

This Gospel Lesson is a straightforward look at the Gospel and how we fit into this story of God calling His people back to Him. Some statements may seem harsh at first but keep moving through the lesson to see how the Gospel really is the “Good News!”

Is everyone a follower of Christ who claims to be?

In 2004 an ABC news poll showed that 82% of all Americans claim to be Christian. Yet only 40% of Americans claim to have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

According to Jesus there will be many people on judgment day who think they are going to heaven but who will be turned away. Matthew 7:21-23

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” - 2 Cor 13:5

How we can test ourselves? The Fruit Test

Jesus really had only one test he told us to conduct to see if someone belonged to Him: the Fruit Test.

“You will know them by their fruit” Matthew 7:20

The *Apple Tree Illustration* helps us see how fruit is what ones life produces in words, actions, and attitudes.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come!”

That means there will be some changes when you commit your life to Christ. The *Semi Truck Illustration* is a good example of how changes should affect us.

It is important to remember that salvation is in no way earned because of our fruit or good works:

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”
Ephesians 2:8-9*

Salvation is a free gift that Christ purchased for us through His death and resurrection. When someone receives this free gift through accepting Christ their life will change and produce fruit.

The following verses show the fruit that will be in a true Christian's life:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Matthew 7:21

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands". The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." I John 2:3-4

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" James 2:14

"Do you believe there is one God? Even the demons believe that and shudder." James 2:19

If you died right now and God asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" what would you say? What percentage chance would you have of going to heaven?

Here is a quick eight-question test to find out if you have been good enough to get into heaven. Circle the appropriate answer:

- Yes No 1. Have you ever told a lie?
 Yes No 2. Have you given money to charity?
 Yes No 3. Have you gone to church regularly?
 Yes No 4. Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)?
 Yes No 5. Have you ever used "God" or "Jesus" as a curse word?
 Yes No 6. Have you tried to read your Bible regularly?
 Yes No 7. Have you ever looked at someone with lustful thoughts?
 Yes No 8. Have you ever broken the first commandment? *"You shall have no other gods before Me."*

Lets take a look at how the results stand up to God's law and standards. (*The answers are grouped and appear out of numerical order*)

1. Have you ever told a lie?

The Ninth of the Ten Commandments is *"You shall not lie."* Telling just one lie, according to God's standard, makes you a "liar." In Revelation 21:8, God says, *"...all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire..."*

4. Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)?

The Eighth of the Ten Commandments is *"You shall not steal."* Stealing just one thing (regardless of it's size or monetary value), according to God's standards, makes you a "thief." In 1 Corinthians 6:10, God says, *"No thieves... ..shall inherit the kingdom of God."*

5. Have you ever used “God” or “Jesus” as a curse word?

The Third of the Ten Commandments is *"You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain."* If you've ever used the name "God," "Jesus," or "Christ" as a curse word, you've taken the name of the God and used it as a "four-letter" filth word to express disgust. This is called "blasphemy." In Leviticus 24:16 God says, *"he that blasphemes the name of the LORD, shall surely be put to death..."*

7. Have you ever looked at someone with lustful thoughts?

The Seventh of the Ten Commandments is *"You shall not commit adultery."* If you've ever looked at another person with lustful thoughts, according to God's standards, that makes you an "adulterer" in your heart. Jesus said, *"You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."* Matthew 5:28

8. Have you ever broken the first commandment? “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

The First of the Ten Commandments is "You shall have no other gods before me." That means that we should love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. The Bible tells us that no one has kept this commandment (Psalm 14:2-3).

2. Have you given money to charity?**3. Have you gone to church regularly?****6. Have you made it a practice to read the Bible regularly?**

Giving money to charity, going to church, and reading the Bible are all good things but *none of them impress God.* The Bible says, *"all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."* Isaiah 64:6 That means, all our "righteous acts" - these "good deeds" that questions 2, 3 and 6 asked can never make up for the fact that we've broken God's Commandments! Think of it this way: if a person was guilty of murder but he gave tons of money to charity, does that make up for his crime? No. The person's crime wasn't cancelled because he gave money to charity. This "good deed" will mean nothing to the judge when he passes his court sentence! The murder must still be punished. In the same way, trying to do good deeds doesn't cancel our sins and mistakes.

TEST RESULT: THE BAD NEWS

This test showed you how you (and I) stand up when judged by just five of God's Ten Commandments. God is perfectly just- He wouldn't be a good judge if He weren't. If God judges you by His standard would you be innocent or guilty (circle one)? Do you think you would go to Heaven or Hell (circle one)? Does that concern you? yes or no (circle one)

THE SOLUTION: THE GOOD NEWS!

