaves to sin.

As a result, human beings in general have become hostile toward God and His law and are not willing to

obey (Romans 8:7). The apostle Paul explained the universal nature of the problem: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Furthermore, he stated that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). This means every human being has cut himself or herself off from the holy God who abhors sin, and each of us is under the penalty of death for doing so! Humanity under the sway of Satan is headed for destruction, even if Satan has veiled that truth from us.

### **Rescue from sin**

Thankfully, God has a plan to rescue us from the clutches of Satan and to pay the penalty for our past sins. But that plan highlights the seriousness of the problem. The solution to our sin was for the Son of God to die for us! Jesus Christ, who never sinned, was willing to take the penalty of our sins on Himself. He was willing to be beaten and die a horrible death by crucifixion so we could have the opportunity for a fresh start.

Let's read the rest of Romans 6:23 where Paul acknowledged Jesus' sacrifice as the solution to the problem of sin: "For the wages of sin is death, *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (emphasis added throughout).

The prerequisite for change is recognizing the problem: sin. Next we must understand what God wants us to do about sin.

# Repentance: Making a U-Turn

Sin is the ultimate cause of evil and suffering. What does God want us to do about sin? Why does He command us to repent, and what is repentance?

This profound truth cannot be over-emphasized: A member of the God family came to the earth and lived a sinless life, but then gave His life as payment for our sins! Jesus' sacrifice demonstrated God's love and His justice, and it set the stage for the transformation of our lives—the process the Bible calls conversion.

So what does God expect us to do about our personal sins?

## **Peter's powerful message of repentance**


Seven weeks after Jesus Christ died and was resurrected back to spirit life as the Son of God, His disciple Peter had an opportunity to speak to a huge crowd on the Feast of Pentecost. God used this message to bring

3,000 people into the Church of God that day.

Peter's sermon at the founding of the New Testament Church clearly lays out the process God is using to transform human beings.

In order for Peter to have the attention of the crowd, God performed a miracle that allowed all to understand him in their own language. Then Peter explained to them from the writings of the prophet Joel and King David what was happening in their hearing. He used Old Testament prophecies to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Peter concluded: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom



Repentance is characterized by an understanding of the seriousness of sin, a deep desire to be forgiven and a determined commitment to change our behavior and thoughts in order to stop sinning.

you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

This was shocking news to them. They were being accused of murdering the very Messiah whom they so longed to see! They could have so easily rejected Peter’s words and justified their own actions and sins—as so many have before and since.

But God was working with many of the people in this crowd, and He opened their eyes to see their own sins. Whether they at that time—or we today—had anything to do with the actual crucifixion, we all have responsibility for the reason Jesus died. If we had not sinned, Jesus Christ would not have had to pay the penalty of death for us!

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (verse 37).

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (verse 38).

This passage packs a lot of meaning and lists many of the steps in the conversion process. But let’s start with the first one: repent.

### **What is repentance?**

The Greek word translated “repent” in the New Testament means “to

change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness” (J.P. Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 1988).

To repent is to consider something that we did in the past and recognize that it was sinful—that it broke God’s good and beneficial laws. To repent is to conclude that every lie, each time we neglected to observe the Sabbath, whenever we dishonored our parents—any time we broke God’s eternally good laws—demanded the death of the Son of God for us to be freed from the death penalty. Yes, we need to change for the better. Our whole pattern of life has been based on wrong, selfish motives. Repentance is recognizing that our thoughts, attitudes and actions have been abhorrent—repugnant and disgusting—to God and have brought on us the penalty of eternal death.

Though God hates sin, He lovingly intervenes to call us out of it. Paul explained that “the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

The Bible shows that this initial repentance is a significant, personal, life-changing decision that leads to baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. **Repentance is characterized by an understanding of the seriousness of sin, a deep desire to be for-**

# The Blessing of Forgiveness

When God forgives our sins, He removes them from us forever—they will never again be associated with us.

