



The Ten Questions Intellectuals Ask About Christianity

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It may strike some readers as peculiar to find a chapter with this title included in a volume on science and Christianity. Twenty years ago, as I began giving this series of lectures as a Professor of Chemistry at the University of California at Berkeley, I would have shared this opinion. However, my hosts always try to schedule a "Question and Answer" time of perhaps 30 minutes to one hour following each lecture. And gradually it dawned on me that many of the same questions were being asked at one university after the next. Moreover, many of these recurring questions had little or nothing to do with science. About ten years ago, someone came to the front of the auditorium after the post-lecture questions were exhausted, perhaps at Stanford University, and had the temerity to say "Professor, you did better on the questions than you did on the lecture. Why don't you make up a lecture from your answers to these nonscientific questions?" So here we are. I am indebted to many sources for the answers to these questions, but I regret that many of these sources have been lost. My comments in the preface are especially applicable here. I do recommend in this context Paul Little's book "Know Why You Believe" and acknowledge several helpful answers from my friend Steve Brown of Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando.

1. Is it reasonable to be a scientist and a Christian?

This is actually the first question that many intellectuals ask about Christianity. Since the majority of the present book is devoted to answering this question, my answer here will be exceedingly brief. Namely, that the answer must be "Yes," because so many of the pioneers in the physical sciences were committed Christians. Further, many of today's most distinguished physicists and chemists are Christians. ----

2. What about Adolf Hitler? Wasn't he a Christian?

I have found that in a university audience of 200 students and faculty, there is invariably at least one person for whom this question absolutely dominates. I answer this question by quoting Hitler himself: "The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity.



Bolshevism is Christianity's illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jew." Christianity is, of course, Jewish in its origin, but the rest of the above statement is pure human depravity. Shortly after assuming power in Germany in 1933, Adolf Hitler stated that he intended "to stamp out Christianity root and branch," for "One is either a Christian or a German - you cannot be both." Christianity should be destroyed by force or "left to rot like a gangrenous limb," Hitler argued, so that most Germans will be Christian "never again. That tale is finished . . . but we can hasten matters. The parsons will be made to dig their own graves. They will betray their God to us." -----

3. Who made God?

This is a universal question, in the sense that it is asked in all cultures by persons of all ages above perhaps three years old. God never needed to be made, because He was always there. Prior to the creation of our universe God existed in one or more time dimensions that human beings have not experienced. God exists in a different way from human beings. We exist in a derived, finite, and fragile way, but the Creator exists as eternal, self-sustaining, and necessary, in the sense that there is no possibility of Him ceasing to exist. In philosophy, many errors result from supposing that the conditions and limits of our own finite existence apply to God. -----

4. Can God make a rock so big that he can't lift it?

I had thought this question was a joke until I was asked to answer it on October 13, 1995 before an audience of 1300 people at the University of Michigan. It is indeed true that God is omnipotent. But omnipotence does not mean that God can do literally everything. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism says "God can do all His holy will." God cannot sin. God cannot lie. God cannot change His nature. God cannot deny the demands of His holy character. God cannot make a square circle, for the notion of a square circle is self-contradictory. God cannot cease to be God. But all that God wills and promises, He can and will do. -----

5. Doesn't the inherent subjectivity of morality prove that God does not exist?

The pervasiveness of this question in contemporary society requires a substantive answer:

A. People commonly say that "morality is subjective" or that it is "relative." But when they speak in a moral vein - which is to say, when they pass judgment on human behavior - they do so as moral realists. Most atheists are just as convinced as Christians that Adolf Hitler was an evil person.

B. People resist moral realism because they think it leads to intolerance. In doing so they make two fundamental mistakes. First, they fail to realize that tolerance itself is a value and that they are simply making this particular goal rule over all others. This is itself a form of moral realism. Second, they fail to understand that tolerance and moral realism can coincide, and indeed do in healthy societies.



C. People disagree about how to achieve objectives, but in the abstract they do not usually clash over the truth of any specific value.

i. One rarely hears it said that "justice" or "fairness" or "kindness" or "bravery" or "charity" are not sound principles - in the abstract.

ii. Moral disagreements typically involve the implementation of values, the challenge of trying to integrate them into our behavior. This involves taking into account issues of knowledge as well as concerns about right and wrong.

