

Arraigned Marriage

Evangelism plays a very important part in Christianity because that is how the Christian faith is spread. What does it take to attract others to the Christian faith? What sets Christianity apart from all of the other religions in the world? Before we can effectively spread what we have, we have to know what we have.

Generally, when a Christian starts the process of winning someone over to his faith, he asks them this question. Do you have a relationship with God? Are you saved? If you died today, do you know where you would spend eternity?

Just what does it mean to be saved? According to most Christian's understanding, when someone says they are saved, it means that they have repented of their sins, they have invited Jesus into their life, and because of that they will spend eternity in heaven with the Father. It is their "get out of hell" ticket!

Romans 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

I did all of this when I was six years old. I was a Christian! I was safe. I was saved! The only trouble is, I confessed something that I did not really believe in my heart. I have had some awesome times with God as a Christian, but I have also experienced a lot of frustration. I felt a lot of condemnation and guilt because in my mind I was not righteous and did not measure up to the expectations God had of me.

I looked up the word salvation, and according to Strong's Concordance of New Testament words it means: to be saved or delivered, to be rescued, to experience victory, aid, prosperity, freedom, and health. How many Christians that say they are saved are experiencing these things? I sure wasn't! Something was wrong with my understanding of the salvation concept!

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life
17 For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

And, just what is this everlasting life or life eternal that the scripture talks about? What does it mean when it says we won't perish? Again, does it strictly mean that we will be safe in the after life, or is there more to it than that?

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Life eternal is all about living a quality life that is connected to having a correct knowledge about who God is and how he sees us; And it is not about having to wait until we have entered into the after life to experience it! Someone who has a correct understanding of God and the things that he has planned for man should be experiencing these things now, in this life! Now is the day of salvation, not tomorrow, not after you die and go to heaven, Now! If you fail to experience these life changing things promises, then what Jesus died for was all in vain.

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

This raises another question. Just where is the kingdom of God; Is it somewhere up in the sky?

Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: **21** Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The kingdom is within us. It is working from the inside out. It is not something that we can physically see with our natural eyes. We have to have spiritual eyes to see spiritual things. The Holy Spirit is the "insider" that connects us to kingdom principles.

Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

It is more than just someday I will be with God in heaven! Salvation is all about experiencing a sense of righteousness, peace and joy in this life, now while we are alive, and extending throughout eternity.

When we are saved, we say we have a relationship with God. What does it mean to have a relationship with God? Does it mean that I have just said the salvation prayer, or is there more to it than that? What does that relationship look like?

Joh 17:21 *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

Everyone is looking for the same thing. They are looking for something that will bring a sense of value to their lives. They are looking for someone or something that makes them feel like their lives have a purpose; that their life is important in the scope of things; that they are loved and valued. The trouble is, even those of us who call ourselves Christians often find ourselves lacking that very thing. We are not the only ones who claim to know and love God who have missed it!

Isaiah 29:13 *..This people draws near to me with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but their hearts are far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men.*

A lot of times we claim to know him but yet we feel separated from him. We don't feel like we deserve to be one with him. The scripture says that

the Father loves Jesus just like he loves himself because they are one. It also says that the Father and the Son love us the same way because we are one with them. The trouble is, we don't see things the way that God does. We don't feel like we deserve the Father's love because the knowledge of our sins haunts us. That is exactly what Jesus came to save us from; That is exactly what salvation is all about; what not perishing is all about!

Everyone is looking for the same thing, but do we really have what they are looking for, or do we fit in the same category as the Jews did in Isaiah 29:13...we draw near with our mouths, but our hearts are far from him.

The Jews respected God. They praised and adored him, but they held themselves at a distance from him because in their minds, they did not feel like they were worthy or had the right to say that God loved them like he loved himself. How do we see God? Do we really know Him the way he wants us to know him?

Let me tell you a story that will illustrate the point that I am trying to make. Every year my husband and I host mission teams in various Latin American countries. A couple of years ago one of the women on one of the trips was an Egyptian. In her culture, marriages are arranged by the parents.

When it came time for her to marry, she did not marry because she fell in love with the man that her parents chose. She married because it was the acceptable thing to do and she felt like she had no choice! She was stuck in a loveless relationship with a man and that relationship was held together by fear. Women do not hold the same value as a man does. She knew that if she ever left him, she could be killed, and her children would be taken away and given to her husband. Divorce was not an option!

We often have an arranged marriage mentality with Jesus. We are talked into the relationship...heaven or hell, which do you choose? It is a marriage of convenience that is held together by fear, not love. His acceptance and love is conditional to our performance. And of course, as you already know, the standard of performance that we think is required of us is impossible to measure up to. We see ourselves like the Egyptian woman was trained to see herself; "beneath" her master.

Only love can initiate love. People would naturally gravitate towards God if they felt like he really loved them, if they felt like he understood them. Life eternal is all about walking hand in hand with God in a love relationship.

Salvation is really coming to an awareness of the love that God has for all of mankind. It is about coming to the sense of our God given identity made possible through the sacrifices that Jesus made for us on the cross. It is all about feeling cherished and worthy and secure in his love. It is all about being set free from the condemnation and guilt that comes when love has a condition attached to it. It is all about being set free from the “less than” attitude that we have about ourselves.

The real message of the GOSPEL brings people to an awareness of who they are.

Understanding God's love causes people to boldly run to Him. No man can come to the Father unless the spirit draws him. God initiates the process. God initiates God moments in our lives that cause us to fall in love with him. It is easy to confess loyalty to God with our mouth when our hearts are fully persuaded that he loves us.

God's number 1 priority in our lives is that we understand how much He loves us, not how much we love him.

1 John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*

Remember Isaiah 29:13.. we have an un-natural fear of God that causes us to feel distanced from God: a fear that comes when we don't know him as He is.

1 John 4:17 *Herein is our love made perfect, 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 casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.*

*He that feareth is not made perfect in love. **19**We love him, because he first loved us.*

1 Corinthians 13 says that even if it seems like we are well grounded Christians who understand the word, if we don't know how much God loves us, we are nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (**Don't understand how much God loves me**), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

The ultimate proof that our Christianity is valid is when we feel loved by God.

Galatians 5:4 *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. **5** For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. **6** For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

Unless we know how much God loves us, it is impossible to have hope in the midst of the adverse circumstances that come our way. When we really understand how much God loves us, we will not be jealous of one another, and we won't be easily offended. **1Corinthians 4:6-13**

In order to experience the fulness of God, we have to be rooted in His love!

Ephesians 3:17 *at Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; **19** And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God f. **20** Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

