



A Personal Message

There is a personal message for you from God: He loves you and wants you to be a part of His kingdom.

All too often people hear the wrong message about God. Some common misconceptions about the Christian God include:

- He is an angry ogre who will punish you for your sins;
- He is a mystical, impersonal “force” of good, but few are privileged to experience it;
- He is a fine creator but has removed Himself from contact with anyone;
- He’s too “complicated” (“holy”) (“mysterious”) (“pure”) (“good for me”) (add you own here);
- He’s probably the same as the god of all other religions, just with a different name;
- He’s too good and I’m too bad to have Him care anything about me.

If there is anything that *does* make God angry, it’s the fact that Christian leaders themselves have often failed to present a complete picture about God. Often, they have emphasized His justice over His love (“You will surely go to hell if you continue to sin”), they have preached His Law over His grace (“Keep the Ten Commandments, or else”), and they have taught His demand for obedience over His desire for relationship (“Just obey Me whether you like it or not”).

The true message that God wants you to hear is this: *He loves you and wants you to have a personal relationship with Him.* He not only desires you to experience His love, He also wants you to express His love to others. The Bible is the story of how to experience and to express God’s love.

Because God is who He is and you and I are who we are, God gets to design the plan for experiencing and expressing His love. Here is the abbreviated version of His plan, as presented in the Bible.

- When God created a man and a woman, they not only experienced a perfect, loving relationship with Him, but they also experienced and expressed perfect love with one another.
- That perfect relationship was shattered when the man and the woman broke the love relationship by sinning against their creator. That broken love relationship has plagued mankind ever since.
- Man has tried desperately but failed to return back to that perfect relationship. This is because he has attempted to do so on his own terms by inventing false religions and belief systems. Some—agnostics, atheists and existentialists—have even given up on the notion that a loving relationship with God can be had.
- God, therefore, set in motion a plan to restore as many as those who desired back into a perfect loving relationship with Him. The means by which He has done this is through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- For God's creation to be restored back into a loving relationship with Him, all the unloving things ever done contrary to God's plan (acts and deeds, words, thoughts and beliefs, i.e., sin) had to be justly dealt with. This is why Jesus, God's Son, came into the world, and this is why Jesus, God's Beloved Son, suffered an unjust death on the cross. Only a perfect man and divine being could adequately satisfy God's requirement for justice. The offer of His Son and Jesus' willingness to go to the cross was the greatest love God could possibly give and mankind could ever know.
- Jesus' sacrifice on the cross did not automatically save all mankind from the consequences of sin or the exercise of God's justice. Therefore, God set one condition for being restored back into a loving relationship with Him: receive Jesus Christ as one's personal Lord. Receiving Christ as one's personal Lord is to receive God as one's personal God. Receiving Jesus Christ means to make Him the new center, the new focus, the new love of one's life. This is

- When a man or a woman receive Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord, God begins a process of restoring the ability to experience and express His love. The Bible teaches that the very first thing He does is adopt you into His family (which is another way of saying “into His kingdom”). You therefore have a new identity: you are a child of God. He also assures us that we will live forever with His Son, and that all our unloving deeds (sins past, present and future) are forgiven.
- But now God wants to change us so that we can experience and express His love. He knows how weak we are, how selfish we are, and how far we’ve strayed from being able to express His love. God therefore sends us a helper. This “Helper” is called the Holy Spirit. When we receive Jesus as Lord by faith, God sends His Helper into us to help us change; that is, to begin the process of experiencing and expressing His love.
- The Helper’s first priority is to help us understand God’s love message, the Bible. The Helper opens our eyes to see the truth that is in God’s Word. We begin to change when we begin to believe God’s Word, for to really believe God’s Word is to be willing to be changed by it. That is, God’s Word is incarnated into us and we therefore change to be the person God originally intended us to be.
- God assures us that with the presence of the Helper, we are never alone. Though we may fail many times at expressing God’s love (we have a lot to learn and even more to change), He will always be there for us. It is the one who perseveres who really begins to experience the beauty and majesty of God’s love, and it is the one who never gives up who emerges as a living expression of God’s love.

Perhaps you have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord. Or, perhaps you have believed the wrong things about God and none of what you have done has worked. Just remember this: *God loves you and wants you to be a part of His family.* In fact, He loves you so much that if you were the only person living on earth, He would still have sent His Son to die for you on the cross. That’s how great the love of God is: He loves everyone, but He also loves you personally. The truth is that the

more you have removed yourself from God's love, the more He loves you! He weeps that you are not experiencing His love, the love of a perfect Father. He grieves that you have hurt yourself so many times by not knowing about His love for you. And He hangs His head in sorrow that you have believed so many things that are not true about Him, or failed to believe the things that are true.

The real question is this: is there any good reason *not* to begin to experience and express God's love? If you answered "No" to that question, then I encourage you to begin having a personal relationship with God right now. Don't wait for more information. Don't put it off until tomorrow. Begin your new life today. Say a prayer like this to begin to experience and express God's love.

Dear Lord God, I have failed You in so many ways.

I know that I have never experienced Your perfect love, and I know that I have failed so many times to love others the way You wanted me to love them.

I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that I have sinned against Your love.

I acknowledge that I have believed things that are not true according to Your Word, the Bible, and I acknowledge that I have failed to believe and accept the things that are true. I have rejected Your Truth.

For these things, I am sorry. As the Bible says, "I repent of my sins." I therefore accept Jesus Your Son as my personal Lord. I affirm this by saying, "Jesus, I want You to be the Lord of my life."

Lord God, having received Jesus as my Lord, I now thank You for forgiving me of all my sins.

I thank You for granting me eternal life, simply because I accepted Your offer of love and said this prayer in my heart by faith.

I thank You for sending the Holy Spirit into my life to help me change. From here on, for the rest of my life, I want more than anything to experience and express Your love.

In the name of Your Son Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.

My friend, if you said this prayer in your heart...welcome to the family of God! May the Lord continually bless you in your new relationship with Him.