D. There are essentially no new or revolutionary ideals. People sometimes assume there are new values, simply because the language through which ideas are expressed changes. For instance, an important concept today is "diversity." While you may not find this precise word in the traditional language of morality, such as that used in the New Testament, you will find the concept (e.g., I Corinthians 12:14-31). There Paul talks about the different roles played by different (i.e., diverse) parts of the body of Christ.

E. People are attracted to moral subjectivism or relativism because it exonerates them of guilt. But the very fact that they so strongly desire to perceive themselves as righteous reveals an unacknowledged commitment to moral realism. -----

6. Is the New Testament Picture of Jesus Reliable?

Given the unprecedented claims of Jesus, this is an important question. Shortly after becoming a Christian, I came upon a remarkable book by the British classics scholar Professor F. F. Bruce of the University of Manchester. Dr. Bruce made his academic reputation as a scholar of ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts. Bruce's book is titled "The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?" Therein Professor Bruce argues that "The grounds for accepting the New Testament as trustworthy compare very favorably with the grounds on which classical (Greek, Roman) scholars accept the authenticity and credibility of 'reliable' ancient documents." As just one example, Bruce notes Julius Caesar's "Gallic Wars," of which there are nine or ten existing manuscripts, the oldest of which dates from 850 A.D.

My immediate response to this bit of information from Professor Bruce was "I wish I had known that when I began second-year Latin at East Grand Rapids High School on the first day of school in the autumn of 1959." We spent the entire academic year trying to translate Caesar's "Gallic Wars." I need to confess here that my behavior in Miss Hill's Latin class was less than exemplary. Miss Hill was an elderly unmarried lady, and some of the names we attached to her person cannot be repeated here. If she's in heaven, I've got some apologizing ahead of me. We received marks for both academic performance and behavior at East Grand Rapids High School, and my marks for behavior in Miss Hill's class placed me right on the edge of expulsion from the school. But I would have cheerfully risked it all on that first day of second-year Latin to say in front of the class "Miss Hill, I am regrettably going to have to request a different translation assignment for the year. It has come to my attention that the oldest existing copy of Caesar's "Gallic Wars" is a copy, probably fraudulent, made nearly 900 years after the book was



purported to have been composed. I respectfully refuse to be involved in translating a book that is not reliable."

In the above context, the comparison of Caesar's "Gallic Wars" to the New Testament could hardly be more stark. Specifically, there are some 4,000 extant Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, in whole or in part. The best complete documents go back to 350 A.D. Parts of John's Gospel are authoritatively dated at 130 A.D., perhaps only 50 years after its composition.

John Warwick Montgomery has well summarized this situation: "To express skepticism concerning the resultant text of the New Testament books . . . is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as is the New Testament." -----

7. How could an intelligent 20th century person believe that Jesus rose physically from the dead?

For me this was the most important question, as I have discussed in my essay "From Berkeley Professor to Christian." Recognizing the truth of the resurrection of Jesus does not make a person a Christian, but it can be a giant step in the correct direction. Let me provide seven possibly helpful comments (help from Steve Brown cheerfully acknowledged):

A. If Jesus remained dead, how can one explain the exuberant statements of His closest friends? Forty days after Jesus' death, people hear His friends' shouts of excitement, "We've seen a dead man walking!"

B. If Jesus remained dead, how can a person explain the faithfulness of Jesus' closest friends to the testimony of the resurrection even in the face of their own deaths? Of the eleven apostles, only one died of old age - John - and he was exiled to Patmos, a gruesome island work camp. Jesus' followers died as martyrs, with the truth of the resurrection on their lips. The simple statement "It did not happen" would have spared their lives.

C. If Jesus remained dead, why did 500 people say they saw Him alive (see I Corinthians 15:6)?

D. If Jesus remained dead, how would one explain the credibility of the witnesses? In the first century, countless individuals questioned the firsthand witnesses repeatedly, and their unified yet independent accounts were never disproved.