Imagine it's you in a courtroom and you're guilty of many serious crimes. The judge says, "It's a fine of \$5,000,000, or prison." You don't have anywhere near that amount of money, so they begin to walk you out of the courtroom when someone you don't even know appears. He runs up to the judge with a check and says, "I've paid the fine for you!" Now that the fine has been paid, the law no longer has any hold on you! You're free -- because of the gift you were given.

This is what God did for you by sending Jesus to die on the cross in your place.

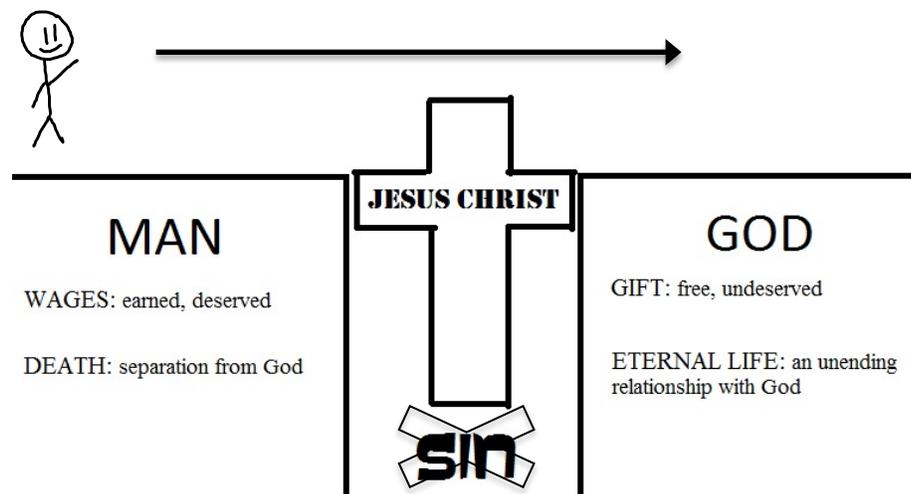
God sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross -- suffering the punishment that justice demands (eternity in Hell). Then He rose from the grave, forever defeating death! The Bible tells us:

"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

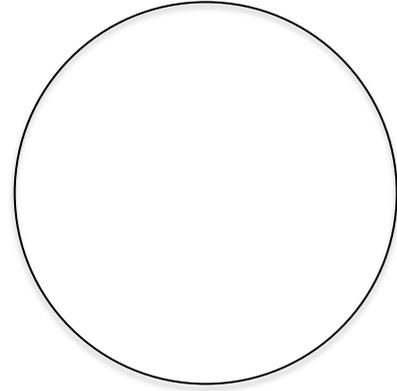
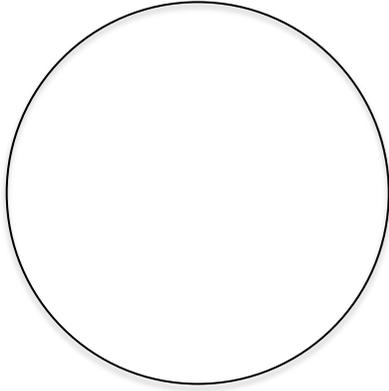
Since Jesus made the payment for our crimes on the cross, if you will repent of your sins and put your trust in Jesus God says He will forgive all your sins and grant you the gift of everlasting life. Romans 6:23 says:

"For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Let's look at *The Bridge Illustration* to help explain this verse:



An example of making Jesus the Lord of our life is *the Pie Illustration* which uses the different pieces of pie to describe the different pieces of our lives (the complete pie).



You can turn from your sins and trust Christ by faith through prayer right now. God knows your heart so the words of the prayer are not magical but if they reflect the decision you would like to make you can use it to express your faith to God. Read over this prayer and see if it reflects the desire of your heart:

“Lord, I confess to you that I am a sinner and that I am separated from you. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I want to turn from all of my sins (name some) and I trust Jesus Christ to come into my life and take control of my life from now on. Please forgive me and grant me your gift of everlasting life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

If you have truly repented and you now trust Jesus there will be some changes in your life. Questions are normal at any stage of a Christian’s walk. You will experience a new desire to honor God, a deeper love for others and other changes. 1 John 5:13 says

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

If you surrendered your life to Christ you can be sure he came in and will give you eternal life! You should take steps to grow in your new relationship with God. Next time we can look further at how to grow as a true disciple of Jesus!