Hebrews 8:12 tells us God no longer remembers sins He has forgiven: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Notice also Psalm 103:11-12: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

The apostle John summed up sin, repentance and God’s forgiveness this way: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:9-10). God *will* forgive our sins when we admit them to Him and humbly seek forgiveness.

given and a determined commitment to change our behavior and thoughts in order to stop sinning.

Repentance is an unconditional surrender to God. Through the prophet Isaiah, God describes the attitude He is looking for: “On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Isaiah also wrote, “Let the wicked forsake *his way*, and the unrighteous man *his thoughts*; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

Paul emphasized that “godly sorrow” produces genuine repentance, which results in permanent changes that ultimately lead a person toward salvation. This is in contrast to “the sorrow of the world,” which does not result in permanent change and leads to death (2 Corinthians 7:10). Verse 11 highlights the diligent effort and

vehement desire to change that godly sorrow produces.

### **It's personal**

Sin is a personal affront to our holy God and brings with it the penalty of death. That means that because of our sins, each of us bears personal responsibility for the need for Jesus to suffer and die. Our reaction to that realization should be as heartfelt and intense as was the reaction of those who heard Peter's sermon in Acts 2. Repentance includes a personal commitment to change—to no longer go whatever way we think is right, but to seek to do what God tells us is right.

If we do not repent, we cannot be forgiven or receive the gift of eternal life. We would receive the penalty of death that we deserve. But if we submit to God as He leads us to repentance, He will forgive and provide the help we need to change and prepare for eternal life as His sons and daughters.

# Faith: Required for Change

Along with repenting and being forgiven, God wants us to believe—to have faith. What is this faith that is needed for conversion?

To be converted—to change and become a Christian—Jesus Christ calls on us to repent and believe (Mark 1:15). We are saved through *faith*—believing God’s promise of forgiveness and all other aspects of the gospel (Ephesians 2:8). What is faith and how do we grow in faith?

## What is faith?

In the New Testament the English word *faith* is used to translate the Greek word *pistis*. *The New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* says, “*Pistis* is used of belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same. ‘Faith’ means trust, confidence, assurance, and belief” (p. 1315).

The Bible also defines *pistis* in Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the sub-

stance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Our trust in God is the starting point, but we must recognize that our own faith is not enough. We must seek the gift of faith (Galatians 2:20; 5:22; Ephesians 2:8). God’s spiritual gift of faith gives that rock-solid evidence of God’s trustworthiness and faithfulness.

God calls on us to be fully convinced that what He promises He will do (Romans 4:21). This includes His promised blessings for obedience and corrections for errors. We are to believe in the gospel—the good news of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). We are to believe that Jesus Christ died and was resurrected. We are to believe that God’s laws are holy, just and good and for our benefit (Romans 7:12). We are to believe that if we repent and are baptized, God will give

# Dead Faith or Living Faith?

The apostle James, who was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, wrote in his epistle about what he called dead faith. Dead faith is when one believes in God, but does not obey His commandments.

James wrote, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19-20).

James went on to use the example of Abraham, who had both faith and works because he believed God and he obeyed what God commanded him to do. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” (James 2:21-22).







The trials and challenges of the Christian life will test our faith and commitment, so we must count the cost and be firmly committed to enduring to the finish.

us the Holy Spirit to help us become like Him (Acts 2:38).

### **Without faith**

The Bible also warns about the results of not having faith. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

If we don’t believe that God exists, that He wants us to change and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him, we will have no reason to

change. We will have no motivation to embark on this quest for transformation. We will have no endurance or commitment to the process of conversion.

### **Faith and commitment**

Not only must we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we must trust God so much we commit to Him completely.

Not only must we believe that following Christ is worth any cost, we must be prepared to pay any price. Jesus tells us to “count the cost.”

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” (Luke 14:27-30).

The trials and challenges of the Christian life will test our faith and commitment, so we must count the cost and be firmly committed to enduring to the finish.

