

BELIEVE IN GOD

By,

Charles R. Chesnutt, Sr.

For God so loved the world that He gave
His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes
in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

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Charles Chesnutt is a bankruptcy attorney in Dallas, Texas, where he has resided since 1979. He is married and the father of four. He graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1983 and is an ardent student of scripture and has been so since completing seminary.



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Through no merit of his own, Charles came to know Jesus Christ in the manner described in this booklet in December of 1973. That experience continues to this day.

Chapter 1

Born Again

BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,
AND YOU WILL BE SAVED

ACTS 16:31

Let's face it. If God is really there, why can't we see Him? Is there really some huge invisible God out there who never speaks and never makes Himself known? How can this God, who is said to have created us, not be able to communicate? Why should anyone believe that? And why should anyone believe some ancient Jewish religious writings that talk about Him?

Isn't it true that people believe in God because they need an invisible friend, or because they need a psychological crutch? Where is this God? If there is such a God, He must be hiding.

Let's see what those ancient Jewish religious writings (the Bible) really do say about God. Then you can form your own opinion.

So, does the Bible say that God is hiding Himself?

Yes, it does.

Does that mean that He makes Himself known to some but not others?

Yes, it does.

The Bible says that God is hiding Himself. That is, He does not make Himself known to everyone,¹ only to those who seek Him with all their heart.²

It is certainly not unusual for people who do not know God to ask this question, “If God is real, why can’t we see him. Why is he silent?” This booklet tells you when and how God discloses Himself in no uncertain terms.

Let’s start from where Jesus says that God hides Himself. This is in a question and answer session with Jesus Christ recorded in the Bible. Jesus was conversing with a man named Nicodemus who is asking Him the same question. Christ tells him this:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.^{3†}

What is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is knowing Christ in this life. Knowing Christ is like a door that opens into a new world. So we are not talking about a religion or set of principles to follow. We are talking an entirely new life. That is why it is referred to as being “born again.”

1. Second Corinthians 4:3 “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,”

2. Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” Searching for Him with your whole heart means that you will yield yourself to His commandments not to sin.

3. John 3:3 † Christians have been preaching and singing about knowing God in this life for centuries. For instance, see *Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee*, a hymn by Bernard de Clairvaux, 1091-1153 A.D., *Worship and Service Hymnal* (Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream IL, 2001), verse 4, “But what of those who find [find Christ]? Ah! This nor tongue nor pen can show, The love of Jesus, what it is. None but His loved ones know”

So, Jesus is saying that not everyone can see the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is hidden from all who are not born again. So, we can give up trying to perceive or experience the existence of God by any means other than being born again.

The next question he asks Jesus is this:

How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb can he?⁴

Jesus answers:

...Unless one is born of water [his mother's womb] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.⁵

So, in order to see and enter the Kingdom of God, we must be born "of the Spirit." So, it is a spiritual thing. Jesus is saying that there is a spiritual reality that one cannot perceive unless one is born again. That is radical statement. How can there be a spiritual reality that we cannot perceive?

Nicodemus wonders about this too, and Jesus answers:

4. John 3:4

5. John 3:5. Here, Jesus specifies that one must be born of water because the right to be born again extends only to humans and not any other created being, such as angels.

Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.⁶

Jesus is saying that being born again is like someone who feels the wind blowing. If you feel the wind you know that it is there because he can hear it and feel it, but it is invisible. Jesus is telling us that one can know the Kingdom of God is there just as surely as one can feel the wind.

The next question is, of course, how can we experience this? Jesus answers and equates the Kingdom of God to eternal life:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.⁷

Jesus is saying that those of us who believe (trust) in Him will receive the gift of eternal life. With the analogy of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness Jesus foreshadows the cross.⁸ How so?

6. John 3:7,8

7. John 3:14-16

8. Romans 4:25 "He [Jesus] who was delivered over because of our

The history of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness is found in the Book of Numbers, Chapter 21 in the Old Testament.⁹ It says

And Moses made a bronze serpent
and set it on the standard; and it came
about, that if a serpent bit any man,
when he looked to the bronze serpent,
he lived.¹⁰

Jesus was saying that He will be like the serpent in the wilderness. When we are bitten by serpent of sin, all we have to do is to look to the cross and we can be healed. But why did Jesus compare himself to a serpent when the serpent represents sin? Because in order to save us, He became sin for us.¹¹ But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

How can we believe in Jesus Christ when He is not here? How can we believe in something that we have neither seen nor experienced? The key is in the word “believe.”

Believing in Christ means to trust in Him in the same way that we trust a doctor that we don't know when we need an operation. Except when we trust in Jesus Christ, we have absolutely nothing to lose.¹²

transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.”

9. The Old Testament is the Jewish Scriptures. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are inspired by God, ie. they are Truth. Second Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is inspired by God...”

10. Numbers 21:9

11. Second Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

12. The original Greek word means to trust. See *A Greek-English Lex-*

But trust Him for what? Trust that through him all of our sins have been totally forgiven.

This is a leap of faith, but it is not a leap from the point of certainty; it is a leap from the point of trust. This is faith.¹³ And faith is not certainty.

God resolves our doubts after we trust in Christ because if God resolved these doubts before we come to Christ, there would be no faith, and we would always wonder if we had simply talked ourselves into believing. The knowledge of God has to come from outside of ourselves or we will always be doubting.

Seeing the Kingdom of God is a two-step process. The first step is to come to obtain forgiveness for all of our sins because it is sin that separates us from God. We can get forgiven for all of our sins by “coming to the cross.” Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins so that we can be forgiven,¹⁴ and we can obtain that forgiveness by trusting in Jesus Christ.

Trusting in Christ is simple. It may be done through prayer. For instance, one may pray “God, I will trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all my sin even though I am not certain that you even there.” That is what faith is. It is trusting even though you are not certain.

icon of the New Testament, by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich (Second Ed. 1958, Univ. Of Chicago Press), s.v. πιστεῶ, “believe (in), trust.”

13. Hebrews 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God...”

14. Romans 5:8 “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.”

How much real faith does one need? Just enough to trust sincerely in Christ. Some people trust in him and some do not, but the invitation is open to all.¹⁵

Jesus explained it pretty well in Matthew 13:31-32. He said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which is a seed that is the size of a pinhead. But when the mustard seed is planted, it grows up and becomes the largest plant in the garden.

The mustard seed is a picture of the faith necessary to come to Christ. Coming to Christ is a pinhead of faith that grows into something wonderful. It grows into the most wonderful thing that one can ever imagine. It grows into a life without emptiness,¹⁶ a life filled with God's peace and assurance,¹⁷ a life of spiritual equanimity and it grows into a life where one actually knows Christ, a life that is eternal.¹⁸ And when a husband and a wife both come to Christ it grows into a family that is bound firmly together.

And it starts with a leap of faith that is little more than a hop just to see if it all is really real. When one comes to Christ, the faith that one needs is small but after exercising

15. Revelation 22:17 "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

16. The internal void is spiritual death. It is cured by the forgiveness of sin and a true commitment to obey God's word.

17. Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts..."

18. John 17: 3 "This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

the mustard seed of faith, one arrives in an entirely different world. This different world is a spiritual world called the Kingdom of God.¹⁹

Although the mustard seed grows during the remainder of our lives, the effect of it (God's presence and peace) is not determined by time and effort and human will, but by the extent of our yieldedness to Him.

Before coming to Christ, we are spiritually dead.²⁰ Spiritual death often presents itself as an internal void, an emptiness that can never be filled. When such a person trusts in Christ and makes a heart-felt, sincere surrender to God's will (a complete yielding), then he or she (like the author) may experience a salvation that is *quite* unexpected. The void disappears and in its place there is an inner peace that is beyond understanding.²¹ That peace never leaves.²² Salvation is what happens when we trust in Christ. It means that we have been saved from spiritual death.

Sound inviting? It is indeed and it is real.

Although salvation is experienced, salvation is spiritual and not material. Before trusting in Christ we are spiritually dead²³ and we know it. But afterwards we become spiritually alive²⁴ and we know that as well. One has to experience it to understand it—or believe it.

19. John 18:36 "My kingdom is not of this world..."

20. Ephesians 2:1 "...you were dead in trespasses and sins"

21. Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

22. This occurred to the author in 1974.

23. Ephesians 2:1 "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins..."

24. Ephesians 2:4,5 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great

The beauty of it all is that God does it. We don't. If we did it we would always know that it was us and not God who did it. At the back of our mind, we would always know that we had created or imagined a made-to-order god, like the idols of ancient peoples. That's why He does it and not us. And because we can't do it. Only Christ can pay for our sins.

