

The Gospel Message

1. You and I were created for relationship with God. Genesis 2–3; Leviticus 26:12; 1 John 3:1-2

Genesis 2–3 tells us that Adam was created in the image of God and given the capacity for relationship with God.

God's desire for relationship was not limited to Adam. He entered covenant relationship with Israel. "I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:12).

Jesus stressed the importance of relationship by instructing His disciples to abide in Him (John 15:1–10), by promising to reveal Himself to those who love Him (John 14:21), and by referring to His followers as friends (John 15:15). Each passage shows God's desire for relationship.

2. Our sin separated us from that relationship. (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:2)

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is breaking God's law, and there's a penalty for sin. Romans 6:23 tells us the punishment for breaking God's law. "The wages of sin is death." Wages are what we earn for what we've done. According to the Bible, we have all earned death.

When the Bible speaks of death, it speaks primarily of separation. When we die physically, our spirit is separated from our body. In similar fashion, when we died spiritually because of sin, our spirit was separated from God's Spirit. "But your iniquities [or sin] have made a separation between you and your God." (Isaiah 59:2).

There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own. (Ephesians 2; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4)

Many people believe good deeds will make them right with God. Unfortunately, there is no definitive marker for "adequate goodness." The Bible doesn't say, "If you are good most of the time, you are acceptable to God," or "Three good deeds will offset one bad deed." Without a definitive standard for goodness, how good is good enough?

The Bible helps us see that our problem is not a lack of goodness; our problem is the effect of sin. We could never reconcile our relationship with God because sin brings death and deception. Ephesians 2:1 teaches that without Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Second Corinthians 4:3,4 reveals that without God's intervention we are blinded to the truth by the god of this world. We can do nothing to reconcile with God because dead people don't act and deceived people don't believe.

3. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. (Romans 5:10; 1 John 4:10)

The penalty of sin was death. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. His sacrifice made reconciliation possible. "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

4. Jesus rose from the dead that we might have life. (1 Peter 1:3)

While Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin, it is His resurrection that brings us the hope of eternal life. "Blessed be the God and Father...who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Jesus' death paid our sin debt; Jesus' resurrection makes relationship a reality.

5. Jesus offers eternal life (or a reconciled relationship) to those who repent of their sin by placing faith in Him. (John 3:16; John 17:3; Acts 2:38)

Jesus spoke often of eternal life (John 3:15,16; 4:14; 5:39; 6:40). Many people assume that eternal life is going to heaven when you die. But that's not what Jesus said. In John 17:3, Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You." Eternal life is to know God. It is to experience a reconciled relationship with God.

According to the Bible, eternal life is given to those who will turn from their sin by placing faith in what Jesus has done for them. The Bible describes the act of turning from sin as repentance. It does not mean a person will be sinless. It means they desire God more than sinful activity. *