

How You Can Know God Personally

If you haven't known God personally, here are four principles that will help guide you into a relationship with him:

1. God loves you and created you to know him personally.

The most well-known verse in the Bible says, *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16 ESV).

You see, this life is not the end of us. This life is preparation for eternity. We have the freedom to decide where we want to spend eternity: with God or apart from God.

God thinks you're so valuable that he wants to spend eternity with you! The Bible says, *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"* (John 17:3 NIV1984). He planned the universe and orchestrated history, including the details of our lives, so that we could become his friends.

So, what prevents us from knowing God personally?

2. Man is sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know him personally or experience his love because of our sin.

The Bible says, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23 NIV1984).

Visualize God in heaven and man on earth, with a great gulf separating the two. Man is continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with him through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion—but he inevitably fails.

The Bible says, *"The wages of sin is death [separation from God]"* (Romans 6:23 NIV). The third principle explains the only way to bridge this separation.

3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through him alone can we know God personally and experience God's love.

Jesus died in our place. *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8 NIV).

He rose from the dead. *"Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time . . ."* (1 Corinthians 15:3–6 NLT).

He is the only way to God. *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'"* (John 14:6 NASB).

Visualize now that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from him by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

Yet it's not enough just to know these truths . . .

4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know God personally and experience his love.

We must receive Christ. *“As many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name”* (John 1:12 NASB).

We receive Christ through faith. *“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 NIV1984).

When we receive Christ, we experience a new birth. The Bible tells of how a man named Nicodemus experienced a new birth through Christ:

There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi,” he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.”

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”

Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don’t be surprised when I say, You must be born again. The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.”

— John 3:1–8 (NLT)

We Receive Christ By Personal Invitation

Jesus Christ says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me.”

— Revelation 3:20 (NASB)

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what he wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of our free will.

We can choose two kinds of lives:

The Self-Directed Life

- Self is “on the throne of your heart”
- Christ is outside your life
- Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration

The Christ-Directed Life

- Christ is in your life and “on the throne”
- Self is yielding to Christ
- Interests are directed by Christ, resulting in harmony with God’s plan

Which description best represents your life?

Which description would you like to have represent your life?

How you can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer

Prayer is just talking with God. He knows your heart, so don't worry about getting your words just right. Here is a suggested prayer to guide you:

Lord Jesus,

I want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins.

I open the door of my life and receive you as my Savior and Lord.

Thank you for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life.

Take control of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life as promised.

Did you pray to receive Christ just now?

If so, Congratulations! Luke 15:7 says that when one sinner accepts Jesus Christ as his or her Savior the angels rejoice. So there's a party going on in heaven right now over your decision! Remember this date as your "second birthday," the day you were born into a new life in Christ! You have God's Word that he answered your prayer.

The Bible promises eternal life to all who receive Christ: "*God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 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*" (1 John 5:11–13 NIV1984).

Thank God often that Christ is in your life and that he will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). You can know on the basis of his promise that Christ lives in you and that you have eternal life from the very moment you invited Him in.

An important reminder

Do not depend on feelings. The promise of God's Word, the Bible, is our authority. The Christian lives by faith in the trustworthiness of God and his Word. There are differences between fact, faith, and feeling:

Fact: God and his Word

Faith: Our trust in God and his Word

Feeling: The result of our faith and obedience

If fact–faith–feeling was a three-car train, the train led by fact would run with or without the caboose (feeling). However, it would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but place our faith (trust) in God and the promises of his Word.

Taking your next steps

The moment you received Christ—as an act of faith and free will—many things happened, including:

1. Christ came into your life (Colossians 1:27).
2. Your sins were forgiven (Colossians 1:14).
3. You became a child of God (John 1:12).
4. You received eternal life (John 5:24).
5. You began the great adventure for which God created you (John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Can you think of anything more wonderful that could happen to you than entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Would you like to thank God in prayer right now for what he has done for you? By thanking God, you demonstrate your faith.

To enjoy your new relationship with God:

Go to God in prayer daily (Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2).

Read God's Word daily (Acts 17:11). We suggest you begin with the gospel of John.

Obey God moment by moment (John 14:21).

Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19; John 15:8).

Trust God for every detail of your life (1 Peter 5:7).

Hand over control to the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to empower your daily life and witness (Galatians 5:16–17, Acts 1:8).

And finally . . . **find a good church and get involved there**. God's Word admonishes us not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together . . .*" (Hebrews 10:25 NKJV). Several logs burn brightly together, but put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with your relationship with other Christians. If you do not belong to a church, do not wait to be invited. Take the initiative; call the pastor of a nearby church where Christ is honored and his Word is preached. Start this week, and make plans to attend regularly.