When He does it, He leaves no doubt in one's mind that it is Him and not us who does it.

Awake you that sleep, and arise from
the dead, and Christ [Christ, not us]
shall give you light.²⁵

Trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all sin is all that is needed for eternal salvation. However, it is not all that is needed to experience the presence of God. Indeed, some people who have trusted in Christ experience nothing as a result of it. Some people don't feel any different as a result of trusting in Christ and many believe that one can never really experience the presence and peace of God. Others simply pretend. Why do some people who have trusted in Him never really know Him?

The answer to that is the second step.



love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.”

25. Ephesians 5:14

Chapter 2

Knowing God

WHOEVER HAS MY COMMANDMENTS AND KEEPS THEM...
I WILL LOVE HIM AND REVEAL MYSELF TO HIM

JOHN 14:21

The first step is obtaining forgiveness for all sin. This is called salvation and it is completely free and open to all without cost.²⁶ The second step is knowing God (experiencing the Kingdom of God) and that is not free. Knowing God is not free because in order to know Him, we must address sin in our lives. After all, if we trust in Christ but don't care enough to turn away from committing the very sins that He died to save us from, what then? The cost of knowing Him is a true intent and surrender to His word, which means a sincere decision to relinquish sin.

The first step, which was explained in Chapter 1, is essential because sins have to be forgiven. The second step, which is explained in this chapter, is essential because knowing God and enjoying the fruits of His presence is, quite simply, the true joy of salvation. Trusting Christ without bothering to experience Him is like being given an unlimited gift certificate for dinner at the finest restaurant in Paris and leaving after eating the bread and butter.

Even though knowing God is the core of Biblical Christianity, many churches skip it. They teach the first step but not the second step.

26. Revelation 22:17 "And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

But Jesus Christ did not skip it. Jesus taught it in crystal clear terms. He tells us precisely when and how He makes Himself known to us:

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself [make myself known] to him.²⁷

God is telling us that if we have His commandments (that is if we bother to find out what He is saying), and then, knowing the commandments, if we *keep them* they we have shown ourselves to be someone who loves Him. And God the Father and God the Son²⁸. And as a result, Jesus Christ says that “I will disclose Myself to him.” This is what knowing God is. It is when Jesus Christ discloses Himself to us. Christianity is more of a relationship than a religion. God is all about love (relationships).

Notice how carefully this scripture is written. This is not formula; it’s a love note. Keeping His commandments to get God to do something will not get us anywhere. The thing that makes a difference to God is that we keep them because we want to be with Him. This is why the scripture says “He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me.”

27. John 14:21

28. This is a reference to two persons of the Trinity. There is only one God but that one God exists in three “persons.” Those three persons are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This passage refers to two of those persons, the Father and the Son. The Son is Jesus Christ.

So, it's a *relational* thing, not a *duty* thing. It is a love thing, not a set of rules. It is not about love because that God is. God *is* love.²⁹ It is a spiritual love affair and love is all over it. But don't worry about loving Him enough, so quit trying. He takes care of the love part. Because when He makes His presence known, you will love Him. You won't be able to stop yourself and you won't want to. The whole thing revolves around love.

But there is a problem; and that problem is sin. Sin kills love and sin kills relationships. It kills relationships with other people and it kills relationships with God. Sin kills, period. From cover to cover the Bible repeatedly warns us that sin kills.³⁰ Like a loving spiritual Father, God works with you, enables you, encourages you to cease from sin. But He is very serious about it.

That is why God requires us to have His commandments and *keep them* in order to know Him. Because He is *very* serious about sin. That means that if you or anyone wants to know God, you must sincerely commit not deceive, not to lie,³¹† cheat, steal, injure, commit adultery, fornicate, com-

29. First John 4:8 "...God is love."

30. See Appendix.

31. † Lying is viewed as a very significant sin. Revelation 21:8 "...all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

mit homosexual acts, do drugs, be greedy, take advantage of others,³² condemn others or yourself,³³ or commit whatever sin separates you from Him.³⁴

Our knowing God does not automatically cease because we commit sin; we can always repent and find forgiveness for sin.³⁵ Knowing God ceases when we choose darkness rather than light.³⁶

So why doesn't He just stop all our sin? Because He will not interfere with our free will.

