



HEAVEN

How Do I Get There?

WOODROW KROLL



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W O O D R O W K R O L L

Heaven—How Do I Get There?

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HEAVEN

How Do I Get There?

If you asked several people how to get to heaven, you'd probably get several different answers.

"Come to our church," one might say, "then you'll go to heaven."

Another might think that if you work hard and only do good things, you have a shot at making it.

Fortunately, we don't have to depend on other people's answers. God has told us exactly what we need to do in the Bible.



GOD'S LOVE

Maybe you're wondering, *Why would God even want me in heaven?* That's a legitimate question. After all, if God didn't want you there, that would be that.

There is only one reason God would want you in heaven—because He loves you! He says in His Word, the Bible, that He has “loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).

Yeah, right! you're thinking. *I've had people tell me that before, and they've just let me down.* But God's love is different. His love is perfect, and it will never let you down. This isn't the kind of love that you see on TV or the movies either. God's faithful love is focused entirely on you.

If you miss this point, nothing else that follows will make

sense. So, before you go any further, realize that God really does love you.

God loves you; He created you.

But why would God love me? There are better people in the world.

The fact is you were created by God with incredible care. When He looks at you, He doesn't see the good or bad things you've done. Instead, He sees a work of art that needs His attention.

Even if you come from a background where your mother or father didn't love you, God always has. He doesn't base His love on how rich or poor you are. It doesn't matter to Him what your heritage is or if you've ever set foot in a church. God loves you and wants you to spend eternity with Him in heaven. The Bible tells us that He “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

God's love is unconditional.

So, what did I do to deserve God's love?

This is a natural question because we all put conditions on our love from time to time. You probably don't say, “If you do this, I'll love you” in so many words. But if you've ever thought that a person should meet certain expectations before you'd give your love to them, you've set conditions.

But God, the Creator of the universe, the King above all kings, loves you with an unconditional love that will last forever. He loves you even though you've done nothing to deserve it.

God's love for you isn't based on how you look, how much money you make, what kind of job you have or any other of the things we humans use to judge each other. God's love is based on who He is—and He will never change.

God's love lasts forever.

What if I mess up tomorrow? Will God love me then?

Since God lives forever, He also loves forever. It's who He is. There won't be days when He loves you less. There will never be a time when He questions His decision to love you in the first place.

When you understand that God's love never changes, you can go to bed at night knowing He will love you as much tomorrow as He does today.

God has made the promise that no matter what you do, where you go or how many times you do something you shouldn't do, He will *always* love you.

Maybe you've already heard that promise from someone who failed you. Maybe you've even heard the crushing words, "I don't love you anymore."

If so, remember, even though all other loves may fail,

God's love will never fail you. He promises that He "will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

God's love is demonstrated.

Yeah, it's easy to say He'll always love me, but does He really mean it?

Yes, He does. And He did something to prove He means what He says.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus was born in the most humble surroundings and lived a life just like you and me. He wanted to show people firsthand God's love for them. He even went out of His way to spend time with the people society had branded as "unlovable." That's how genuine His love is.

Jesus had a mission—to provide you a way to heaven.

When someone says he loves you but doesn't show it, you have every right to question his sincerity. But when he backs up his words with actions, you know he means what he says.

God said, "I love you," and then He went the extra step to demonstrate He meant it. He sent His only Son, Jesus, into this world to provide you a way into heaven. The Bible tells us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that

whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). It also says, "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

God's love is giving.

Any one who has been in love knows what it's like to want to give to the one you love. *But what has God ever given to me?* you might be asking.

God gave His Son, Jesus, and Jesus gave His life. Why? Because it's the only way you would ever have a chance of spending eternity in heaven. The Bible says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

Can you imagine someone so important to you that you would die to let them live? That's exactly how much you mean to God.



OUR NEED

If God's love is so great, then we just automatically go to heaven, right?

The answer is no. We don't automatically go to heaven because of God's love, and it's all because of one thing—sin. Sin is disobeying God and violating His commands. We've all done it. The Bible says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And that "we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Before we can talk about getting into heaven, we need to talk about this problem of sin.

Take heart, though. Remember, God loves you. If He didn't, there would be no hope for anyone.

We've chosen to sin.

We said that sin is disobeying God and violating His commands. But what exactly counts as disobedience?

Sin can be:

- any act of breaking the law.
- not following through on your responsibilities.
- doing anything you know is wrong.
- ignoring a chance to do the right thing.

Not all sins are things like stealing or murder. Sin can be as "big" as killing someone or as "small" as gossiping. Wherever you fall on this spectrum, you have sinned.

But that's unfair, you say. I didn't even realize there was a God let alone that I was disobeying Him! Unfortunately, ignorance isn't an excuse. The Bible says, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

The fact is, whether you knew God existed or not, He's real. His rules are for everyone, and you made the choice to disobey. You made the choice to sin.

God knows we are sinners.

It's not possible to hide anything from God. The Bible tells us:

"O LORD, you have searched me
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O LORD" (Psalm 139:1-4).

God knows every time you've been disobedient. He knows the times that it happened by accident, and He also knows the times it was deliberate.

