

Becoming a Christian is the most incredible event that will ever take place in your life. You have found peace with your Creator.

You have found everlasting life! Be assured—God will never leave you nor forsake you. He has brought you this far and He will complete the wonderful work He has begun in you. God knows your every thought, your every care and your deepest concerns.

Let's now look at some of those possible concerns. First, and of primary concern—do you have “assurance” of your salvation? The Bible says to “make your calling and election *sure*” (2 Peter 1:10, italics added), so, let's go through a short “checklist” to make sure that you are truly saved:

1. Are you aware that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16), and that He died for the sins of the world?

- 2 Save Yourself Some Pain
2. Did you come to the Savior because you had sinned?
 3. Did you “repent” and put your faith in Jesus?
 4. Are you convinced that He suffered and died on the Cross and that He rose again on the third day?

God acquits us from the Courtroom of Eternal Justice on the *grounds* that Jesus Christ paid our fine. We are “justified” (made right with God) by His suffering death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was God’s seal of approval of the fact that His precious blood was sufficient to pay the fine.

Think of it this way. You have violated the law and face a \$50,000 fine. You tell the judge that you are truly sorry for your crime, but he answers, “So you should be—you have broken the law! *Now, can you pay this fine?*” He can only acquit you if the fine is paid. If someone else pays your fine, *then* he can let you go, but he must have “grounds” on which to release you.

The reason we need a substitute (a savior) to pay our moral “fine,” is because we have broken God’s Law. To see *how much* we have transgressed this Law (the Ten Commandments), we will go through some of them—Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen something? Jesus said, “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Have you ever lusted? If you answered “Yes” to these questions, you admit that you are a lying, thieving, adulterer at heart, *and you have to face a holy God on Judgment Day!* If you have used His name in vain, then you are guilty of “blasphemy”—you’ve substituted God’s holy Name for a curse word. Perhaps you’ve hated someone, then the Bible says that you are a murderer. You have violated God’s holy Law, and you’re in BIG trouble. On Judgment Day, you will be found guilty and end up in Hell. That’s *why* you need the Savior.

The Bible says that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He is rich in mercy and provided a Savior: “God so loved the world

that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Jesus Christ died on the cross, paying the death penalty for sinners. Hundreds saw Jesus after His resurrection; it’s no fairy tale. Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies about the promised Savior, written in the Holy Scriptures hundreds of years before His birth.

Merely being sorry for your sins, or confessing them to God won’t help you. Salvation is a free gift. It cannot be earned by good works or religious rituals. You must repent, and your faith must be in Jesus Christ alone. He is the only “grounds” for God to grant mercy towards you. If you’re not sure of your salvation, make Psalm 51 your own prayer. Then show your gratitude by obeying His command to be baptized.

Let’s now look at some more important principles that can save a great deal of pain.

1. Feeding on the Word—*Daily Nutrition*

A healthy baby has a healthy appetite. If

you have truly been “born” of the Spirit of God, you *will* have a healthy appetite. The Bible says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Feed yourself every day without fail. Job said, “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). The more you eat, the quicker you will grow, and the less bruising you will have. Speed up the process and save yourself some pain — vow to read God’s Word every day, *without fail*. Say to yourself, “No Bible, no breakfast. No read, no feed.” Be like Job, and put your Bible *before* your belly. If you do that, God promises that you will be like a fruitful, strong and healthy tree (see Psalm 1). Each day, find somewhere quiet, and thoroughly soak your soul in the Word of God.

There may be times when you read through its pages with great enthusiasm, and there may be other times when it seems dry and even boring. But food profits your body whether you enjoy it or not. As a child, you no doubt ate desserts with great enthusiasm. Perhaps

vegetables weren't so exciting. If you were a normal child, you probably had to be *encouraged* to eat them at first. Then, as you matured in life you were taught to discipline yourself to eat vegetables. This is because they would physically benefit you, even though they may not have at the time, brought pleasure to your taste buds.

2. Prayer — *“Wait For A Minute.”*

It has been well said that God always answers prayer. Sometimes He says, “Yes.” Sometimes He says, “No.” Sometimes He says, “Wait for a minute,” and a day to the Lord is a thousand years to us (see 2 Peter 3:8). That means that a ten year wait for us, is 14 minutes and 24 seconds to God, so ask in faith but rest in peace-filled patience.

