

Becoming a Christian

The answers to our meaning, purpose, and identity are found in Jesus.

By Michael Kelley

You can define the seasons of your life in many different ways. You might, for example, define a life season based on your living arrangements. There is the season in which you live in a home owned by your parents, then you live in a dorm or apartment, and then eventually in your own home — and then maybe after that, again in an apartment or someone else's house. Or you might define life seasons by the main way you spend your time. First, the bulk of your time is spent in school. Then developing a career. Then in an advanced career, and then finally in retirement.

Perhaps another way you can define the seasons of life is by the nature of the questions you are asking — because each stage of life is really about asking and answering a different set of questions. Initially, these questions are more informational in nature:

- *Why is the sky blue?*
- *What are mosquitos for?*
- *Why do I have to eat vegetables?*

Then the questions change to be more personal:

- *With whom should I be in a relationship?*
- *What kind of work will I engage in?*
- *Where do I want to live for this period of life?*

And at some point, all of us enter a stage in life when these questions become even more meaningful. Real questions about our meaning and purpose and identity begin to stir within us. These are the real shaping questions. And there are trustworthy answers; if we get the answers, they will determine how we respond to life now and in the future. In fact, the truth affects our eternity. And though these questions are many, they all really boil down to these three fundamental ones:

- *Who are we?*
- *Where are we from?*
- *Where are we going?*

Yes, these are the real questions, aren't they? These are the questions behind the other ones — the questions that get at the core of the meaning of all of life and the way it ought to be spent. Indeed, these are really the questions behind every philosophy, every religion, and every educational and economical system. And though a person might look to many sources to find the answers, the real truth can only be found in one place: the Bible, God's Holy Word. And though the Bible addresses these questions in many ways and in many places, there is a single verse in which we find the answer to all three:

"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

If we get the answers, they will determine how we respond to life now and in the future.

We were made to love God and to know beyond a shadow of a doubt we are loved by Him.

1. Who are we?

Simply put, we are the dearly loved creation of Almighty God. How do we know that God loves us so? It is not because of our bank balances, the size of our homes, or the success we have in careers. Our circumstances are not a trustworthy indicator of the love of God, for God has already proven just how much He loves us. He loves us enough to sacrifice His own Son for us.

But that begs the question of why such a sacrifice would need to be made, doesn't it? And here, too, we find part of the answer to the question of who we are: Though we are the dearly loved creation of God, we all have rejected Him as our rightful King. We have, in our own pride, rebelled against the One true God and have determined to be our own gods. We are all sinners, and as such, we are separated from the holy, sinless God who loves us. Though it might be hard for us to accept, this is indeed who we are.

2. Where are we from?

Again, simply put, we are from God. We are not cosmic accidents; we are not the result of random chance. We are created beings, created in love in order to relate to God and to glorify Him forever. In His love, God has made us with this unique relational capacity: We were made to love God and to know beyond a shadow of a doubt we are loved by Him.

Until we know our origin — until we know where and whom we are from — we will always be wanderers. We will seek to find our worth, value, and substance in transitory things. We will be like children building our little sand castles too close to the water, only to find them washed away again and again. But when we accept and believe this, our true origin story, then we are actually starting to build on the rock.

3. Where are we going?

This question is unique because there are actually two options, and this verse gives us both final destinations. We are either bound to perish eternally without God, or bound to live eternally with God. If we believe that we are loved and created by God but that we have rejected His authority over us and now must be made right with Him, then in His love, God will show us the way He has provided.

There is only one way to be reconciled with God, and that is through Jesus. The singular issue that determines where we are going is what we do with Jesus. Someone is going to pay for our rebellion, and the price is enormously high. Either we will pay the penalty for our sins by perishing in a place the Bible calls hell and describes as eternal punishment where we are separated from God, or Jesus will redeem us, having already paid for our sins by conquering sin and death. In His love, God has provided this moment for us and has opened His arms to whosoever receives the truth of salvation and believes in Jesus, trusting Him alone and submitting to His authority over their lives.

Yes, indeed, life is about questions. Some are more important to answer than others. But none are more important than these three. Whether we know it or not, your life and mine — both now and into eternity — is really determined by how these questions are answered.

By God's grace, He has told us the truth, and even now His Holy Spirit implores with us to come and believe. You can respond to God by sincerely praying a prayer like this:

"God, You are holy and cannot look on sin. I admit that I am a sinner and that my sin separates me from You. I know that without You, I would be helpless to remove my sin and would have to live in eternal punishment. But I sincerely believe that Your Son, Jesus, paid the penalty for my sin when He died on the cross and He conquered sin and death when He rose to live forever with You. I trust Jesus to save me from my sin and to help me live according to His will. Thank You for giving Your Holy Spirit to live in me and guide me daily until You receive me into the heavenly home You have prepared for me. I pray this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."

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God's Plan of Salvation

The Bible is the Word of God that reveals His plan to redeem those who believe in His Son, Jesus. May His Holy Spirit speak through these verses to show that truth to you and lead you to receive the gift of eternal life.

Admit to God that you're a sinner and repent, turning away from your sinful life to a new life in Christ:

- *"When [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:8).*
- *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).*
- *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).*
- *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*
- *"Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).*

Believe that Jesus is the only way to be reconciled with God. By faith, trust Jesus as your Savior, receiving His gift of forgiveness for your sins.

- *"Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).*
- *"For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift – not from works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).*
- *"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" (Rom. 10:9).*
- *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).*
- *"To all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name" (John 1:12).*

Confess with your words and live your faith in Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

- *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).*
- *"The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).*
- *"Everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).*
- *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me'" (Matt. 16:24).*
- *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17).*

If you have trusted Jesus for salvation, share your decision with a pastor or a Christian friend. Follow Christ's example by being baptized by immersion and join a local church where you can worship and grow in your faith.