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I WANT TO BELIEVE, BUT . . .

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS ON
Baptism, Church, Christian commitments
When Soo Ann first heard about Jesus and his offer of forgiveness and eternal life, she felt that she had finally discovered something—and someone—worth believing in. Convinced that Jesus is God, she wanted to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour of her life. But there was a snag: having come from a family who followed traditional beliefs, she feared her parents would object. What, she wondered, would they say?

To her surprise, they didn’t oppose the idea completely. “It’s your life and your belief,” her mother told her. But, she quickly added, Soo Ann was not to get baptised until she and her husband were gone. “As our only child, you must perform the traditional rites at our funerals. If you are baptised and cannot do this for us, then who will?”

This has put Soo Ann in a difficult position. She wants
to follow Jesus, but being a filial child, she also wants to honour her parents’ wishes. So she is holding back. If she cannot undergo baptism yet, she figures, then she cannot become a Christian. Henry is hesitating about the same decision, but for a different reason. He has a fixed weekend routine, and it’s a good one. On Saturdays, he spends the day with his family. On Sundays, he joins his friends for a few rounds of badminton in the morning. Or, if he feels tired, he sleeps in and enjoys a leisurely brunch. It’s a great schedule, and he likes the flexibility. He can’t imagine having to wake up early every Sunday to go to church. “If I become a Christian,” he reasons, “I will lose this freedom.”

You might share the same concerns as Soo Ann or Henry. Or you may have other doubts and questions that need to be addressed before you can make the decision to become a Christian. Don’t worry: these thoughts are only natural when considering such an important decision. It shows that you have thought about Christianity seriously, and want to be sure that you’ve considered all the possible issues before saying yes to God.

These issues are not easy to deal with, and we understand how troubled you may feel. However, we urge you to persevere in your search for God. Keep asking questions and seeking the truth. God will respond because he loves you; he wants you to know him so that you can receive his gift of salvation, which he offers to us through Jesus. In the meantime, we hope to address some commonly-asked questions about what it really means to be a Christian.
A BIG COMMITMENT

Some people hesitate to follow God because they fear that a lot is expected of Christians. They may think they need to become a “good” person, or that they must observe many rituals and practices, such as getting baptised and going to church. You too may wonder if becoming a Christian means making commitments you aren’t ready for. Let’s take a look at some of them.

1. WHY DO I NEED TO BE BAPTISED?

This is something that Jesus himself underwent and told us to do. Some churches will physically immerse you in water, while others will sprinkle or pour water over you in front of the whole congregation.

Baptism is a public confession of our faith. It is an outward sign of the change that goes on inside—it declares our decision to follow Jesus, and symbolises our identification with him and with his death and resurrection. The Bible says: “When we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death . . . For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives” (Romans 6:3–4).
2. MUST I BE BAPTISED TO BE SAVED?

As churches may encourage or even urge you to get baptised soon after you turn to God, you might be wondering if you must be baptised to be saved.

The short answer is: No. Baptism is a sign of salvation, not a requirement for it.

The Bible makes it clear that we are saved by Jesus through his death and resurrection, and nothing else: “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Nothing we can do—no ritual, tradition, or action—can save us.

However, as we mentioned earlier, baptism is something that Jesus wants us to do, because it shows that we have decided to follow him. It is a public declaration of our faith. Your family may object to you being baptised because they don’t want you to declare your new faith officially, or because they don’t understand why you need to be baptised. You may need to address their concerns and explain why you want to be baptised. Ask God for wisdom and strength to speak to them sensitively, and to determine the right time to be baptised.
3. Why Do Christians Talk So Much About Going to Church? Must I Attend Church When I Become a Christian?

To answer these questions, it would help to understand what church is all about.

When you commit your life to Jesus, you join a body of people who have made the same decision. Paul, an early follower of Christ, notes that we are “no longer strangers and foreigners. [We] are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. [We] are members of God’s family” (Ephesians 2:19). United in this faith, we are called to worship God together. The Bible urges believers to meet regularly so that we can praise God together, study the Bible together, encourage each other, and help each other out. As we seek to grow closer to God amid challenges in our personal lives, fellow believers can aid, advise, inspire, and pray for us.

When fellow Christians meet to worship God together regularly, it is called a church. This can be a structured or formal meeting held in a building designed for the purpose, or an informal gathering held in someone’s home. Jesus promised: “For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). We encourage you to join a church where you live, so that you can grow in your faith there.

If you face challenges in attending church—either from rules that prevent you from going to formal church meetings, or opposition from your family and community, we encourage you to ask God for wisdom and help in finding other ways to meet with fellow Christians for support.
4. IF I BECOME A CHRISTIAN, WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO? DOES IT MEAN I HAVE TO BE “GOOD”?