Surveys show that more than 90% of America prays daily. No doubt they pray for health, wealth, and happiness, etc. They also pray when grandma gets sick, and when grandma doesn't get better (or dies), many end

up disillusioned, and some end up bitter. This is because they don't understand what the Bible says about prayer. It teaches that sin will stop God even *hearing* our prayers (see Psalm 66:18). It teaches among other things, that if we pray with doubt we will not get an answer (see James 1:6-7).

Here's how to be heard:

1. Pray with faith (see Hebrews 11:6).
2. Pray with clean hands and a pure heart (see Psalm 24:3-4).
3. Pray genuine heart-felt prayers, rather than vain repetitions (see Matthew 6:7).
4. Make sure that you are praying to the God revealed in the Holy Scriptures (see Exodus 20:3-6).

How do you “pray with faith?” Someone once said to me, “Ray, you’re a man of great faith in God,” thinking that they were paying me a compliment. They weren’t. If I said to you, “I’m a man of great faith in my doctor?” To whom is the compliment? It’s to the doctor. If I have

great faith in him, it means that I see him as being a man of integrity, a man of great ability — that he is trustworthy. I give “glory” to the man through my faith in him. The Bible says that Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able to also perform” (Romans 4:20-21). Abraham was a man of great faith in God. Remember, that is not a compliment to Abraham. He merely caught a glimpse of God’s incredible ability, His impeccable integrity, and His wonderful faithfulness to keep every promise He makes. His faith gave “glory” to a faithful God.

As far as God is concerned, if you belong to Jesus, you are a VIP. You can boldly come before the throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:16). You have access to the King, *because you are the son or daughter of the King*. When you were a child, did you have to grovel to get your needs met by your mom or dad? I hope not. So, when you pray, don’t say, “Oh God, I *hope* You will supply my needs.” Instead say something like,

“Father, thank You that You keep *every* promise You make. Your Word says that You will supply *all* my needs according to Your riches in glory, by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). Therefore, I thank You that You will do this thing for my family. I ask this in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.”

It was the great missionary, Hudson Taylor, who said, “The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see Divine power wrought in the place of weakness, failure, and disappointment, let us answer God’s standing challenge, ‘Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things of which thou knowest not of.’”

How do you get “clean hands a pure heart”? Simply by confessing your sins to God, through Jesus Christ. His blood cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7-9). When you confess them to God through Jesus, God will not only forgive your every sin, He promises to *forget* that sin (Hebrews 8:12). He will even justify you on the grounds of the sacrifice of the Savior. That means He will count it as though you have never

sinned in the first place. He will make you pure in His sight — sinless. He will even “purge” your conscience so that you will no longer have that sense of guilt that you sinned in the first place. That’s what it means “to be justified by faith.” That’s why you need to soak yourself in Holy Scripture — to read the letters to the churches and see the wonderful things that God has done for us through the Cross of Calvary. If you don’t bother to read the Will, you won’t have any idea of what has been bequeathed to you.

How do you pray “genuine heart-felt prayers”? Simply by keeping yourself in the love of God. If the love of God is in you, you will never pray hypocritical, or selfish prayers. In fact, you won’t have to pray selfish prayers if you have a heart of love. When your prayer-life is pleasing to God, the Bible says that He will reward you openly (see Matthew 6:6).

How do you know that you are praying to “the God revealed in Holy Scripture?” Study the Word. Don’t accept the image of God portrayed by the world, even though it appeals to the

natural mind. A loving, kind fatherly-figure, with no sense of justice or truth appeals to guilty sinners. Look to the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai. Gaze at Jesus on the Cross of Calvary — hanging in unspeakable agony because of the Justice of a holy God. Such thoughts tend to banish idolatry.

3. Fellowship — *Flutter by Butterfly*

Pray about where you should fellowship. Make sure the place you are going to call your church home calls sin what it is — sin. Do they believe the promises of God? Are they loving? Does the pastor treat his wife with respect? Is he a man of the Word? Does he have a humble heart, and a gentle spirit? Listen closely to his teaching. It should glorify God, magnify Jesus, and edify the believer. One evidence that you have been truly saved is that you will have a love for other Christians (see 1 John 3:14). You will want to fellowship with them. The old saying that “birds of a feather flock together” is true of Christians. You gather together for the

breaking of bread (communion), for teaching from the Word, and for fellowship. You share the same inspirations, illuminations, inclinations, temptations, aspirations, motivations, and perspirations — you are working together for the same thing, for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is why you attend church — not because you have to, but because you want to.

