

Acts 16:28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.³⁴ Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Basics of Doctrine

In the apostle Peter's stirring message about Christ's sacrifice for all our sins, he told everyone:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

In the book of Hebrews, we find a list of the six basic doctrines of Christianity:

Heb 6:1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Heb 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Matt 4:4 [Jesus] answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"


A Plan for You

To take control of your own spiritual life, you

need to make a plan to do these things:

1. **Pray regularly.** You pick the place and time, but find time to talk to God each day.
2. **Read the Bible.** Almost any version will work, but the New King James is a good version to start. Read it from beginning to end. If some books are too difficult, skip them, but read as much of it as you can.
3. **Study the Bible.** Get an exhaustive concordance or a computer Bible (biblegateway.com, onlinebible.org, esword.net) so that you can find any verse in the Bible by knowing just a couple words in it. Begin by studying the basic doctrines in the past section.
4. **Assemble regularly with other believers.** Share your Bible study with them. You do not need a minister or teacher to do this. Sharing with other people your age is the best. If there are none available locally, try doing it on-line.
5. **Set a goal to repent and be baptized.** Don't do it without thinking, but do not make your path so long that you cannot walk down it.
6. **Don't let the "cares of the world" distract you** (Matt 4:19). Movies, internet, video games, clothes, the wrong friends and other things can take you away from the important.

It is not easy for parents to turn over responsibility for important things to their children. So many Christian teachers emphasize just doing religious things, rather than people learning to make the right choices. You will be tested on this point yourself in about 20 years when your children mature. Remember what it was like to be young, then. As much as possible, honor your parents and live at peace with all people (Ex 20:12; Rom 12:18).

May God bless you as you seek Him! 

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WANTG01

I Want God in My Life, Not My Parent's Religion

If you can answer "yes" to the following questions, this article can help you:

1. Are your parents (or parent) religious?
2. Is their teaching so complex you cannot possibly understand it all now?
3. Do they really claim to love you and try hard to get you to practice religion their way because they think it is best for you?
4. Do you find their religious practice often not applicable to your life situation?
5. Do you find that they are not very interested in your personal beliefs and convictions?
6. Is all of this "driving you crazy"?
7. Do you still desire to worship and follow the God of the Bible?

You can come to God at your age. Many of the prophets of the Old Testament, and Jesus' disciples in the New Testament, started when they were young. God spoke to the prophet Samuel when he was a young man, rather than to the old, but corrupt high priest, Eli (1Sam 3).

God does not expect you to know all that your parents, ministers or teachers know right now. But he wants you to take spiritual responsibility for yourself. This article is **not** simply telling you to quit previous religious practices. It is telling you to establish your own belief in God and commitment

continued inside...

to learn and live His way apart from your parent's religion. If you are going to simply stop your present religious practices, and not replace them with a plan of your own, then you will probably be even worse off.

On the other hand, if you use this article to establish a life-long personal commitment to God, it may be the best thing that ever happened to you. Not because this article is great, but because God is great, and you are looking to Him!

We will first cover a few essential Bible verses, then give a six step plan for your spiritual life.

Jesus: What Is Most Important?

We do not have to guess at which are the most important verses in the Bible, they are identified for us.

Mark 12:29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.' ³⁰ 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

³² So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³ "And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

What Is Love?

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because

as He is, so are we in this world.

¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."

Unfortunately, many religious people teach that God works mostly in their religious group, usually because "they have true doctrine and other groups don't". Some teach that Christians are to love their enemies, but that God tortures his enemies forever—even if they have never heard His Word. Run from teaching like that. God does not like sin, or want us to do it. But the purpose of this world is not for us to suffer, but for us to repent of our sin.

2Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

What Does God Think of People with Little Doctrinal Knowledge but Great Faith?

Let us start with the story of a Roman centu-

tion, an army commander of 100 men, who was not an Israelite and had little understanding of God, but asked Jesus to heal his servant:

Matt 8:7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

¹⁰ When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! ¹¹ And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

This centurion was headed for the Kingdom of God, because he humbly believed in the power of God. It was the same for one of the criminals being crucified with Jesus:

Luke 23:42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." ⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

While this man certainly did not go to heaven with Jesus that day—Jesus was dead the rest of that day, he did receive a promise on that day that he would be in "paradise" because of his attitude. Christ did not use a Hebrew expression for the Kingdom of God or give a complex Biblical explanation of resurrections to the man, but he used the Greek mythology word for "paradise", probably because it was something this man could understand quickly. Jesus was running out of time.

Our last example is a Roman Jailer, with apparently no prior belief in God, who almost killed himself when he thought his prisoners escaped: