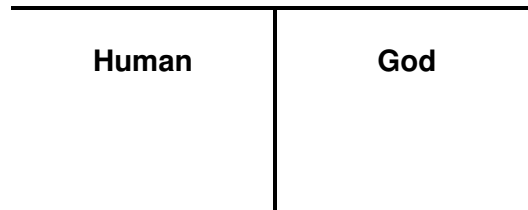


The Gospel

One Way of Presenting the Good News

God's Creation

📖 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ... God created man in his own image,¹ in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them ... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (*Genesis 1:1, 27, 31, NIV*)²



Harmonious relationships; humans “very good,” without shame.

Our Problem

? What is the evidence that there is a “problem” in this world, and in our lives? How would you describe the problem? How would you describe the problem on a *personal* level?³

📖 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Romans 3:23*)

📖 “... your sins have separated you from God” (*Isaiah 59:2a*)

? How would you define “sin?”⁴

📖 “... the wages of sin is death (spiritual separation from God, the Source of life)” (*Romans 6:23a*)

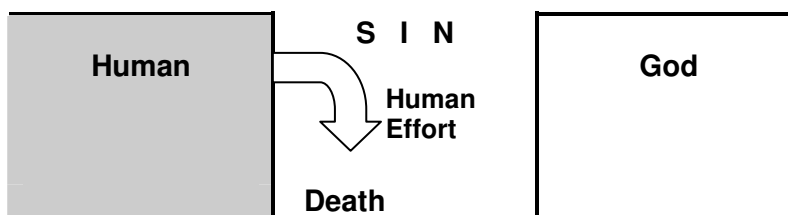
See the next page.

¹ The “image of God” (1:27) is commonly described as the reflection of God’s communicable attributes (those qualities of God for which at least a partial counterpart can be found in his human creations). The image of God in us includes spiritual life; moral consciousness; ability to think abstractly, appreciate beauty; capacity to relate to God and other humans, and to represent God (to exercise dominion over the earth). In their original condition, the first humans “were both naked (exposed to each other and God), and they felt no shame” (*Genesis 2:25*).

² Genesis 1-2 reveal the ideal purpose of man in God’s creation: To live in harmonious relationship with God, and also with other human beings; To acknowledge the authority of God and to serve and obey him; To work and take care of his creation - to rule over the earth. In these ways, human beings “glorify” (honor, worship, and reflect) God.

³ The “problem” may be perceived and described in different ways depending on the culture and personal experience of the person. In the West, Christians emphasize moral law, disobedience to God; and the resulting guilt, judgment, and penalty. In the East, people may express the problem in terms of failure to “be” what they are expected to be; and the resulting shame. In the Middle East, people might perceive the problem in terms of defilement and shame. Distinctions have been made between “guilt-based” and “shame-based” cultures. “Guilt is a feeling and/or condition occurring when one has broken or not kept a divine or human law, while shame is a feeling and/or condition stemming from a shortcoming in one’s state of being either before God or peers” (Bruce Thomas, *EMQ*, July 1984).

⁴ In the Old Testament, the most common Hebrew root for “sin” is *ht*, which generally conveys the idea of missing the mark, or deviating from the goal. The most common New Testament word for “sin” is *ἁμαρτία* (*harmartia*) which has a meaning equivalent to the Hebrew *ht*. Other Hebrew and Greek words are used to specifically denote unfaithfulness, rebellion, deliberate wrongdoing, wickedness, error, violation of God’s law, etc. Thus the biblical concept of sin cannot be limited to the meaning of one of these words. I have defined sin as “any attitude or action that is opposed to the nature and will of God.” In other words, “sin is that condition and activity of human beings that is offensive to God, their Creator” (*The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 946).



Broken relationship; shame, guilt; humans cannot make themselves acceptable to God.⁵

? Why did God allow sin to enter the world?⁶

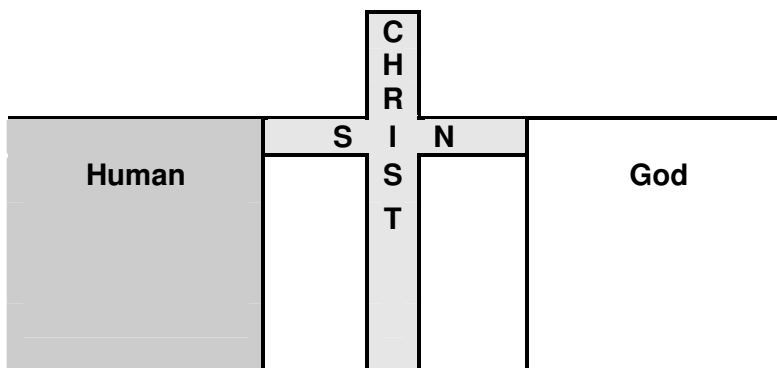
God's Solution

Jesus – The Lamb of God (John 1:29)

📖 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this; While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NIV)

📖 “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice⁷ for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10, NIV)

📖 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV)



Jesus took our sin, shame and guilt on Himself, and died in our place. By doing this, he provided a way of reconciliation (restored relationship) to God.

⁵ The Bible presents our situation as hopeless without God. It is like we are in deep dark pit, and it is impossible for us to get out. We cannot save ourselves. Only God is able to rescue us. It is only by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

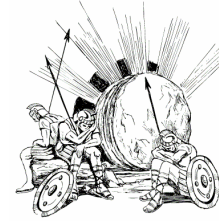
⁶ God purposed to make human beings morally responsible (consistent with being created “in his image”). God does not force us to love, honor and obey him. God gave humans the freedom to make choices. The first man and woman chose to disobey God and go their own willful way. Humans have been making wrong choices ever since.

⁷ See Jay's *Atonement* for an explanation of “atoning sacrifice.” The meaning of Christ's death is explained in biblical terms such as “atonement” and “reconciliation” (restoration of relationship); “redemption” and “ransom” (the price paid for release from captivity and/or punishment); and forgiveness of sins. This paper does not include detailed explanations of these terms. The main point is that Christ's death was necessary to rescue us from the results of our sin. The necessary result of sin is death (separation from God). Jesus died in our place so that our relationship with God could be restored. This provision is a gracious gift from God. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Jesus – The Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25-26)

- 📖 "... I want to remind you of the gospel ... For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." (1 Corinthians 15:1a, 3-5, NIV)
- 📖 "... God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." (Acts 2:23-24, NIV)

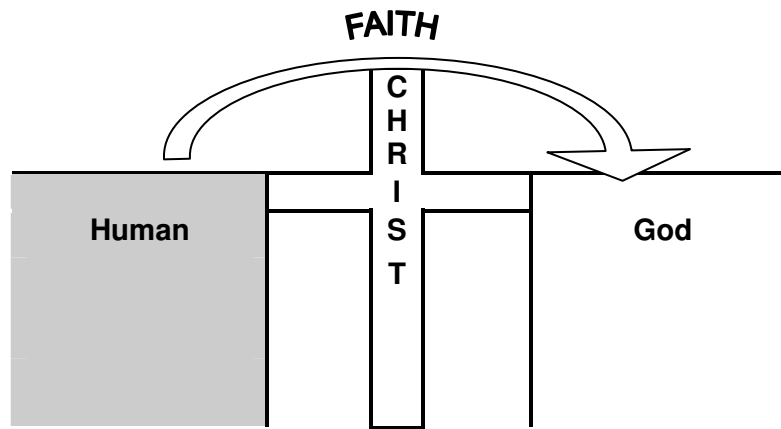
? How important is Jesus' resurrection to the gospel?⁸



Our Response

- 📖 Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, NIV)
- 📖 "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved ... As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:9, 11, NIV)
- 📖 "... to all who received [Jesus Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12, NIV)

➔ The appropriate response is "faith."⁹



Jesus Christ is the "bridge" (the Way) back into a relationship with God. Through faith in Christ, our shame and guilt are removed, and we are adopted into God's family.

⁸ The resurrection of Christ is essential to the Christian faith. Paul wrote, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile (useless); you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17, NIV). The historical evidence for the resurrection is very strong. See Jay's articles *The Reliability of the New Testament* and *The Resurrection of Christ*.

⁹ The New Testament word for "faith" is πίστις (*pistis*). The word "believe" (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) comes from *pistis*. Biblical "faith" is confident belief and trust in God. Christian faith is not "blind faith." It is a faith based on sufficient evidence to be firmly persuaded, even if some of the things believed are future or unseen. Also, this faith is not based on human intellect alone, but is enabled by God's grace, and is evidenced by human action, including a willingness to turn from our sin (repent) and invite Jesus Christ to take control of our life through the Holy Spirit.

Becoming a “Christian” (Follower of Christ)

Steps to a New Relationship with God

- Confess your problem – a broken relationship with God because of your sin.
- Be willing to “repent” – turn from your sin, and turn toward God.
- Believe and trust in God’s solution – Jesus Christ died for your sins, and was raised from the dead, so that you could have a new relationship with God.
- Through prayer, receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – invite Jesus Christ into your life, and give Him control of your life through the Holy Spirit.

An Example of What to Pray (make it your own prayer) ¹⁰

- Dear Lord, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I need Your forgiveness. I want to turn away from my sins, and have a new relationship with You. I believe that Jesus died for my sins, and was raised from the dead. I now invite Jesus into my life – to be the Lord of my life, to rule in my heart from this day forward. Help me, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to know and do Your will. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for saving me, and making me Your child. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



A Statement of Faith¹¹

We believe in ...

- One God, existing eternally in three persons as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ: His deity, true humanity virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension, and visible return to earth.
- The Holy Spirit, Who convicts men of sin and sets apart the believer to a holy life.
- The Bible as the Word of God, fully inspired, inerrant in the original writing, and of absolute authority in faith and life.
- The sinfulness and helplessness of man and his inability on his own to produce any act worthy of God's acceptance.
- Salvation as a gift of God's grace apart from human merit, received on condition of faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Church in its universal form, composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Its visible form is the body of believers organized locally for worship, prayer, teaching, edification, service, and evangelism.

¹⁰ This prayer is just one example among many. There are no “magic words” required to become a Christian. God knows your heart, and that is what is most important. If you want to receive Christ, pray from your heart.

¹¹ Almost all Christian organizations have a “statement of faith.” It is important to know what supposed Christian organizations believe. The statement of faith printed here is from the Blacksburg Christian Fellowship website.