But don't forget what we've already talked about. Even though God knows you are a sinner and that you've done a lot of wrong things, He's also been saying from day one, "I love you."

Think of it this way: If you had cancer, would you want your doctor to tell you about it? Of course you would. If you catch it soon enough, cancer can usually be treated. When God sees the sin in your life, He sees a cancer that will kill you if you don't get help.

That's why He tells you about your sin. He wants you to know about it and come to grips with it so He can help you deal with it.

As sinners, we are locked out of heaven.

So what? Even if I die with sin in my life, I can still go to heaven, right?

No, you can't. Because sin is rebellion against God, no one who has sin in his or her life will be allowed into heaven. After all, it's God's heaven, and He sets the standards for entrance.

Because you have chosen to sin and because God knows of your sin, you are effectively locked out of heaven. Nothing you do can change that.

If it weren't for God and His love for you, that would be the end of the story. But it's not. God has a plan that will take care of your sin and its penalty.



GOD'S PLAN

Have you ever heard the word “Gospel”? It’s the name given to the books of the Bible that tell you of the life of Jesus. But the word “Gospel” means “Good News.” The story of Jesus’ life, death and Resurrection is more than just good news; it’s the best news ever.

Are you ready for it? Here it is—because you can’t do anything to remove the sin that’s keeping you from heaven, God has provided a way to get rid of that sin and allow you to be with Him.

God wants to forgive you.

Do you have credit card debt? Maybe a student loan payment that’s been hanging over your head for years? What would it be like if the bank called you tomorrow and said your debts were cancelled? How

happy would that make you?

The first part of God’s plan is that He’s willing to forgive you for disobeying Him. It’s God saying, “I’m willing to release you from the consequences of your disobedience.”

Maybe that doesn’t sound like much, but the awful truth is that the consequence for disobeying God is death. That doesn’t mean just dying in this life, but being separated from God forever—spiritual death, eternal death.

But the Bible says: “The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made” (Psalm 145:8–9). The Bible says elsewhere that God is “a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Nehemiah 9:17).

God doesn’t want you to experience this spiritual death any more than you do. So, He did something wonderful so He could extend forgiveness to anyone who will accept it. He wants you to know you can be free from the burden of your sins.

God provided a Savior.

God made a rule: Anyone who disobeys the commands of God—who sins—has earned the death penalty. The Bible says that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). We all have sinned, so we all fall

under that penalty. So, motivated by His great love for you and His grace and mercy, God found someone willing to pay the penalty for you.

Jesus, God's only Son, is your substitute. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the penalty you owe for your sins. So, while the wages of sin are death, the Bible also says "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The justice and holiness of God were satisfied when Jesus did for you what you could never do for yourself.

There is no other way to remove your sin. You deserve death, but Jesus said to you—to the world—"I will die in your place." The Bible says, "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

When many people think about Jesus' death, they only see one man among hundreds who was executed on a cross. But it's because of that act, that great act of His love, that you have a way to go to heaven. Jesus rose from the dead as an exclamation point that God had accepted His sacrifice on your behalf.

God has forgiven you for the times you sinned in the past and the times you'll slip up in the future. But more than that, Jesus has paid the debt you owed.

Let me give you an example of what that means.

God solves a dilemma.

Imagine a mother standing on her doorstep looking at her children who have just come from playing in the mud. She loves her kids and wants them to come inside. But while they're covered head-to-toe in mud, that's just not possible.

The dilemma the mother faces is the same one God faces. Your sins have made you dirty, unclean and unfit for God's house. And even though God will forgive you for getting dirty, you still need to be cleaned up before the door to heaven is opened. If heaven was filled with people that had been forgiven but not cleaned, it wouldn't look any different than earth.

Now, the mother could send the kids off to clean themselves with the hose, but she knows they'll never get clean enough to meet her standards. Instead she'll take them and wash them herself, taking care to wash off every speck of dirt and grime. They can't meet her standards, but she can.

On a much larger scale, this is what God has done. He knows you can never clean yourself up enough to meet His standards of perfection and holiness. So, He's chosen to do it Himself.

The Bible says:

"Come now, let us reason together,"
says the LORD.
'Though your sins are like scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool"" (Isaiah 1:18).

You've been forgiven, but more than that, God has found a way to wash your sins away! But do you believe what Jesus did at the cross is all that God required to pay the penalty for your sin? That's the real question.



YOU DECIDE

So far, we've talked about only one main person—God. God loves you, God saw your sin and your inability to remove it and He sent His Son, Jesus, to die in your place. Everything God did He did because He loves you and wants you to live in heaven with Him. There's nothing you've done to deserve or earn this incredible opportunity.

But now there's another person we need to focus on—and that's you. There's really only one thing you must do at this point, and that is believe it. The Bible says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Romans 10:9–10).

You must believe the facts of the "Good News."

The fact is that God loves you.

We've communicated this fact on nearly every page of this booklet. But more importantly, you can find it written on nearly every page of the Bible. From chapter one of book one to the last chapter of the last book, God's love is clearly demonstrated.

