

The news filled him with remorse over their broken relationship. Hurrying home, he rushed into the room and threw himself on his mother's bed. In a flood of tears he begged her to forgive him.

She drew him close and whispered, "Son, I would have forgiven you long ago if you'd only asked."

If you have drifted away from God—or have not yet come to know Him—please think about how eager your loving heavenly Father is to welcome you home. He wants more than anything else for you to accept His offer of pardon. Jesus loves you. He died for you. He is always willing to forgive you. So respond to His gracious invitation to repent. Confess your sins. Simply believe that God forgives you, and he does. Trust Him! Trust His promises.

Step 2. Receive a new life from Jesus.

Your part in receiving a new life from Jesus is to believe that Jesus has really saved you. Accept without question the fact that He has forgiven and cleansed you, taken away your old life of sin, and given you an entirely new and changed life.

"All . . . who believed in his name, he gave the right [power, authority, privilege] to become children of God." —John 1:12.

As a child of God, you have "the right" to receive a new life from Jesus. As we have said, you can't achieve it on your own—it's a gift from your heavenly Father! Jesus gives such an absolute promise in order to remove our insecurities and doubts.

What is God's part in giving us a new life?

"Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'" —John 3:3.

According to Jesus, a believing, repentant sinner is actually born into a new life. It is a miracle that only God can perform. He promises:

"I will give you a NEW HEART and put a NEW SPIRIT in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." —Ezekiel 36:26.

Jesus transforms our heart—our feelings and behavior—and dwells "in us" (Colossians 1:27). This new life is not just a nice, spiritual idea; it's a hard, solid fact, a resurrection from spiritual death to an entirely new life and existence.

Step 3. Live for Jesus every day.

The Christian life involves a daily turning away from selfishness, and bonding with Jesus as our loving Friend. We grow in this new life by strengthening our relationship with Jesus. This means spending quality time with Him, building honest and open communication. God has given us five

divine aids for spiritual growth: Bible study, prayer, meditation, fellowship with other Christians, and sharing our experience with others.

Living in Christ doesn't mean we never make mistakes. But when we stumble and sin, we claim Christ's forgiveness, and keep going. We're headed in a certain direction, and we know Christ remains a living presence in our hearts.

5. THE JOY OF THE SECOND CHANCE

Harold Hughes received many honors during his distinguished career as a U.S. Senator, but the one that meant the most to him came shortly after his commitment to Christ.

Harold was studying the Bible alone in his living room one evening when he felt a nudge at his elbow. He looked up. It was his two small daughters, standing quietly in their nightgowns. He stared at them for a moment; they had changed so much, and he had missed so much during his devastating battle with the bottle.

Then Carol, the younger said, "Daddy, we've come to kiss you good-night."

The father's eyes blurred. It had been so long since the children had come for his embrace. Now their beautiful clear eyes held no fear. Daddy had come home at last.

Jesus does truly give people a second chance. He takes the most hopeless cases and creates new beginnings.

The Savior longs for each one of us to come home at last. Have you accepted Christ's loving invitation? Receiving God's forgiveness and cleansing is as simple and profound as opening your arms for a child's embrace.

If you have not yet trusted in Christ as your personal Savior, you can do so right now by praying something like this:

"Father, I am sorry for my old life of sin. Thank you for sending your Son to this world to die in my place. Jesus, please forgive my sins and come into my life and save me. I want a second chance at life—I want to be born again. Even more, I want to establish a day-by-day relationship with You. Thank you for performing this miracle in me. In Jesus name, Amen."

Make this wonderful discovery: When we do the coming, Jesus does the saving.



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DISCOVER

Guide 6

A Second Chance at Life

After living most of his life as a Buddhist, an elderly man in Singapore who had become a Christian was asked, "Mr. Lim, what difference do you find between being a Buddhist and being a Christian?"

"That's easy," he answered. "Since I've found Jesus as my Savior, I have such a peace in my heart."

That's what happens when we center our lives on Christ.

"You [God] will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

—Isaiah 26:3 NKJV. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

Living the Christian life results in perfect peace—a perfect sense of security and well-being.

Those who have made this discovery have found the only way to a second chance at life—Jesus!

1. WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE LOST TO BE SAVED

It's possible for a physically alive person to be having what some call a good time, and still be dead—that is, spiritually dead.

"YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND SINS, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, THE [EVIL] SPIRIT WHO IS NOW AT WORK in those who are disobedient." —Ephesians 2:1, 2.

Satan leads a spiritually dead person down a descending spiral of sin and disobedience. But the wonderful truth of the gospel is that God loves such doomed people. He loves them while they are dead in their sins, and offers them a full and free deliverance from their predicament.

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN TRANSGRESSIONS . . . [to] show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." —Ephesians 2:4-7.

God loved us when we had nothing lovable about us. His grace created in us a new life in Christ. We can't change ourselves, but God can. When we come to Him in faith and submission, He gives us a second chance at life as a free gift.

2. FROM WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE SAVED?

(1) We need to be saved from sin.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." —Romans 3:23.

To put it bluntly: we don't live up to what we know is right. A parent under stress may blow up and wound a child emotionally. A person may become incensed at another driver and almost cause an accident. A student may grow resentful and whisper unkind things about another student. A businessman may plan to "forget" about a certain source of income at tax time. "All have sinned"; that's the human condition.