Many people feel that they are unworthy of being forgiven and accepted by God because of their sins, weaknesses, and character flaws. They may be struggling with guilt over things they have done in the past, or with feelings of failure over current addictions and inadequacies. You too may say, “Well, I do believe Jesus died and rose for me, and I want to follow him. But I don’t think I can live up to his expectations. I’m not good enough.”

Let us quickly assure you of this comforting truth: you don’t have to be good to be saved. All of us are saved by God’s grace, not by our good behaviour. The Bible contains many accounts of Jesus personally reaching out to prostitutes, corrupt officials, adulterous people, and those who were most despised and hated. In fact, he gave the greatest attention to the ones who felt most unworthy and unwanted in society. “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do,” he explained. “I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners” (Mark 2:17).

ALL OF US ARE SAVED BY GOD’S GRACE, NOT BY OUR GOOD BEHAVIOUR.
5. ISN’T IT DIFFICULT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

When we become Christians, we are called to be like Jesus—to reflect the image of Jesus by becoming more like him in character. That can seem difficult or even impossible, given how flawed we are.

But God does not place a heavy burden on us. We don’t have to try to be “good” on our own. Rather, as we commit our lives to God and grow closer to him, he will work in our lives and, over time, change our hearts so that we will desire to live up to his standards. And he will give us the ability to do so.

Jesus himself reassures us that following him does not mean taking on a heavy burden. He said, “I won’t lay anything heavy ... on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11:28–30, The Message).

At the same time, we must be willing and ready to seek God’s help in giving up any habits, practices, and attitudes that do not honour or please Him, and in pursuing things that do. The Bible lists some of the sinful actions and attitudes that we are to give up, and the godly characteristics that we will develop as we grow in our relationship with God. “When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these . . . But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:19–23).

Ultimately, becoming a Christian is entering into a relationship with God. It is not about following a set of rules and regulations. Rather, as you come to know Jesus better and grow closer to him, you will naturally desire to live in a way that pleases him. At the same time, he will help you to do this by giving you the strength, wisdom, and guidance to follow in his footsteps.
SEEKING GOD’S HELP

To be sure, deciding to follow Jesus will require a commitment on your part. But you’re not alone if you find such commitments challenging. Even those who have been Christians for a while struggle with them. Some, facing the same dilemma as Soo Ann, made the decision to follow Jesus, but waited some time before being baptised. They did this after their parents came to accept their decision. Some, like Henry, took a while to get used to going to church on Sundays. And many of us still struggle daily with behaving more like Jesus. So don’t be disheartened—God understands your hesitation and doubts.

Following Jesus is a journey: God will be delighted by your first step of faith, and if you keep seeking him, he will give you the wisdom and guidance to follow him. He is not a demanding God, but a loving God who will honour your honest desire to follow him. He will send his Spirit to live in your heart and guide you on your journey of faith. “I will come to you,” he tells us. “The Holy Spirit . . . will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you” (John 14:18, 26).
MAKING A DECISION

Becoming a Christian means accepting and believing the following things:

• God created us to have a loving relationship with him.

• But all of us have turned against him by living life according to our own standards and rejecting his authority.

• This makes us sinful, for which the penalty is death.

• But God provided a way out for us by sending his son, Jesus Christ, to die for us.

• Jesus died, but rose to life three days later, showing that God accepted his sacrifice on our behalf.

• This is God’s gift of salvation—we don’t deserve his forgiveness, nor can we earn it by any means; it is only through his grace that we can be forgiven and saved.

The statements above are the basic truths of the gospel; in fact, they’re the only ones you need to establish in your heart right now. God will help you
deal with the issues of baptism, going to church, and Christian living as you begin your journey with him. If you feel ready to follow Jesus, we encourage you to make the decision right now! Tell God personally that you believe in his son Jesus, that he died for you on the cross and rose to life, and that you are ready to accept him as your Lord and Saviour. God is always listening, so all you have to do is to speak to him as if he was in front of you. If possible, find a Christian friend to pray with you and be a witness.

You will find what is commonly called the “Sinner’s Prayer” below, which takes you through the main points. The words are only a guide; what is important is the sincerity of your prayer, for that is all that matters to God.

   God, I know I have sinned against you. I believe that Jesus is your Son, that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins, and that he rose from the dead as proof. Now I accept your offer of full forgiveness and eternal life. I accept Jesus as your gift for my salvation.

If you want to find out more, we have materials that you might find useful. Use the attached form to request more resources, or go to www.ourdailybread.org/locations
Do you want to find out more about Jesus? *A Story of Hope* is a booklet that can tell you more about who Jesus is and what He has done and will do for you.

**Scan the QR Code** to read it online, or contact us if you would like to receive a print copy.

We invite you to also check out [odb.org](http://odb.org) to view our other printed and digital resources.