

How Can I Act Like a Believer?

The Gospel should be a Christian's motivation to do the right thing. When facing a decision about whether to do the right thing, we should ask, "How can I show my love for Jesus by my actions?"

"Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted" (2Corinthians 7:10a). In other words, if you repent and ask Christ to forgive you, you are completely forgiven. That ought to end your experience with guilt. You can move on to showing love for Jesus by your actions. On the other hand, if you recognize your guilt for sin but do not go to Jesus to ask for forgiveness, you have nowhere else where you can go to receive forgiveness. The Good News is that we can believe in Jesus, and that He will forgive our sins.

Believing this makes us better people when our actions show that we believe it's true. You may have heard someone say, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." A "dangerous" partial knowledge of the Gospel causes some people to believe it's really okay to sin. People who understood only part of the Gospel may think they've understood the truth, but only understood part of it.

What is the full truth? If you have received Christ's salvation you belong totally to Him¹. If you have received His gift of salvation you must live in obedience to Him². This is not a burdensome, dehumanizing kind of bondage and slavery. It is a commitment filled with joy and celebration³.

A Christian must set aside everything in his or her life that interferes with living for Jesus Christ⁴. Anything that gets in the way must be removed. No matter what it is, if it prevents you from worshipping and serving your Savior in all things, it must go.

Commitment to Christ is a total commitment, with nothing left in reserve. Yet, giving yourself totally to Jesus Christ frees you from:

- A spiral of sinful patterns leading to spiritual death;
- Short-sighted selfish ambitions that hurt others and ourselves;
- Bitterness and hatred of other people;
- Fear that personal needs won't be met;
- Dread that no one cares about us; and
- Ultimately, permanent, physical death itself.

So how does knowing the Gospel change everything in a person's life? First of all, it only changes everything if you receive it. Imagine a person in a dark cellar, who can't turn on the light until touching a finger to the switch. The electric lights do nothing until a finger flips the switch that turns them on. Like the electric light in that cellar, the gift of salvation is always there but you need to become connected to its truth. You do that by receiving Christ's salvation as a gift from God. You recognize your need for forgiveness of your sins. You recognize the sufficiency of Christ to provide that forgiveness. He did this by dying on the cross to pay for our sins⁵. Until you receive the Gospel it is like that light switch in the dark cellar. The electric light is there but it can't help you. Until a finger flips the switch, the darkness remains. Until you tell Jesus, by prayer, that you want to repent of your sin, receive His forgiveness, and give yourself totally over to loving Him ... you will remain in spiritual darkness⁶.

Does this mean that I will have to work hard to believe it's true? We don't need to work at anything. Jesus has done all the work required by dying on the cross and guaranteeing victory over death by rising from the grave. Jesus said that if we have faith the size of a very, very small kind of seed known as a mustard seed, we can move mountains. That's just another way of saying that the most important thing is that you put your faith in Jesus. So, the Christian should focus more on where he or she puts his or her trust, and not so much on how much faith there is.

So, if I only have a little faith, how do I know if the Gospel is true? Things are true whether we know they are true or not. Only God knows everything. If we think we need to know everything before we can decide whether God is true, then we will end up never making a decision. We don't usually live that way. Instead, we make our choices based on what we are able to verify first hand. Then, when we can't learn about something firsthand (which is actually most of the time)

then we need to put our trust in the word of someone else. What Christians are doing is trusting the words of Jesus Christ. If you want to believe in Christ, but lack faith, I suggest that you pray, asking God to give you faith to trust the words of Jesus. The Bible says that those who seek the Lord will find Him. It also says, if you ask you will receive. Just the act of making the prayer indicates that you have at least some small amount faith in Christ. Jesus said even a small amount of faith is all that is necessary.

Finally, what if I really do believe it's all true? It's not enough to simply believe it's true. You need to show it by the way you act. If you love Jesus, you will act like you love Him. If it isn't showing in the way that you live, you need to come to Him now. Ask His forgiveness for not acting in love toward Him. Receive refreshing assurance of His love, forgiveness, and salvation. Next, find ways to show that you love Him in everything you do, in every moment of each day.

Okay, so suppose you decide you really want to live your life fully committed to showing love for Jesus in everything you do and say. What if you sin? You shouldn't at all. You should never consider even a little sin in your life as being okay. You should always aim to live completely free of all sin. However, if you sin, should confess your sins to Jesus. Receive His forgiveness. Get back to living a life showing your love for Him in everything you do and say.

What if I commit a sin and it horrifies me: "How can such evil desires still be in my heart?" You are a sinner saved by grace. Jesus' death and resurrection save you, not some kind of spiritual surgery that removed your sinful nature. Your sinful nature is still there, and it will stay there until you see Jesus face to face. Until then, you will battle with sin that originates with evil desires that come from yourself. It is horrible! Recognizing this is simply acknowledging the truth. The Good News is, that Jesus saved you. He created a new heart in you. It is a heart that will be pure and will last eternity. We will need to repeat this process of repenting and receiving Christ's victory over our sin many times before we see Him face to face. If you have sin, then ask Jesus to forgive you. Never forget that Jesus Christ is our joy, our strength and our victory.

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¹ What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV).

² If you love me, keep my commandments. (John 14:15, KJV).

³ These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:11, KJV).

⁴ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin, which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV).

⁵ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; (1 Corinthians 15:3&4).

⁶ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart of man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. ¹² For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is right unto all that call upon him. ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:8-13, KJV).