Even before the world began, God loved you. His desire has always been for you to spend eternity with Him.

The fact is that you are a sinner.

Even when you didn't understand what sin is and who you were sinning against, you were guilty of it. It's hard to admit, but necessary. Don't be afraid to come to God. Remember, He already knows about it. But rather than turning His back on you, He's offering to forgive you.

The fact is that Jesus paid the price for your sin.

When He was crucified, Jesus took your place and paid the penalty for your sin. Why? Because it's the only way the guilt for your sins could be removed so you could live in heaven. The Bible says: "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

The fact is that Jesus also rose from the dead.

The fact that Jesus rose from the dead proves His ability to remove your sins. Since Jesus did not stay dead, He demonstrated that death no longer has the power it once held over you because of sin. This means that because He died your death and still lived, you have the opportunity now to live with Him forever.

If Jesus had not risen from the grave, believing in Him would be pointless. Billions of people have been killed and buried. But only one ever came back to life—Jesus, your substitute.

You must believe that God is enough.

Now that you know the facts, will you believe them? Can you sincerely tell God: “I believe you’re the only One who truly loves me. I believe you’re the only One who can forgive my sins and wash them away. I believe you’re the only One who can make it possible for me to go to heaven when I die”?

Will you trust God enough that you will ignore anything or anyone that tries to convince you that God is not enough—that you need more?

Someone who understood this kind of belief is a man named Harry Colcord. Harry was the manager of an entertainer and tightrope walker named Blondin, who in 1859 walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. As he walked high above the great falls, Blondin would even do a back flip or cook and eat an omelet! The audience loved every minute of it.

But then Blondin asked the crowd, “How many of you believe I can carry a man across on my back?” They all cheered enthusiastically, “We believe! Of course you can!”

But the cheers stopped when Blondin asked for a volunteer. Only one man did—Harry Colcord. And the two of them made it across safely.

Colcord had all the facts he needed, and even though he had never seen Blondin carry a man across the falls, it wasn’t hard to believe he could. But what made his belief different from everyone else was when he said, “I’ll go with you.”

This is the kind of belief we need to have in Jesus. Not just agreeing to the facts of what Jesus did for us, but belief enough that says, “I volunteer. I’ll go with you.”

Now that you know what the Bible has to say about how to get to heaven, it’s up to you to decide. God’s not going to force you to believe what we’ve been talking about—but He wants you to.

Remember that above all God loves you and has done everything He can to make sure that you have a way to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

First, you need to acknowledge the sin in your life. Next, you need to believe that Jesus sacrificed His own life as a substitute for the debt you owed. Finally, you need to receive Him as your personal Savior.

If you are ready to do this, tell God. You don't have to say anything fancy. Just stop wherever you are right now and tell Him. Say it out loud or speak it in your mind; God will hear you.

Here are some suggestions for things to say:

1. Acknowledge that you want to know Jesus as Lord, Savior and constant companion.
2. Admit that you are a sinner.
3. Be willing to turn from your sins (repent) and to give God free access to your life.
4. Believe in your heart and mind that Jesus is the Son of God; that He died on the cross for you and was raised back to life. Trust Him as the only way to God.
5. Since Jesus is alive, you can talk to Him. This is called prayer. So talk to Him now, and accept His invitation to know Him. Invite Him to take control of your life as the One who has saved you from your sins.

(See Luke 23:39–43; John 14:7, 20:24–31; Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9–10; 2 Corinthians 6:1–2; Revelation 3:20, 20:15.)

If you just did this, congratulations! The Bible says that's all you need to go to heaven when you die.

In the meantime, if you have questions about being a Christian or if you'd like to know what to do now, we'd like to help.

Just contact us at Back to the Bible by calling 1-800-759-6655, or send an e-mail to info@backtothebible.org.

You can also visit our Web site at www.backtothebible.org or write us at:

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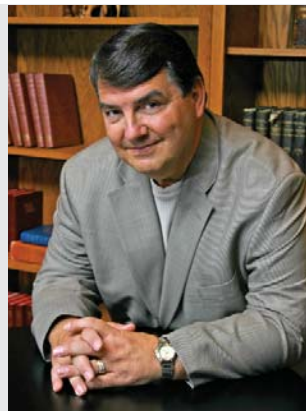
How do I get to heaven?

Ask many different people this question, and you'll get many different answers. But maybe the person we should be asking is God? If anyone knows how to get to heaven, it's Him.

God has spelled out exactly what is required of us in the Bible. In this booklet, you'll find out about the problem keeping us from heaven in the first place. But most importantly, you'll find out about everything God has done to overcome that problem and allow you a place in heaven for eternity.

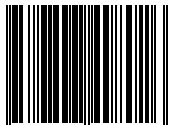
Woodrow Kroll's speaking, writing and radio ministries have clearly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ for more than 30 years. He serves as President of the international ministry Back to the Bible and is heard daily on the nationally-syndicated radio broadcasts *Back to the Bible* and *The Bible Minute*. His numerous books include: *How to Find God in the Bible*, *An Interview With God*, *Places in the Bible* and *People in the Bible*.

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