Don't become a "spiritual butterfly." Send your roots down. If you are moving from church to church, how will your pastor know what type of food you are digesting? The Bible says that your shepherd will have to give an account to Him that has entrusted you to him (Hebrews 13:17), so make yourself known to your pastor. Pray for him regularly. Pray also for his wife, his family, and the elders. Being a pastor is no easy task. Most people don't realize how many hours it takes to gather a fresh sermon each week. They don't appreciate the time spent in prayer and in the study of the Word. If the pastor makes the same joke twice, or shares something he has shared before, remember, he's human. So give

him a great deal of grace, and give him double honor. Never murmur about him. If you don't like something he has said, pray about it then leave the issue with God. If that doesn't satisfy you, humbly approach the Pastor and talk to him personally, as there may just be some sort of misunderstanding. If you are still not satisfied, leave the church rather than divide it through murmuring and complaining.

A woman once spread some hot gossip about a local pastor. What he had supposedly done became common knowledge around town. Then she found that what she had heard wasn't true. She gallantly went to the pastor and asked for his forgiveness. The pastor forgave her, but then told her to take a pillow full of tiny feathers to a corner of the town, and in high winds, shake the feathers out. Then he told her to try and pick up every feather. He explained that the damage had already been done. She had destroyed his good reputations, and trying to repair the damage was like trying to pick up feathers in high winds.

The Bible says that there is life and death

in the power of the tongue. We can kill or make something alive with our words. The Scriptures also reveal that God hates those who cause division among the brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19). Pray with the psalmist, “Set a watch O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

Remember the old saying, “He that gossips *to* you, will gossip *about* you.”

4. Thanksgiving – *Do the Right Thing*

For the Christian, every day should be Thanksgiving Day. We should even be thankful in the midst of problems. The Apostle Paul said, “I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation” (2 Corinthians 7:4). He knew that God was working all things together for his good, even though he was going through trials (Romans 8:28).

Problems *will* come your way. God will see to it personally that you grow as a Christian. He will allow the storms, to send your roots deep into the soil of His Word. We pray more in the

midst of problems, but it's been well said that you will see more from your knees, than you will on your tip toes.

A man once watched a butterfly struggling to get out of its cocoon. In an effort to help it, he took a razor blade and carefully slit the edge of the cocoon. The butterfly escaped from its problem . . . and immediately died.

It is God's way to have the butterfly struggle. It is the struggle that causes its tiny heart to beat fast, and send the life's blood into its wings.

Trials have their purpose. They make us struggle

—they bring us to our knees. They are the cocoon in which we often find ourselves. It is there that the life's blood of faith in God helps us spread our wings. Faith and thanksgiving are close friends. If you have faith in God, you will be thankful because you know His loving hand is upon you, even though you are in a lion's den. That will give you a deep sense of joy, and joy is the barometer of the depth of faith you have in God. Let me give you an example. Imagine if I said I would give you

one million dollars if you ripped out the last page of this booklet and mailed it to me. Of course, you don't believe that I would do that. But imagine if you did. Imagine if you had knowledge of more than 1,000 people who had sent in the page, and every one received their million dollars — no strings attached. More than that; you had actually called me, and I had assured you personally that I would keep my word. If you believed me, *wouldn't* you have joy? If you didn't believe me—no joy. The amount of joy you have would be a barometer as to how much you believed my promise. We have so much to be thankful for. God has given us “exceeding great and precious promises” that are “more to be desired than gold.” Do yourself a big favor — believe those promises, thank God continually for them, and “let your joy be full.”

An old farmer once had an ungodly relative visit him. After the farmer had bowed his head and thanked God for the food they were about to eat, the relative rudely said, “What did you do that for? There's no God. We live

in an age of enlightenment.” The old farmer smiled and said, “There is one on the farm who doesn’t thank God before he eats.” The relative sat up and said, “Who is this enlightened one?” To which the farmer quietly replied, “My pig.”

5. Evangelism – *Our Most Sobering Task*

It was late in December, 1996. A large family gathered in Los Angeles for the joyous occasion of wrapping Christmas presents. It was a big family because it was the product of two marriages. There were so many gathered that night, five of the children slept in the garage. It was a converted structure, kept warm during the cold night by an electric heater which sat by the door.

During the early hours of the morning, the heater suddenly burst into flames, blocking the doorway. In seconds the room became a blazing inferno. The frantic 911 call revealed the unspeakable terror of the moment. One of the children could be heard screaming, “I’m on

fire!” The distraught father vainly rushed into the flames to try and save his beloved children. He received burns to 50% of his body.

