



A Right Relationship with God¹

By David Cunningham

A story is told of an accountant who answered an advertisement for a top job with a large firm. At the end of the interview, the chairman asked, “One last question for you . . . What is three times seven?” The accountant thought for a moment and replied, “Twenty-two.”

After the interview and on his way home, the accountant checked himself on his calculator and figured that, because he gave the wrong answer, he had lost the job. But two weeks later he got a call and was offered employment at the same firm. He asked the chairman why he had been appointed when he had been wrong on the simple math equation. “You were the closest one to the right answer,” the chairman replied.

The harsh reality of life is that there are so many people who think that God is like the man who conducted the interview. They think it does not really matter what you believe as long as you are close to the truth.

Our society cringes when we proclaim that the Bible is true, and that we can know absolute truth. We live in a postmodern² culture where the prevailing wisdom is that there is no absolute truth. And, as the thinking goes, if there is no absolute truth, there is no absolute way to live. So the postmodernist reasons that he can live

any way he wants as long as he does not hurt someone else in the process. But the Bible not only claims to be true, it claims to be the source for everything we need to live life.³

Postmodernism teaches that everyone’s opinion of truth is equally valid. This is commonly called “inclusivism.”⁴ The following quote attributed to President George W. Bush in an October 4, 2007 interview with Dubai based *Al Arabiya* is a good example of postmodern inclusivism.

Well, first of all, I believe in an Almighty God, and I believe that all the world,

whether they be Muslim, Christian, or any other religion, prays to the same God. That's what I believe. I believe that Islam is a great religion that preaches peace.⁵

Just because President Bush believes that does not make it true. In fact, his only standard of authority for such a statement is *his own belief*. "That's what I believe." He does not quote any source of authority outside of himself. Sadly, that is a major problem in our world today. People have rationalized that their beliefs are valid and true — even if they do not come from an authoritative source.

While postmodernism teaches inclusivism, the Bible teaches "exclusivism." Exclusivism claims that there is only one authoritative source of truth (the Bible) and that there is only one way to heaven (Jesus Christ).⁶ In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me." No one can come to the Father except through the person of Jesus Christ.

Do Muslims worship the God of the Bible? No. Do Jehovah Witnesses worship the God of the Bible? No. Do Mormons worship the God of the Bible? No. Each of these religions deny the deity of Jesus Christ and

have put together a set of rules to try to reach Heaven. The problem for them is that they are not only misguided, but God is not impressed with their efforts. The Bible paints a very bleak picture for those who try to manufacture their own way to heaven. It calls man's best attempts to gain favor with God "filthy rags."⁷

The Bible teaches that for you to have a right relationship with God there are at least four things that are essential.

I. KNOW WHO YOU ARE

Do you understand that you are a totally depraved sinner and therefore totally incapable of reaching God on your own?

You might have heard someone say before, "You've got to get a person lost before you can get them saved." Well that is partially true. A sinner must recognize his sinful condition before a holy God and he must realize his total inability to save himself from the penalty of sin.

The part of that statement that is a little concerning, though, is the inference that you or I might have something to do with getting someone saved. While you or I may be the agent that God uses to give out the truth

of the sinner's condition and need of salvation, the Bible is very clear that no one can be persuaded to believe the Gospel unless God first opens the lost person's eyes. In John 6:44, Jesus says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him." God is the initiator of salvation.

Why is God the initiator in salvation? Because Ephesians 2:1 says "you and I were [born] dead in our trespasses and sins." And, since we were born dead in our trespasses and sins, we do not have the desire nor the capacity to seek God.⁸ The Bible is clear that it is our sinful condition that stands in the way of a right relationship with God. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." There is a huge chasm between God and man because of man's sin. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." What man deserves for his sinfulness is eternal separation from God. Man deserves eternal death.

So the first thing you need to know before you can be saved is that you are a sinner in need of a savior. You have offended a holy and righteous God and your sinful condition is something that you personally cannot remedy.

II. KNOW WHO JESUS CHRIST IS

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the holy Son of God, the risen Savior and Lord, and the only one who can provide salvation from your sin and its penalty?

Of course, it is not enough to simply know that you are a sinner in need of a Savior if you do not know Who the Savior is. The Bible proclaims that Jesus Christ is the only one Who can provide the way of salvation from sin and from the penalty of sin.