### God gives faith to those who seek it

How do we grow in faith? Faith is increased by seeing God’s involvement in our lives when we draw closer to Him through prayer and the study of His Word, the Bible. Paul told the Philippians to “be anxious for nothing [don’t worry], but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

They believed God’s Word, and they obeyed His commandments. As they listened and followed Paul’s instruction on giving their cares to God in believing prayer, their faith was increased.

Another way faith is increased is by reading examples of faith in the Bible or hearing them publicly expounded. This is mentioned in Romans 10:17: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Consider how God intervened for Abraham and Sarah, giving them the son Isaac when they were old; how He miraculously brought the children of Israel out of the mighty nation of Egypt; how God protected Daniel in the lion’s den and his three friends in the fiery furnace; and how He protected the young Child Jesus from the murder of babies by Herod. There are many other examples we could cite.

These examples of God’s intervention in others’ lives can strengthen our belief that God can intervene for us and that He has our best interests at heart. Faith gives us comfort and security. Faith is a blessing that we can ask God to increase (Luke 17:5).

### Following through with faith

Living faith (see the sidebar “Dead Faith or Living Faith?”) is not just a thought or a feeling. It involves action. We show faith by following through on the instructions that God gives. This includes the commands the apostle Peter gave for those who wanted to turn their lives around: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized” (Acts 2:38).

The next step, baptism, is a powerful and necessary demonstration of faith.

# Baptism: Why Does God Want Us to Be Baptized?

God commands us to be baptized in water as part of the conversion process. What does baptism symbolize and teach us?

The Bible clearly instructs us to be baptized (Acts 2:38). Why? What does baptism represent?

The word *baptize* means to “immerse.” It comes from the Greek *baptizo* and means “dip, immerse ... wash” (Walter Bauer, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1952, p. 131).

John 3:23 confirms that baptism requires much water: “Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, *because there was much water there*. And they came and were baptized.”

**Baptism by complete immersion symbolizes the washing away of our sins, among other things.** David, in

his psalm of repentance, called out to God: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:2). How do we know that this is applicable to baptism? Because Acts 22:16 says: “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

## Three things baptism symbolizes

Three important symbols can be found in water baptism. The apostle Paul discussed them in Romans 6:1-4:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many



Baptism by complete immersion symbolizes the washing away of our sins, among other things.

of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

### **Death**

How does baptism picture death? To come to see ourselves as we really are and go through the process of repentance can be an excruciating process. Paul continued in Romans 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man

was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

Paul compared the process of repentance with being crucified and putting our old man of sin to death with Christ.

Paul also emphasized this process in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by

faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Paul was saying that because of Jesus’ crucifixion, we can be forgiven of our sins and “put to death” (repent and change from) our previous way of life and follow Jesus’ example in how we live (“Christ lives in me”).

Putting to death the old man means complete repentance of our sins and is the first symbol of baptism. It is a process that begins in the mind *before* going under the water.

### **Burial**

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death” (Romans 6:4). Full immersion shows a complete burial, just as Christ was crucified and buried in the heart of the earth.

Burial shows that the “old man” and the “old way of life” are symbolically put to death, buried and put behind us. Though the burial is symbolic, the complete change that follows is to be literal.

### **Resurrection**

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

God expects us, through the covenant made at baptism, to walk in newness of life.

After having put the old man to

death, we can now walk as if we are a completely different person. No longer are we carrying the burden of broken law and the penalty of death associated with it, but now we have the opportunity to become a new person through the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. The newness of life implies a change in the way we live—a new lifestyle of obedience to God’s law.

Colossians 2:12-13 tells us that we are “buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

### **Following Christ’s example**

The baptism ceremony we experience represents Jesus’ experience. He was crucified and put to death, buried in the heart of the earth, and resurrected by God to eternal life. Baptism symbolizes a death, burial and resurrection to walk in newness of life, awaiting our eventual resurrection to spirit life at the return of Christ to this earth.

We must leave the old man buried and now walk in newness of life, obeying God and seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

# Receiving the Holy Spirit

After baptism, God promises the wonderful gift of His Holy Spirit. The Bible shows this gift is given when God's ministers lay hands on the baptized person and pray.

Baptism is an important part of the conversion process, but it is not the end. In fact, just being baptized does not make a person a Christian.

Notice an important truth in the Bible: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9).

A person is a Christian only if God's Holy Spirit is dwelling in him or her.

The Bible gives examples of people who had the baptism of repentance, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit. How was the Holy Spirit given?

## The laying on of hands

When the deacon Philip "preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" in Samaria, many were baptized (Acts 8:12). But they did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came and "laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (verse 17).

This procedure is confirmed in the example of about a dozen men in Ephesus who had been baptized into John the Baptist's baptism of repentance. Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). They had not, but when Paul "had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (verse 6).



The Holy Spirit gives a Christian spiritual power and understanding and makes it possible for him or her to become more like God and eventually inherit eternal life.



## The wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is one of God's greatest gifts, and it provides a lifeline to God by which He gives many of His other wonderful gifts.

The Holy Spirit gives a Christian spiritual power and understanding and makes it possible for him or her to become more like God and eventually inherit eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is the power of God, which He offers to those who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38) and who obey Him (Acts 5:32). The Bible lists many things the Holy Spirit enables us to do. Paul wrote that God's Spirit opens up our spiritual understanding of things that seem like foolishness to those without spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2:10-14). Through regular prayer and study of the Bible, the Spirit helps us grow in understanding of God's plan and our part in it. It makes it possible for God's laws to be written on our hearts and minds, as we internalize them through consistent obedience (Hebrews 8:10). It is the power by which we will be able to transform (change) our minds (Romans 12:2).

Jesus said the Spirit will provide us with help and guidance (John 14:16, 26; 16:13). One of the most important blessings of having God's Spirit is that "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). Godly

love is described in more detail in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

John also connected God's love with His law: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). God's love leads us to obedience to His commandments, which is how our transformation takes place.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul listed qualities we can develop through the presence of the Holy Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering [patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

This "fruit" represents the character of God, which we are to develop in our lives. To do this, we are to pray regularly for the gift of His Spirit and commit to following the lead of God's Spirit and grow more of this fruit.

How much better will we cope in life with more *patience* when a promotion does not come when we expect? Or if we have *self-control* rather than angrily flying off the handle when our children need encouragement rather than harsh words? And God's Spirit is so important in helping us fight against the unseen influence of the enemy, Satan.

We are to regularly ask God to provide His gracious Spirit to help us grow more and more.

# The Continuing Process of Conversion

Conversion is not just a one-time event that ends with baptism. It involves being led by the Holy Spirit in a life of continuous repentance and change.

As we have seen in this booklet, in order to become a Christian, we must repent of sin and have faith. But these are just the first steps toward Christian conversion. We also need to be baptized and have the laying on of hands in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:17). Furthermore, those who are led by God's Spirit are identified as His sons (Romans 8:14). But what does it mean to be "led" by God's Spirit? It means to be transformed—to change to become more and more like Christ.

We have all seen a beautiful, multi-colored butterfly. It did not start that way. It started as a tiny egg, almost invisible to the human eye. It had to pass through various stages of transformation until it became an amazingly beautiful butterfly.

The Bible tells us that we, too, must go through a process of transformation.

In our case, it is to become a converted Christian.

Notice what the apostle Paul said in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

God requires that we leave our former ways and change direction by turning to Him. We must turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. As Peter said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

According to *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, the word *converted* “means properly to ‘turn; to return to a path from which one has gone astray; and then to turn away from sins, or to forsake them.’ It is a word used in a general sense to denote ‘the whole turning to God’” (note on Acts 3:19).

To be converted means to turn away from sin, and that must be done regularly.