How does the Bible define sin?

"All wrongdoing is sin." —1 John 5:17.

We need to be rescued from all kinds of unhealthy habits and compulsions: lying, abusive anger, lust, bitterness, to name a few.

"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness." —1 John 3:4.

So we need to be saved from sin—breaking God's commandments.

(2) We need to be saved from a broken relationship with God.

"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you." —Isaiah 59:2.

Unforgiven sin cuts off our relationship with God. Christ came to restore trust in God, which Satan had undermined.

(3) We need to be saved from eternal death—sin's penalty.

"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." —Romans 5:12.

(4) We need to be saved from a sinful, unhappy, empty life.

For the sinner, life is a dead-end street.

(5) We need to be saved from a sinful world.

We must be rescued from a world full of sin and its results—misery, heartache, loneliness, war, sickness, and death!

3. WHO CAN SAVE US?

Only Jesus can save us.

(1) Jesus can deliver us from sin.

"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." —Matthew 1:21.

A Hindu told a Christian friend, "I find many things in Hinduism not found in Christianity, but there is one thing Christianity has that Hinduism does not have—a Savior." Christianity is the only world religion offering people a Savior.

(2) Jesus can save us from our broken relationship with God.

"You were separate from Christ . . . without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." —Ephesians 2:12, 13.

Jesus is the perfect Friend to enjoy a relationship with. He loves to bring out the best in us. "Through the blood of Christ" our past life of sin is forgiven, and day-by-day He gives us His acceptance, power over sin, and His perfect life. We know He'll be there to pick us up every time we fall. Our love for Him in turn produces a desire to live in a way that pleases Him.

(3) Jesus can save us from eternal death, sin's penalty.

"For the wages of sin is [eternal] death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." —Romans 6:23.

We are lawbreakers sentenced to die. The penalty for sin is death. Jesus saves us from eternal death and gives us eternal life.

"God demonstrates his own love for us, in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." —Romans 5:8.

Because of His unfailing love, Jesus "died for us." And because He died for us and suffered the full results of sin, God can now forgive and accept sinners without trivializing sin.

(4) Jesus can save us from a sinful, unhappy life.

"For if a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new." —2 Corinthians 5:17, Phillips.

We can't save ourselves from sin or change our nature on our own any more than a lion can decide to become a lamb (Romans 7:18). Sin is simply stronger than our willpower. But Christ is able to "strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). He works to replace our destructive habits with His healthy qualities: love, peace, joy, kindness, self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23). Christ lives His life through us, and we receive spiritual healing, restoration, and a new life.

Harold Hughes had given up hope of ever changing. He'd tried desperately to stop drinking many times. He knew only too well that his battle with the bottle had put his wife and two daughters through ten years of hell. And so he stepped into his bathtub one cold morning and pointed a shotgun muzzle into his mouth. Before pulling the trigger, he decided he'd better explain things to God. That prayer turned into a long, sobbing appeal for help.

And God came through. Harold Hughes made a commitment to Christ and found the spiritual strength to persevere. He quit drinking for good, became a loving, dependable husband and father, and went on to earn a seat in the U.S. Senate. Harold Hughes discovered the greatest transforming power in our world—Jesus!

(5) Jesus can save us from a sinful world.

The next four DISCOVER guides will explain how.

4. WE ARE SAVED BY TAKING THREE SIMPLE STEPS

Step 1. Ask Christ to deal with the sin in your life.

What is our part in getting rid of our sinful life?

"REPENT, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out." —Acts 3:19.

What leads a person to repent?

"GOD'S KINDNESS LEADS YOU TOWARD REPENTANCE." —Romans 2:4.

"YOUR SORROW LED YOU TO REPENTANCE." — 2 Corinthians 7:9.

Repentance is simply being sorry for our past life of sin, and then turning away from our sins, making a break with the old habits, practices, and attitudes. It's not sorrow just because we fear punishment, but a response to "God's

DISCOVER

HOW WE RECEIVE A NEW LIFE FROM CHRIST

1. We believe in Him and receive Him as Savior and Lord.
2. We establish a relationship with Him. (A regular time of prayer and Bible reading is vital.)
3. Christ works through His Spirit to replace our bad habits with His good qualities.

kindness" that led Jesus to die in our place for our sinfulness. We reject sin because it hurts God.

When we experience a new life in Christ, we should so far as possible make past wrongs right (Ezekiel 33:14-16).

What is *God's part* in getting rid of our old life of sin?

Both repentance and being forgiven are a gift to us from God.

"God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and SAVIOR that he might GIVE REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS OF SINS." —Acts 5:31.

And when we repent, a loving Savior forgives our sins, cleanses us from sin, and throws them into the depths of the sea.

"IF WE CONFESS our sins, HE IS FAITHFUL and just AND WILL FORGIVE US our sins and PURIFY US FROM all unrighteousness."

—1 John 1:9. (See also Micah 7:18, 19.)

There is no sin so terrible that the Savior who died for our sins on Calvary's cross can't forgive. A person who trusts in Jesus need only ask Him for His pardon. Christ's dying for us can't pardon us unless we ask to be forgiven.

It's a sobering fact that our sins helped drive those nails through Christ's hands and feet. And yet Jesus is more eager than we can imagine for us to accept His gift of pardon and reconciliation.

Word reached a young man who'd run away from home that his mother was dying.