Tragically, all five of the children burned to death. They died because steel bars on the windows of the garage thwarted their escape. There was only one door, and that was stopped by the flames.

You are back in time. It's minutes before the heater burst into flames. You peer through the darkness at the peaceful sight of five sleeping youngsters. You know that at any moment the room is going to erupt into an inferno and burn the flesh of horrified children. *Can you in good conscience walk away?* No! You *must* awaken them, and warn them to run from that death trap!

The world sleeps peacefully in the darkness of ignorance. There is only one Door by which they may escape death. The steel bars of sin prevent their salvation, and at the same time call for the flames of Eternal Justice. What a fearful thing Judgment Day will be! The fires of the wrath of Almighty God will burn for eternity.

The Church has been entrusted with the task of awakening them before it's too late. We cannot turn our backs and walk away in complacency. *Think of how the father ran into the flames.* His love knew no bounds, and our devotion to the sober task that God has given us will be in direct proportion to our love for the lost. There are only a few who run headlong into the flames to warn them to flee (Luke 10:2). *Please* be one of them. We really have no choice. The Apostle Paul said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). It was the "Prince of Preachers," Charles Spurgeon, who said the words, "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that." A Christian *cannot* be apathetic about the salvation of the world. The love of God in him will motivate him to seek and save that which is lost.

You probably have a limited amount of time after your conversion to impact your unsaved friends and family with the Gospel. After the initial shock of your conversion, they will put you in a neat little ribbon-tied box, and keep you

at arm's length. So it's important that you take advantage of the short time you have while you still have their ears.

Here's some advice that will save you a great deal of grief. As a new Christian, I did almost irreparable damage by acting like a wild bull in a crystal showroom. I bullied my mom, my dad, and many of my friends into making a "decision for Christ". I was sincere, zealous, loving, kind, and stupid. I didn't understand that salvation doesn't come through making a "decision," but through *repentance*, and repentance is God-given (see 2 Timothy 2:25). The Bible teaches that no one can come to the Son unless God "draws" him. If you are able to get a decision but they have no conviction of sin, you will almost certainly end up with a still-born on your hands.

In my "zeal without knowledge" I actually inoculated the very ones I was so desperately trying to reach. There is nothing more important to you than the salvation of your loved ones, and you don't want to blow it. If you do, you may find that you don't have a second chance.

Fervently pray for them, thanking God for their salvation. Let them *see* your faith. Let them *feel* your kindness, your genuine love, and your gentleness. Buy gifts for no reason. Do chores when you are not asked to. Go the extra mile. Put yourself in their position. You know that you have found everlasting life. *Death has lost its sting!* Your joy is unspeakable — but as far as they are concerned, you have been brain-washed. You have become part of a weird sect. So your loving actions will speak more loudly than ten thousand eloquent sermons.

It is because of these thoughts that you should hold back from *verbal* confrontation until you have knowledge that will guide your zeal. Pray for wisdom and for a sensitivity to God's timing. You may have only one shot, so make it count. Keep your cool. If you don't, you may end up with a lifetime of regret. *Believe* me. It is better to hear a loved one or a close friend say, "Tell me about your faith in Jesus Christ," rather than you saying, "Sit down. I want to talk to you."

It is important to realize that we should share

our faith with others *whenever* we can. The Bible says that there are only two times we should do this — “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). The Apostle Paul *pleaded* for prayer for his own personal witness. He said, “. . . that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19-20).

Remember that you have the sobering responsibility of speaking to other peoples’ loved ones. Many times when you open your mouth for the Gospel, you may be the answer to the earnest prayer of another Christian. Perhaps he has cried out to God that He would use a faithful witness to speak to his beloved mom or dad, and *you* are that answer to prayer. You are that true and faithful witness that God wants to use.

Never lose sight of the world and all its pains. Keep the fate of the ungodly before your eyes. Too many of us settle down on a padded pew and become introverted. Our world

becomes a monastery without walls. Our friends are confined solely to those *within* the Church, when Jesus was the “friend of sinners.” So take the time to deliberately befriend them for the sake of their salvation. Remember that each and every person who dies in their sins has an appointment with the Judge of the Universe. Hell opens wide its terrible jaws. There is no more sobering task than to be entrusted with the Gospel of Salvation — working with God for the eternal well-being of dying humanity.

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