

Pursuing God—A Seeker's Guide

Chapter Eleven *What Shall I Do?*

1. We have come now to a most important chapter for you. Before you read the chapter, please discuss among yourselves what you have learned so far from all that you have read and talked about over the last few weeks. If possible, do this in pairs. You might think of these words as you discuss briefly what you've learned: sin, death, heaven and hell, justification, repentance, faith, and works. Or, you may just wish to look over the table of contents and talk about the chapter that you found most helpful. [*Leader, you may only want to take 3-5 minutes for this.*]

2. Now, please read aloud the introduction and the chapter.

3. What is the most straightforward answer to the question: "What must I do to become a true Christian?"

4. In the Bible you will find the words "repent" and "believe" (sometimes called "faith" or "trust") over and over again. The faith you have must be a repenting faith. That is, when you come to Christ, you come rejecting your life of disobedience and self-reliance. You do not come to Christ all cleaned up, but you come willing to be changed and desiring freedom from your sin and all that it causes. Your mind will be changed about your sin. Sin brings hell, but it also causes you much pain on the way to hell. So, you must come with a "repenting faith" in Christ. You are turning away from a life of independence to a life of trust in Christ.

But behind all of this is the work of God. In fact, one way of seeing salvation is from God's perspective. I said this:

A seeker becomes a true Christian because *God* does something, creating desire for Him and distaste for sin. If God is at work, you cannot help rejecting your independence and coming to Him. You will place your trust in Him because there is nothing else left to trust. You will love Him because He is irresistible to you.

What can you see in yourself? Is God doing something to attract you to Christ? Do you find yourself hating the lifestyle you once loved? Please explain to the others what you think God is doing in you.

5. As I said, you must repent and believe. Even though the words "repent" and "believe" are often found alone, one always implies the other. In other words, you must "repentingly believe" or "believingly repent." In the final analysis, you are turning from something bad to something, that is, *someone*, who will give you more than you can ever deserve.

It may surprise you to find that you could come to this position in a moment of time. By that I mean, as you are reading, listening, thinking, you may, in fact,

find yourself in this new way of seeing things. Describing his conversion, the author and Oxford professor, C. S. Lewis, said that he was “surprised by joy.” That could happen to you.

Another may come to Christ in a more deliberate manner. That is, he or she may go to God in prayer and express repentance and faith. God, of course, knows our hearts and can see our repentance and faith whether it is articulated well or not—or even at all. You must not make the mistake of thinking that becoming a Christian is some sort of formula, that is, the right words said to God. But if you quit your independence and fall over into Him by faith, you are a true believer. In one sense, believing in Christ is like quitting. You drop into his arms, so to speak, precisely because you can no longer sustain yourself in your independence. You stop trusting yourself and start trusting solely in Christ for your salvation.

I said this in the chapter:

When the question is put to you, now that you have read and thought this through, do you have to say, “I do, in fact, trust Christ, and I do, with joy, reject a life independent of Him?” Can you say, “I place no hope in anything else other than Christ for my salvation?” And, are you willing and quite happy for this benevolent God to be the master of your life without rebellion? Do you desire to follow Him, whether difficult or easy, throughout your entire life?

Attempt to express your answers to these questions to the group to the best of your ability. But above all, tell the truth. If you are not inclined to trust Him, then just say so. You may express something short of true salvation. Talk about how God is dealing with you now. In other words, are you a true believer? Or, are you close to becoming a true believer? It is perfectly permissible to express your current thoughts and even to express doubts, questions and concerns.

6. I listed a few actions you may wish to take if you think you have become a true believer. Let’s take a minute to list them.

- Talk to a believing friend, pastor, or mentor so that he or she can help you take your first steps as a believer.
- Expect to see the evidence of a change in thinking, behavior, and attitudes. Expect genuine holiness, but not perfection.
- When you sin, deal with it by asking God to give you the help you need. You are a lifelong repenter.
- Find a good church where the Bible is taught, and the right view of becoming a Christian is believed and encouraged. Make sure that this church is serious about God and the Bible.
- Read the Bible and pray. I have provided a special guide through the gospel of John to get you started. Some of the groups will continue on using this guide together and discussing what is discovered. This is helpful even if some of the group have not yet believed in Christ. This is one of the most important things you can do. If you are not

continuing as a group for the next weeks, at least, if possible, work with a mentor. Or, if this will not be possible, just use the guide personally. You will want to make Bible reading a lifelong habit. It is in the Bible that you will find the way to live out true Christianity.

- Be baptized. You will find this mentioned repeatedly in the Bible. You will not be baptized as a way to become a Christian, but rather as a way to show openly that you have already been changed. A pastor will be helpful on this issue. In the New Testament, believers were baptized *after* they were converted to Christ. This is an exciting drama and celebration. You should invite all the friends and family you can to watch your baptism.
- Tell others about Christ. You might find that introducing them to *Pursuing God—A Seeker's Guide* will be the best way to do that. In fact, I do not doubt that you could join with your mentor and help lead a group of your friends through this book.
- Attempt to live by the Great Commission of Christ as found in Matthew 28:19-20.

This will be a good time to talk about these items I have just mentioned in the group. Look them over again. What questions do you have about them? Leader, please add whatever you can to help the group understand the beginning steps of a Christian. Perhaps some others who are true believers can also help. Now is the best time to get your questions answered.

7. Finally—

Let me say to you who have believed in Christ that I am excited for you. Others of you may not be there yet, but there is real hope. Your interest in Christ is a good sign that your conversion may not be far away. Continue to pursue God. This is likely, in itself, an indication of God at work in you. And don't forget that there is much more to find out in the book of John and the Bible as a whole. Let the Word of God guide you and the Holy Spirit empower you through the exciting life ahead.

Do you need more help?

Do you have further questions?

Jim Elliff provides a web site with many resources to help you understand the way to Christ. On it you will find these useful tools:

The Dialogue on Christianity—a short nine chapter book containing a dialogue between a seeker and a true believer.

The Eaglet—a simple and colorful way to understand the gospel originally written for children. Many adults have found Christ through this short work, however.

Wasted Faith—an audio reading by Jim Elliff of a booklet that explains the difference between true faith and false faith. This may also be ordered in written form.

The Brockton Dialogues—stories that convey the gospel.

Questions and Answers for the seeker.

Audio messages by Jim Elliff on the way to relate to Christ.

The stories of people who have come to Christ.

Many other articles and helps for those who want to know Christ.

All this may be found at
www.WaytoGod.org

Jim's largest site, for believers and leaders, is www.CCWonline.org. The study guide is found on this site under "downloadables."