

## A GUIDE TO THE PROCESS GOD USES TO CONVERT US INTO HIS CHILDREN

What does it mean to *believe in Jesus*? How does being *born again* work? Do these describe something real, or are they just churchy words we use. Is believing in Jesus nothing more than:

- 1) Saying you're a sinner,
- 2) Saying you're trusting Jesus,
- 3) Going to church,
- 4) Trying to obey him,
- 5) Hoping your efforts are good enough,
- 6) Or else!?!

Or, is there something more to being converted into a believer in Jesus?

Conversion is a *real* spiritual process God uses to change use from a rebel against Him into His child (John 3:3-21). When God converts us we literally begin a new life, one guaranteed to experience God's original purpose for us – living in both His joy and His glory (John 15:1-11)!

We can trick ourselves with an imitation conversion process, believing in Jesus in our own power. But, as Jesus warns, we will run out of power. Failing to grow the fruits that prove God converted us, we'll end up still lost and hopeless (Matthew 7:20-21; James 1:22).

So how can we know God has converted us, and we're not just fooling ourselves? In Jesus' ministry the Bible present a 4-phase process that God uses to convert a person (Matthew 19:16-23; John 4): 1) Spiritual beliefs, 2) Sin and God's law, 3) The gospel, and 4) God's promise. Let's walk through these together.

### **ONE: CONSIDER SPIRITUAL BELIEFS**

Let's talk briefly about these questions:

*Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?*

*Do you think there is a heaven or a hell?*

*If you died tonight, what do you think would happen afterwards?*

### **TWO: CONSIDER SIN AND GOD'S LAW**

We may be familiar with the term "sin" but still have a hard time explaining it. Yes, it means to disobey God's law. But that doesn't quite seem to explain why God gets so upset about sin. This illustration helps show why sin, disobeying God, is so very serious to God and why it should terrify us.

*There once was a great man, a genius in all ways. His inventions that made people's lives better. His works of art inspired people to nobility and virtue. All who knew this great man were transformed, changed for the better, forever.*

*This man had a son whom he deeply loved. The great man loved his son beyond love and promised him a life of joy and satisfaction that surpassed all imagination and wonder. His plan was that his son would inherit all his greatness and build on it a life of further greatness.*

*Yet, instead of being grateful to his father, this son grew to be selfish and prideful. He scorned his father's gifts, and actually thought he was better than his father.*

*One day the son demanded his father give him his inheritance and leave him alone. He took his inheritance and moved to another city where he lived a life of debauchery and depravity. Worse than this, the son stole his father's glory. He claimed his father's inventions and works art were actually his. Like erasing his father's name on a painting and writing his name in its place, the son stole his father's glory, denying his father's very existence.*

This story illustrates why sin is so horrifying – it is denying God who created us and stealing His glory for ourselves. Deep down inside we know the best possible life is to reflect God's glory. We know we were created to do just this (Genesis 1:27-28; 1 Corinthians 11:7).

Yet we listen to the lie that tells us to be like that wicked son, deny our Creator, and claim His glory for ourselves (Romans 1:22-25). We all know this is true, from even as simple a thing as looking at the created world around us. Seeing it, we know there is some sort of “creator,” and we end up feeling guilty as we wonder what or who He is (Romans 1:18-20).

Who wants to admit that they are a glory-stealer (Titus 1:16)?! So we lie and blind ourselves about why we truly think, desire, say, and do the things we do (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:21).

But God is not satisfied to leave His children in such a desperately bad situation. He built into every one of us a diagnostic test that can prove to us that we know God exists and whether or not we are guilty or innocent before him. Let’s apply this test to our circumstances:\*

**GOOD?** – *Would you consider yourself a good person?*

2 Corinthians 13:5: Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.

**KEPT?** – *Do you think you have kept the Ten Commandments? Let’s test:*

Commandment #9 – *no lying*: How many lies have you told? What do you call someone who lies? [A liar.]

Commandment #8 – *no stealing*: How many things have you stolen, even small things? What do you call someone who steals? [A thief.]

Commandment #7 – *no sexual immorality*: Jesus said to look at someone who is not your spouse with sexual awareness is to commit adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28). How many times have you done this? What do you call someone who does this? [A sexually immoral person.]

Commandment #6 – *no murder*: Jesus said to get angry enough to call someone a bad name is to commit murder in the heart (Matthew 5:22). How many times have you done this? What do you call someone who does this? [A murderer.]

Commandment #3 – *no blasphemy*: God says that it is a great evil to use His name to swear or curse (Exodus 20:7). How many times have you done this? What do you call someone who does this? [A blasphemer.]

Ok, so that is only five of the Ten Commandments. How well did you do? Like me when I took the test, not very well. You have the same heart problem we all do:

Matthew 15:19: For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. So, based on your responses, you are a [fill in labels for what we call those who break these commandments].

**INNOCENT/GUILTY?** – *If God were to judge you by the Ten Commandments, would you be innocent or guilty?*

Romans 2:15-16: They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

**HEAVEN/HELL?** – *Since you are a rebel against your Creator, just like the rest of us, when you stand before God’s judgment, do you think you will go to heaven or hell?*

Revelation 21:8: But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

### **THREE: CONSIDER THE GOSPEL**

So how do we escape this judgment? Read each of these verses from the Bible.<sup>†</sup> (If you have time, or later on, look them up and read them in context.) After reading each verse, answer this question: *What is God saying to you?* (I’ll be glad to help with any questions.)

Romans 3:12: All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.

Romans 2:2: We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

Revelation 22:12: Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my payment with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

Job 14:4: Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one.

John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Galatians 1:3-4: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

Romans 10:9-10: because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Colossians 2:13-14: And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

1 Corinthians 1:30: And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

John 5:24: Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Acts 2:21: And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Luke 15:10-24: Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

And [Jesus] said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them.

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."'

And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? This is the story we read earlier about our ownership of sin, those who steal God's glory for themselves. It's a true story; it's our story. Look particularly at the first sentence and then the last paragraph in this passage. What is God saying to you?

#### **FOUR: CONSIDER GOD'S PROMISE**

All that's left for you to do is apply what God has said to you. God promises that all those He calls to believe in His Son will be converted forgiven of their sins and made them His children ((John 6:44; 10:27-30; 1:12-13).

**UNDERSTAND?** – Do you understand these things?

**BELIEVE?** – Do you believe they are true?

**TRUST?** – Do you want to trust in Jesus to save you?

**PRAY?** – If so, let's pray, so you can confess and profess your belief in Jesus. [Here is a sample prayer you can use]:

*God, I admit that I am a sinner; I disobey your law. I've stolen your glory and pursued my own. I know You will judge me guilty, and condemn me for my rebellion against you.*

*I believe You sent Your Son so You wouldn't condemn me, but instead save me. I believe He died in my place, paying the debt owed for my sins, so You could with justice declare me forgiven. I believe He obeyed in my place, providing a record obedience, so You could with love declare me righteous.*

*Right now I repent of my sins and place my faith in Jesus. Because of who He is and what He did, please forgive me, justify me, adopt me, and grow in me the love and life of Jesus. I ask in Jesus' name because you've promised to say yes to anyone who asks through faith in Him. Amen.*

**CHURCH?** – Please come to church with me. This is where God promises to complete in you what He has begun in saving you (Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 10:24-25).

---

\* Adapted from *The Way of the Master*, by Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron (Bellflower, CA: Living Waters Publications) 2006.

† Adapted from *Share Jesus Without Fear*, by William Fay and Linda Evans Shepard (Nashville, TN: B&H Books) 1999.