### **A converted life begins**

After receiving God’s Spirit, a converted Christian must focus on what

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is not easy. Jesus stated in Matthew 7:21 that it is those who do the will of God who will enter His Kingdom; He emphasized in Matthew 7:14 that the way to God’s Kingdom is difficult and challenging.

It is obvious that the apostle Paul was a converted Christian. He had repented, accepted Christ and



The Bible tells us that we must go through a process of transformation.

received the Holy Spirit. But Paul found that living a Christian life and overcoming sin was a struggle, as he described in Romans 7.

Paul discussed the carnality (the mind apart from God—Romans 8:7) that he knew he had to overcome. “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7:14-17).

### **Ongoing battle against sin**

So, how did Paul explain what was happening to him? “I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (verses 21-23).

This was a frustrating battle in which Paul was engaged. He acknowledged it and asked: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

He then gave the answer: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (verses 24-25).

Paul explained that his deliverance was through Jesus Christ, who will also give us the help we need to turn from sin and be converted.

### **We must have a repentant mind for the rest of our lives**

We learn from Paul’s experience that even as we spend the remainder of our lives struggling against the pulls of our nature, we won’t completely overcome it.

The apostle John also showed us two other influences to guard against—the ungodly society around us and the mind of Satan that tries to inject wrong thoughts in our minds (1 John 2:14-17). When we fight against these and our human nature, we will win some battles; we will lose others. But so long as God sees that we sincerely desire not to sin, that we hate sin and struggle against it, He is merciful. He understands that we are flesh and is quick to forgive us when we repent.

The apostle John summarized God’s merciful response to our continuing repentance: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7-9; see also Psalm 51:2, 7).

In Colossians 3:1-10 Paul called on Christians to continually “put to death” the sinful ways of the “old man” and to “put on the new man.”

## **We now belong to God**

The “new” person we become belongs to God. Our life was ransomed—redeemed—paid for by the sacrifice of Christ, as Peter explained in 1 Peter 1:18-19 and Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians 6:20. Having been rescued from death and forgiven of our past sins through Jesus’ sacrifice, we should no longer be slaves of sin, but should become servants of righteousness: “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:18).

But we are called to become much more than slaves. God in His great love is adding children to His family: “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18). We are called to follow the example of our older Brother and our Father in heaven. We are called to become like God.

## **What happens when conversion is complete?**

God wants to help us overcome sin—repent and change—so that He can give us the gift of eternal life. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Notice Hebrews 12:1-2: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so

great a cloud of witnesses [those who are named in the previous chapter, Hebrews 11], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

The Christian life is like a long-distance endurance race. We are admonished to overcome sin, obey God and endure to the end. “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations” (Revelation 2:26).

So, what will be the end result of our transformation—our conversion? The apostle Paul answered that in 2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

God wants us to change—to be His children (1 John 3:1-3)! He wants to give us crowns of righteousness and to have us assist Him in His exciting, creative work for eternity.

What a wonderful future God has in store for us! And He offers us all the help we need to become transformed—converted—to become like Him!

# What Will You Do Now?

The biblical message of transformation is not just something to know. It demands action! God wants to know if we will use what He gives us to change our lives.

Now that you understand what conversion is, you need to begin practicing what you have learned. In prayer, ask God to help you repent, have faith, seek baptism, receive His Holy Spirit and be converted. Ask Him to help you understand and prove for yourself His truth as revealed in the Bible. Ask Him to give you courage to obey even though others around you may not care about or understand what God says.

If you truly want to be converted,

ask your Creator for help. If you have questions, feel free to contact us using our [“Ask a Question”](#) form. We’re always pleased to show people God’s truth and encourage them as they turn from sin to a life of faith toward God and obedience to His laws.

This is the most important thing in your life. Don’t miss out on this opportunity to transform your life for the better and to deepen your relationship with your loving Father!



# About

## LifeHope&Truth

LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

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