E. If Jesus remained dead, how does a person explain the inability of the first century skeptics to deal with the resurrection via an alternative explanation? The political power of Rome and the religious establishment in Jerusalem were arrayed to stop the Christian faith. All these powerful forces needed to do was to excavate the grave and triumphantly present the corpse. They were utterly unsuccessful.

F. If Jesus remained dead, how can you explain the reality of the Christian church and its phenomenal growth in the first three centuries of the Christian era? The church of Jesus covered



the Western world by the fourth century. A religious movement built on a lie, and with no military or financial resources, could not have accomplished such a remarkable result.

G. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, his closest friends were an extraordinarily compulsive group of liars. This charge does not fit well with the ethical caliber of the writings of Jesus' disciples. Virtually all religions now concede that the writings of the apostles represent a very high level of moral character. -----

8. Who is Jesus?

I think the best brief answer to this is given by C.S. Lewis in his masterpiece "Mere Christianity." This book should be required reading for anyone with the faintest interest in the life of the mind. Lewis begins with a statement that most of us have heard, perhaps frequently: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." Lewis argues that the above statement is intellectually indefensible. He writes: "That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." -----

9. Why do bad things happen to good people?

For many people this is the biggest question of all. The best simple answer I have seen was scrawled on the side of a vacant, burned out building in Berkeley, California. This was probably the site of some drug war or other nefarious activity. As one approaches the building, one sees in large, very distinct letters the words "Most people want to serve God." The first time I saw these words I was genuinely surprised, as my 18 years as a professor at the university had actually inclined me to the opposite opinion. However, my puzzlement was dissolved when I drove closer and saw in smaller print the words of explanation: "Usually in an advisory capacity."

In his 1955 lecture to the Oxford Socratic Club, C.S. Lewis expressed the same truth in more sophisticated language: "If human life is in fact ordered by a beneficent being whose knowledge of our real needs and of the way in which they can be satisfied infinitely exceeds our own, we must expect a priori that his operations will often appear to us far from beneficent and far from wise, and that it will be our highest prudence to give him our confidence in spite of this." James Packer adds to Lewis's insights: "A god whom we could understand exhaustively, and whose revelation of himself confronted us with no mysteries whatsoever, would be a god in man's image, and therefore an imaginary god."

Human arrogance tends to believe that if we had been in charge of creation we would have done it better. With a little more care about the details, we would have kept the beauty of sunsets, but eliminated cancer and heart disease. The more we understand the processes of the world,



however, the less likely does it seem that this would be possible. The fine tuning of our universe is perhaps its most remarkable characteristic. As finite human beings we should not claim to know God's will exhaustively. But it is clear that God did not intend to create an enormous machine whose sole purpose was the elimination of human suffering. Suffering is very much a part of God's plan for our brief sojourn upon this planet.

As John MacArthur has discussed, the major reality of the book of Job, one of the oldest books in the Hebrew Bible, is the inscrutable mystery of innocent suffering. God ordains that His children walk in sorrow and pain, sometimes because of sin, sometimes for chastening, sometimes for strengthening, and sometimes to give opportunity to reveal His comfort and grace. But there are times when the compelling issue in human suffering is unknowable, because it is for a heavenly purpose that those on earth cannot discern. Stephen Curtis Chapman has well written in a popular song: "God is God and I am not. I can only see a part of the picture He's painting." Moreover, it is unwise, as well as uncharitable, to conclude that the sufferings of others are specifically punitive. The concept of karma (punishment for sins in an imaginary prior life) has no role in the Christian faith.

Why do bad things happen to good people? A humorous variant of this important question goes something like this: "God would have a lot more friends if He treated the ones He already has better." The response to this critique seems obvious: if God rescued from every problem those who are true to Jesus, Christians would not need faith. Their religion would be a great big insurance policy, and there would be lines of selfish people ready to sign up. -----

10. Doesn't the uneven geographical distribution of Christianity around the globe prove that it must not be a universal truth?

