

building a boat, even if they didn't believe in God? No. Only faith, an obedient faith, can save.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

- Romans 6:3-4

We see in the Bible that our faith in Jesus will lead us to do certain things. We will publicly and openly state our belief in him. We will admit our sins and do our best not to repeat them (something referred to as “repentance”). We will also be immersed in water, being baptized, to symbolize the burial of our old life and the beginning of our new life as a member of God’s family.

As members of God’s family, we’re expected to try and live the way God wants. He knows that we will still make mistakes, and he’s always willing to forgive us when we do. God’s family is far from perfect, but we’re supposed to be imitating our older brother: Jesus. Since he lived a sinless life, we do our best to eliminate sin from our lives.

I hope you’ll find out more about God’s family, what it means to be part of his family, and the things you need to do to be adopted into that family.

God bless

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INVITED INTO THE FAMILY

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You have been invited to become a member of God's family. I know that sounds strange: ordinary humans entering into a relationship with the God that created them. Yet that's exactly what God has offered us. You'll hear this referred to in different ways: salvation, being born again, coming to Jesus, becoming a Christian, etc. While many other terms are appropriate, I can best relate to the idea of coming into God's family.

"For 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

You see, God is a God of relationships. It was he that came looking for man, not vice versa. The Bible tells us that it was love that motivated God to reach out to man. It was God who first made the gesture of trying to fix our broken relationship.

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

- Romans 3:23

But what happened to our relationship with God?

Why did it need fixing? If he created us, why can't we all just be with him? The way I understand it, it all comes down to God's nature. For example, God is light, so darkness cannot be where he is. God is truth, so all untruth is away from him. God is life, so death is banished from his presence. And God is holy, God is pure, God is untouched by evil. Therefore everyone who has done wrong cannot live with God. And because we all have done wrong, because all have sinned (to use the proper term), we are disqualified from being in God's family.

"You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin."

- 1 John 3:5

What if we don't enter into a relationship with God?

The time is coming when God will forever separate those that are his from those who aren't. Those who are with God will enjoy all the things that he is: life, light, joy, etc. Those who have not chosen to follow God will not be with him and will not have any of those things. A place without God and without the things that God is will be a place that will only have darkness, suffering and death.

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"

- Ephesians 1:7

The stains that sin leaves last a lifetime... and beyond. Only someone who has never sinned can possibly take them away. That's why God sent his son Jesus. Jesus came to earth and lived a life without sin. His unjust death opened the way for us to receive the forgiveness of our sins. His innocent blood is able to wash away the stains of sin, allowing us to be holy like God, allowing us to be adopted into God's family. This is the good news that God has for mankind: through Jesus Christ and his death, God has provided the way in which mankind can have a complete relationship with him.

"That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them"

- 2 Corinthians 5:19

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

- John 1:12

The Bible says that any who believe in Jesus Christ can become children of God. It also tells us that those who believe in him can have unending life. Obviously this means more than just believing that Jesus existed; the kind of belief that gives us hope involves believing that Jesus is who he says he is and allowing our lives to be shaped by that fact.

This kind of belief is called faith. Faith leads to action. I can believe that a man is a doctor, yet still have no faith in him. But if I do have faith in a doctor, then I will follow his instructions. It is no special credit to me if I do what the doctor tells me to do; it is merely a symbol of the faith that I have in him.

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

- James 2:17

I thought faith was just believing.

"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."

- Romans 10:9

There is a famous example from the Bible that helps us understand more about faith and obedience. Most have heard the story of Noah and the ark, how God warned Noah of a coming flood and told him to build a large boat, an ark, to save himself, his family and examples of each species of animal.

God saved Noah by his mercy; Noah in no way earned his salvation. He was saved because of his faith in God. Yet would that faith have saved him if he hadn't built the ark? No. Would someone have been saved just by