32. First Corinthians 6:8-10 "...you yourselves cheat and do wrong, even against your own brothers! Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who submit to or perform homosexual acts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God...."

33. Luke 6:37 "Do not judge [criticize], and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

34. Galatians 5:19,20 "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God...."

35. First John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

36. First John 3:19 "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil."

Free will (free choice) is necessary for love. Free will is the very heart of love. Love that is not free is not love; a man cannot be compelled to love. At the core of loving God is our free decision to yield to Him and to no longer commit sin.

Does that mean that we have to be sinless in order to know God? No. Living a perfect life is not required. No one can do that. Knowing God is all about heart.³⁷

God responds to heart, just like we do. And He does not require perfection in order to love any more than we do. He made us to be imperfect and He knows it. He discloses Himself to those who sincerely surrender their will to His.

It is all about heart and surrendering to His will.

After surrendering to His will, life is a progression toward righteousness,³⁸ not perfection.³⁹ One's heart must be right about turning from sin because God will be neither fooled nor mocked.⁴⁰ But when our heart is right and our intent is sincere, God *does* respond. The extent of His response depends upon the extent of our yielding, not the extent of our perfection because it is all about heart.

37. First Samuel 16:7 “God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

38. Second Peter 1:1-10. This entire progression is enabled through the actual knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:2,8).

39. Second Peter Chapter 1 “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing [it is a process] they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

40. Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

That's the tree that we were discussing, the tree that grows from the mustard seed. It can grow slow or it can occur suddenly. It all depends on heart. That is what Christ was talking about when He referred to the Kingdom of God. It starts with salvation and grows into a tree when it is watered with righteousness.

When we yield to Him, He tells us in no uncertain terms:

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.⁴¹

And when we sin, we can confess and He forgives us.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.⁴²

The result is knowing God, and one of the greatest benefits of knowing God is the supernatural love and peace:

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.⁴³

41. John 14:23

42. First John 1:9

43. Philippians 4:7

Once a person has truly perceived and experienced a full measure of this peace, he cannot turn away. It is overwhelming, magnificent and irresistible. But it is spiritual,⁴⁴ not physical. It is like the wind. You can feel it but you cannot see it.

The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.⁴⁵

That is why one cannot simply decide to believe in God. Because someone who is spiritually dead cannot see the things that are spiritually alive because they can only be spiritually discerned;

The natural man does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.⁴⁶

It is for this reason that Jesus taught that one must be born again before one can perceive the Kingdom of God.

44. John 18:36 “My kingdom is not of this world.”

45. John 3:8

46. First Corinthians 2:14 (Berean Study Bible). See also the King James translation, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God⁴⁷

Try it yourself and see. He does it; not you.

To the one who is truly wants to find God but wonders if there is a God to find, let me say that I have been where you are. I was just as doubting or even more so. But I found God exactly as this booklet describes, and then I opened the Bible and read about what had happened.

I found Him by trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of all sin and the sincerely yielding to Him. I did this through a silly, fumbling prayer that I prayed one evening long ago. I was totally sincere, but at the same I doubted that something would ever come of it.

I had no idea what would happen, if anything. Well, I found out. He came to me with His immense peace and love and He is still there. He changed me from the inside out and made me new, just as He will with you if you come to Christ and sincerely yield to His will.

My time was in 1973. Your time is now and you have absolutely nothing to lose except your sin.



47. John 3:3

Appendix

FIFTEEN CENTURIES OF SCRIPTURE WARNING THAT SIN KILLS

Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

1400 BC

Psalm 33:18,19

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death...

967 BC

Ezekiel 33:11

“As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from you evil ways; for why will ye die?”

593 BC

John 8:51, 52

Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.

30 AD (the words of Jesus Christ)

James 5:20

Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death...

45 AD

Romans 1:32

Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God that those who practice such things are deserving of death...

55 AD

Romans 6:16

...sin leading to death...

55 AD

Romans 6:21

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

55 AD

Romans 6:23, 24

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.

55 AD

Second Timothy 1:10

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality

55 AD

Romans 6:16

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, His servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

55 AD

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

68 AD

Hebrews 2:9

But we see Jesus...that He, by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

80 AD

Revelation 2:11

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

90 AD

Revelation 20:14,15 and Revelation 21:8

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire ... [the] unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

90 AD