No more than the uneven distribution of the understanding of calculus around the world proves that calculus is untrue. Very closely related questions may be expressed in several different ways, but this one captures the essence of the problem. The critical issue must be one of truth, rather than geographical distribution. -----

11. What about other religions?

This is an important but potentially contentious question, with the capacity to produce more heat than light. My intention is to seek the latter rather than the former. One of the more even-handed ways to compare different religions is in terms of the words and lives of their founders. C. S. Lewis made some helpful comments in this regard, recorded in the anthology "A Mind Awake," edited by Clyde Kilby. Therein Lewis writes: If you had gone to Buddha and asked him, "Are you the son of Brahma?" he would have said, "My son, you are still in the veil of illusion." If you had gone to Socrates and asked, "Are you Zeus?" he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, "Are you Allah?" he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, "Are you heaven?" I think he would have probably replied, "Remarks that are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste." The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said (that He was God Almighty, the one through whom the universe was created) is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person



who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man. He was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. Jesus did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects: hatred, terror, and adoration. -----

12. Question from a student at the University of Arizona, February 21, 2001: "I know I'm not perfect, but I'm not a big sinner. Does God really care about my sins?"

Obviously, before a large public audience of University of Arizona students and faculty, no matter how strong the temptation, this was not the time for me to inquire about that person's particular failures to serve God. But I was able to share from my own experience that my sins are not minor. My sin runs too deep: the way I hurt people, my unloving attitude, my tendency to judge others, my refusal to trust God in all circumstances, my inability to get sinful thoughts out of my mind and heart (and the list could go on and on) cause me to tremble in God's presence. Pride and selfishness are an integral part of the human condition, and they are not "minor" sins. Pride and selfishness are the essence of man's rebellion against God. Credit to Steve Brown. -----

13. Will not God accept those of other religions who are sincere?

Let us begin another potentially contentious discussion by noting that all other religions are diametrically opposed to Christianity on the most crucial question: "Who is Jesus Christ?" These worldviews deny that Jesus is God, that He rose again after dying on the cross, and that because of His death, all who trust in Him exclusively can have a full and complete forgiveness of their sins.

Given these essential differences, what is one to conclude about the question of sincerity? No one should doubt the sincerity and intensity of faith of a Hindu holy man, a Sadhu, wandering through India with absolutely nothing to his name but a begging bowl. Such a person is not into religion for the big bucks! But sincerity or intensity of faith does not create truth. Faith is no more valid than the object in which it is placed. The critical point should be, "What is true?" I always encourage my friends to read the four original accounts and see what Jesus claimed about Himself. Not every religion can be true. Most are mutually contradictory. Either one is true and the others are false, or they are all false. Either Christ is who He said He is or He is not. If He is not, then He was lying, He was sincerely deluded, or the stories were all made up about Him. If Jesus is who He said He is, then Christianity is true, and He is the only mediator between God and human beings. -----

14. Hasn't the overall influence of Christianity been negative?

A balanced response to this old question has been given by Dr. Kenneth Scott Latourette, Sterling Professor, Yale University:

Christianity has been the means of reducing more languages to writing than have all other factors combined. It has created more schools, more theories of education, and more systems than has



any other one force. More than any other power in history it has impelled men to fight suffering, whether that suffering has come from disease, war, or natural disasters. The Christian faith has built thousands of hospitals, inspired the emergence of the nursing and medical professions, and furthered countless movements for public health and for the relief and prevention of famine. Although explorations and conquests which were in part its outgrowth led to the enslavement of African people for the plantations of the Americas, men and women whose consciences were awakened by Christianity and whose wills it nerved (e.g., William Wilberforce) brought about the abolition of slavery (in England and America). Men and women who were similarly moved and sustained wrote into the laws of Spain and Portugal provisions to alleviate the ruthless exploitation of indigenous peoples in Central and South America.