So with all that said . . . Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus is God — Jesus Himself said in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Titus 2:13 says that Christians are "Looking for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

Jesus is Holy — Isaiah 6:3 tells us that Jesus is perfectly holy, and therefore cannot commit or approve of evil.⁹ Because Jesus is holy, He requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Jesus is the Risen Savior — Acts 4:12 says, “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” First Corinthians 15:3-4 says that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Jesus is Creator — According to John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, Jesus Himself created all things. Psalm 103:19 tells us that He owns everything and rules everything. Because He is the Creator, He has absolute authority over our lives. As His creatures, we owe Him nothing less than our total allegiance, obedience and worship.

Jesus is Lord — Romans 10:9-10 identifies Jesus Christ as Lord. As God, He is Lord and Master over every person and everything. Philippians 2:10-11 says “that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow . . . and that every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Jesus is Judge —
2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says,

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and

to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

And so for you to have a right relationship with God, first you need to know who you are. Second, you need to know who Jesus Christ is.

III. KNOW WHAT JESUS ALONE PROVIDES

Do you believe that salvation from sin is found only in the person of Jesus Christ?

Even though God’s justice demands death for sin, His amazing love has provided a Savior, Who paid sin’s penalty and died for sinners. First Peter 3:18 says, “Christ . . . died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God.” Jesus Christ’s death on the cross of Calvary has perfectly satisfied the righteous demands of God’s justice, thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him¹⁰

John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift

of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.” Trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of one’s sins is the only way to a right relationship with God.

And so you must first know who you are. Second, you must know Who Jesus is. Third, you must know what Jesus provides.

IV. KNOW THAT ALL OF THIS APPLIES TO YOU

Have you repented of your sin and believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, lest any man should boast.” It is impossible to gain salvation through performing certain works or good deeds. We could never be good enough to reach God’s standard of perfection; therefore we need grace. Grace is God giving man something that man does not deserve.¹¹

We receive His grace through placing our faith in Who He is and what He has accomplished on our behalf. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall

be saved.”

True and saving faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.¹² It is agreeing with God that you are a sinner, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from your sin and pursue holiness.¹³ The true follower of Jesus Christ desires to make Jesus the Savior and Lord of his life with everything that is in him.

Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes.” “The power” that Paul refers to is in the message of “the Gospel”¹⁴ and not the messenger or the method. It is the Gospel that we are called to proclaim and it is the exclusive Gospel that sinful man must embrace and believe to have a right relationship with God.

End Notes

¹ Some of the content above was taken from the tract, *Who Do You Say That I Am?* published by Grace to You.

² www.theopedia.com/Postmodernism as of 3/16/09. “Postmodernism is a relativistic system of observation and thought that denies absolutes and objectivity.”

³ 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16.

⁴ www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/inclusivism as of 3/16/09. Inclusivism is “the practice or principle of being inclusive and acceptance of other belief systems.” In regards to salvation, inclusivism “posits that even though the work of Christ is the only means of salvation, it does not follow that explicit knowledge of Christ is necessary in order for one to be saved. In contrast to pluralism, inclusivism agrees with exclusivism in affirming the particularity of salvation in Jesus Christ.” www.theopedia.com/Inclusivism as of 3/16/09.

⁵ Quotation taken from iraq.usembassy.gov/20071005_bush_al_arabiya.html as of 3/16/09.

⁶ www.theopedia.com/Exclusivism as of 3/16/09. “Exclusivism (in Christianity) refers to the fact that orthodox Christian doctrine maintains only faith in the Jesus Christ of the Bible leads to salvation or heaven. Christianity is exclusive in that its teachings indicate that the faith of other sects or religions will not lead to eternal life.”

⁷ Isaiah 64:6.

⁸ See Romans 3:10-11.

⁹ See James 1:13.

¹⁰ See Romans 3:26.

¹¹ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, S. C.: Ambassador Emerlad International, 2002) 199. Grace is “undeserved favour bestowed upon those who are positively deserving of the wrath of God.”

¹² *Ibid.*, 379.

¹³ See Acts 26:18, 20.

¹⁴ www.theopedia.com/Gospel as of 3/16/09. “The word *gospel* originates from the meaning of the New Testament Greek word *evangelion* meaning ‘good news’ . . . The Gospel is epitomized by Jesus Christ in the following proclamation: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the *good news* (Mk 1:15).”