

A Religion of Reconciliation

One way – Jesus Christ

The consequence of running from God is eternal separation from him. But the great news is, even while we ran from God, he did not give up on us. He sent Jesus Christ to show us the way back to him. In fact, Jesus is God's Son, so by trusting in him we're trusting in God and the perfect way he has made for us (the *only* way - John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5). By dying on the cross, Jesus Christ suffered the punishment for our sins so we don't have to. By being raised again, he guarantees that all who follow him will receive eternal life. He offers this gift to all of us. How do we accept it?

We must put our faith in the real Jesus Christ

Can we just accept the gift and go on about our lives? No! *We can't hide behind the distorted image of a purely gentle Jesus who doesn't require anything of us.* The real Jesus is radical – he requires our lives! The real Jesus said that you must die to your old, sinful ways and be reborn a child of God (John 3:3-5), trusting your heavenly Father for all of life's needs and living to do his will (Matthew 6:25-33).

Are you reconciled to God?

I still hear you thinking, "I think I'm a pretty good person. I pray, go to church and treat others kindly." If that's true then you've missed the point completely! Following Jesus is not like sitting with your feet in the pool – it's diving in head first. It's not trying to balance your own wants against those of God, but it's taking up your cross daily and following him, losing your life for his sake (Matthew 16:24-26)! You have to make up your mind who your Lord is going to be – yourself or Jesus Christ. Have you ever made a decision to radically transform your whole life by entrusting it to Jesus Christ? Do you believe him that much?

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

Your Big Decision

Accepting the gift of Jesus Christ is not just a big decision, it is *the biggest*. Are you ready to die to your old self and awaken to a new life and new identity (which is what baptism is supposed to symbolize)?

Count the cost. It's huge. It's life as you know it.

When you're ready to stop running from God, you can make a heartfelt decision to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior any day, any time – even right now. I can suggest a few things to say in prayer, although the words should really come from your own heart...

Dear God, I believe that you exist and that you created me. I'm sorry that I've been running away from you all my life.

I want to accept your gift of Jesus Christ and be reconciled to you. I believe he died on the cross to pay the penalty I deserve. I believe that he is your Son, that you raised him from the dead, and that you've given him power and glory in heaven forever. I want to share in that inheritance with him as your child.

Please send your Spirit to live in me and make me new.

I give to you my soul, my life, my all.

Thank you, God, for loving me by sending Jesus Christ. Thank you that I can now call you Father.

If you have prayed to accept Jesus Christ and become a child of God, then you have a new family of fellow believers waiting to pray for you, love you and encourage you in your new life. Seek out these people (call the number on the front of this pamphlet if you'd like help).

Now that you have decided to stop running from him, may your Lord Jesus Christ richly bless you every day with the joy and assurance of your salvation!

The Spiritual Truth About Why You Need Jesus Christ



*Is Your Religion Helping You
Seek or Avoid God?*

A Radical Approach to Faith

Your Moment of Decision

A Challenge

When it comes to religion, you are an independent thinker, right? *You* decide what you believe and how you act on those beliefs. Your religion is and always has been a private matter between you and God. You may feel you already believe in Jesus Christ just fine. Ok, fair enough.

How about a deal? Let me make three guesses about your religion. If I don't come anywhere close to describing it, then throw this pamphlet away and go on about your business. But if I hit the mark on any of my guesses, then you seriously consider my point – that you need Jesus Christ.

From the Author

My objective for this pamphlet is to hold a mirror to your faith, to ask you to see a possible disconnect between what you say you believe and what you are doing about it. On November 11, 1984, at age 17, I gave my life totally over to God and made Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord. But to do that I had to break free of my comfortable bedtime and Sunday morning religion which I had really been using to *avoid* God. I had sensed all my life that God wanted nothing less than *all* my heart, soul, and strength – but I had suppressed that truth. If you look deep into your heart, I wonder if you sense this as well. Maybe your religion is keeping you from God.

- Chuck Cruise

Three Guesses About Your Religious Beliefs

- 1. Your beliefs are not limited to any one system of faith** but come from a variety of religious perspectives. You find many religions to be compelling, and you pull the beautiful essentials from each. You wonder why different religions can't get along. Since they're all just different ways of describing the same thing, why can't you have *your* own way?
- 2. You're skeptical of other people's claims of religious experiences**, especially given the age of modern science in which we live, yet you have had certain experiences in your life that made you wonder whether a higher power was reaching out to you.
- 3. You have strong moral convictions**, and while you know you're not a saint, you still feel that you're a pretty moral person (better than many of the religious hypocrites you see). You believe that you follow the essence of Jesus' moral teachings and will be going to heaven when you die.

How accurate were my guesses?

- (a) Not at all – where's the nearest trash can?*
- (b) Somewhat – I'll read on...*

A Religion of Running Away

If I came anywhere close to describing your beliefs, it's only because, like those of most people, your beliefs are part of the *standard way of avoiding a relationship with Jesus Christ*. Here are the tell-tale signs:

- **Denial of ultimate truth** – People avoid Jesus Christ by taking a “cafeteria approach” to faith, picking and choosing tasty truths from among the different religions. But if you study the religions you'll find that each one makes truth claims that completely contradict all the others - they can't all be right! Why, then, do people act illogically when it comes to their faith? Because they don't want to deal with the cataclysmic impact it would make on their lives if they accepted that everything Jesus Christ said is true.
- **Denial of the supernatural** – Lots of people who say they believe in God nevertheless revert to scientific skepticism concerning his acts (creation, the divine inspiration of the Bible, Jesus' resurrection, miraculous healings, millions of transformed lives). Such people hide behind an atheistic worldview that has no meaning for their lives to avoid confronting the vastly meaningful reality of Jesus Christ.
- **Denial of sin** – People work hard to convince themselves and others that they've been “good” enough to get into heaven (if only God were Santa Claus!). Why? Because we are all prideful by nature, easily deceived into self-reliance. But no amount of charity, volunteer work, or going to church can *ever* make up for our having turned our backs on God. We all need Jesus Christ.

So for many people, religion is part of running away from God.