Wars have often been waged in the name of Christianity. They have attained colossal dimensions through weapons and large scale organization initiated in (nominal) Christendom. Yet from no other source have there come as many and as strong movements to eliminate or regulate war and to ease the suffering brought by war. From its first centuries, the Christian faith has caused many of its adherents to be uneasy about war. It has led minorities to refuse to have any part in it. It has impelled others to seek to limit war by defining what, in their judgment, from the Christian standpoint is a "just war." In the turbulent Middle Ages of Europe it gave rise to the Truce of God and the Peace of God. In a later era it was the main impulse in the formulation of international law. But for it, the League of Nations and the United Nations would not have been. By its name and symbol, the most extensive organization ever created for the relief of the suffering caused by war, the Red Cross, bears witness to its Christian origin. The list might go on indefinitely. It includes many other humanitarian projects and movements, ideals in government, the reform of prisons and the emergence of criminology, great art and architecture, music, and outstanding literature.

Atheism has in fact engendered greater carnage than "Christendom" in its politicized exploits. But when atheism worked its way into violence and sensuality, it was the logical outworking of some of its assumptions. When politicized Christendom did its evil, it was in violation of the teaching and the very person of Jesus Christ. That is a primary difference in the two worldviews. Finally, it may be noted that just three atheists - Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, and Mao Zedong - were responsible for more deaths than those reported in all the wars of recorded history. -----

15. How can a loving God send people to Hell?

The premise to this question is correct. God loves us. But His love is strong, rather than weak and permissive. The question might equally well be, "How can a perfectly righteous God let self-centered people into heaven?" It betrays a lack of balance to presume upon God's love and ignore His holiness.

No one but God is worthy enough to enter heaven. But because of His love, God wants us to be with Him. Therefore, Jesus' death on the cross, where He paid the penalty for all that those trusting Him exclusively have done wrong, was God's way of simultaneously satisfying His holiness and demonstrating His love.



Consider that sacrifice: God has done everything necessary to rescue people from an eternity separated from Him. What have you done about Jesus' provision? Are you choosing hell rather than heaven? ----

16. What about people who have never heard even the name of Jesus?

Many people have carefully considered this question over the past two millennia. Few thoughtful persons claim to understand God exhaustively. If I did, I would be God, a possibility to which I assign a probability of absolutely zero. But we do know the Bible says God will judge the world with justice. It also says God has made His presence known to all people through nature and through our consciences, so we all find ourselves without excuse (Romans 1:19,20).

The world can be divided into two groups: those who are familiar with the message of Jesus, and those who have not heard yet. I have confidence that God will take care of the latter group with perfect justice. Part of God's provision in that regard is Jesus' explicit command for His followers to go to every nation and people group with His message of eternal life. Many who have not yet heard will hear. But because everyone reading these words has heard, you will need to make a personal decision about the free gift that Jesus offers. ----

17. Why are there so many hypocrites in the church?

Again, the premise is correct. Yes, there are people in the institutional church who do not live the life in Christ they profess. God hates such pretense as much as you do. But businesses, social clubs and other religions all have their hypocrites as well. Regrettably, hypocrisy is a part of the human condition.

My challenge to the reader is to look at Christ and who He claimed to be, rather than focusing on the fallible footsteps of those who follow, or profess to follow, Him. Christianity stands or falls on the life of Christ, not on the performance of His followers. Anything in life that is genuine will inspire counterfeits. The deplorable hypocrisy of some who falsely claim to be Christians has little bearing on the central truth claims of Christianity. John Warwick Montgomery once quipped "If Albert Einstein were arrested for shoplifting, would it make the theory of relativity wrong?"

Jesus Christ's claims are true, and He was not a hypocrite. Will you follow Him? Don't miss out on knowing Jesus because of someone else's failures. ----

18. Won't a good moral life get a person to heaven?

Living a good life cannot get a man or woman into heaven, because God's standard for "good enough" is perfection. In this context, Jesus said "You must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." If God allowed anything imperfect into heaven, heaven would be marred. So who can get to heaven on his or her own merit? No one but Jesus, because only He lived a perfect life.



So how can any ordinary person get there? We cannot live a sinless life, nor can we make up for our wrongs. But Jesus did both. God offers a relationship with Him on this earth and eternity with Him in heaven. What one needs to do is trust in Jesus' death on the cross as the penalty for our sins, paid in full. -----

19. Many people are offended by the "exclusiveness" of Christianity. Can anything be said in response?

A. Christianity is "universal" in the sense that Jesus invites all people everywhere to receive the gift of eternal life made possible by the death on the cross.

B. Since many basic tenets of different religions are contradictory, someone has to be wrong.

C. Exclusivity seems unavoidable. Who wants to board a commercial airplane on which the pilot is not exclusively committed to a safe landing? Does the pluralist not believe exclusively that several religions provide acceptable paths to God? The exclusion of exclusivity is also exclusive.

D. Christianity's uniqueness arises not from the narrow-mindedness of individual Christians, but from the extraordinary claims of Jesus Christ, attested by those who were eyewitnesses of His life, death, and resurrection. -----

20. What should one make of all the different denominations within Christianity?

Let me focus my answer in stating that under the umbrella of "denominations" I would include the Roman Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church Eastern Rite (Uniates), the different branches of Eastern Orthodoxy, and the many forms of Protestantism. Something like one-third of the world's population has at least nominal adherence to one of the above branches of Christianity. My discussion below is not intended to include Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, the Unity School of Christianity, the Boston Church of Christ, Scientology, the Unification Church, and several smaller groups that grossly deviate from the central truths of the Christian faith. I regret having to be explicit here, but I do not want to be misunderstood by the unsuspecting.

I am an advocate of the Ice Cream Theory of denominations. Although I am currently on a low sugar diet, I love ice cream. In fact, I love virtually all flavors of ice cream. I readily admit that when a choice of all flavors is available, I always choose Oregon Mountain Blackberry ice cream. This attitude reflects my view of denominations. I am not embarrassed to say that I am a Presbyterian, having regularly attended the same church for the past 15 years, beginning when I moved from Berkeley to Georgia. However, I have worshipped Christ in many parts of the world where there was no presbyterian church - at Catholic, Orthodox, or several varieties of Protestant churches. Further, I would express my opinion that the different denominations can be helpful, in causing Christians to think deeply and indeed meditate on just what it is that they believe. Firm convictions need not necessarily, indeed should not, lead to rancor among Christians. While we may disagree on the details, we agree on the big picture, which is well



expressed in the words of a contemporary song: "It was all about a Man; it was all about a cross; it was all about the blood that He shed so I would not be lost." -----

21. OK, professor. You promised us ten questions and you delivered twenty. Now let's cut to the chase. How does a person become a Christian?

God exercises tremendous creativity in the countless mechanisms from which he chooses to draw a person into a relationship with Himself through Jesus. Two perspectives on my own experience ("From Berkeley Professor to Christian" and "The Way of Discovery") may be found elsewhere in the present book. In striking contrast, for a mentally handicapped twelve-year-old child to say in complete earnestness "I love you Jesus" may well be sufficient. So I would not be one to limit the way in which a person comes to Christ to a particular formula. That stated, there would seem to be a logical flow of the response to the offer of eternal life that Jesus gives freely to those willing to listen. Humanly speaking, what needs to be done?

A. Repent. There should first be an admission that I have been living as my own master, driven by selfishness, worshipping the wrong things, violating God's loving laws. Repentance means to ask God for forgiveness and to turn from my self-absorption with a willingness to live for Christ and center on Him.

B. Believe. Faith is transferring my trust from my own efforts to the efforts of Christ. I was relying on other things to make myself acceptable, but now I consciously begin to rely on what Jesus did to achieve my acceptance with God. Nothing else is needed for me to be right with God. If I still think "God owes me something for all the good things I have done," I have completely misunderstood the teaching of Jesus.

C. Approach God in prayer in a manner perhaps like this: "I now understand that I am more flawed and sinful than I ever dared to believe. At the very same time, however, I see that I am much more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I turn from my old way of living for myself. I have nothing in my record to merit your approval. But I now rest in what Jesus did, and I ask to be accepted into God's family for His sake." When a person genuinely enters into this transaction, two things happen: (i) that person's accounts are cleared, his or her sins wiped out permanently, and the person is adopted into God's family; and (ii) the Holy Spirit enters one's heart and begins to change that person into the character of Jesus.

D. Follow through. Tell a Christian friend about your new commitment to Jesus. Begin to engage in the basic Christian disciplines of prayer, worship, Bible study, and fellowship with other Christians. -----