

## UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY (3)

### WDXE – February 5, 2012

Jesus Christ has influenced more people than anyone who have ever lived on the face of the earth. Christ's life and teaching are worthy of consideration by all people. When all the facts concerning Christ are considered the evidence leads people to believe that Jesus is God's Christ, God's Son. The word "Christ" means "anointed one." God sent His anointed one into the world on a mission to save people from their sins and to give them an inheritance in God's eternity. If we believe in Jesus as that Christ, the Son of God, then we will want to know what Jesus wants us to do and how he wants us to live.

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

People naturally have many questions about what is right or wrong. For instance, questions arise about morality. What is the righteous thing to do in a given circumstance? Questions also arise about religious practices. Every person thinks about God! That's right! No one can escape Him. Even the atheist must deal with God in trying to disprove Him for their own peace of mind! But think of the different ways that people in the world think of God:

1. Some think of God as an **impersonal force, an impersonal power** that infuses the whole universe. Something like electricity.
2. Others think of God as an **impersonal spirit** that lives in every person like a kind of divine light.
3. Some other people think of God as a **powerful creator** who made all things but then took a long vacation, never to return. In other words, God is no longer interested in the affairs of the world, and so He has left it to humans to sort it out by themselves.
4. Some people think of God as a **personal spirit** that made the world and then stayed in the world to inhabit everything. And so you may find these people worshipping nature and the creatures of the earth.
5. And then, of course, there are those people who do not believe in God at all. They do not believe that such a person exists.

In one way or another everyone has an idea about God! To have a God-idea one must have **faith**. Even the atheist must believe! That's right! The atheist believes there is no God.

You see, Faith counts things unseen as real. Every human being lives by faith, because no one human being has seen everything. We must live by faith. When we come to grips with questions about life and religion we begin to **believe** certain things about life and religion. Things that we **DO** see in the world lead us to believe certain things we **cannot see**. That's faith and that's how faith develops. Faith develops from the things we hear or see or experience. Experiencing these things build within us a faith- system.

A faith-system is a series of beliefs that are consistent and in harmony. This faith-system holds together all things in our worldview. The Bible says that Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1.) Faith is "substance" because it is a foundation for everything we hope for. The word "substance", in English, means to "stand under."

Hebrews 11:1 also says that Faith is "evidence". The ancient Greek word translated "evidence" in Hebrews 11:1 was uncovered from an ancient rubbish heap in Egypt. This word was the name given to a piece of paper that proved that a certain person was the owner of some land. The archaeologists had uncovered an ancient person's deed to the property. Your Faith in God's word is proof (or evidence) that you own some things that you have not seen with your own eyes. How have you come by this faith? The Bible also says that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17.) The Christian's Faith in Jesus Christ comes from the evidence that can be read in the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament of Christ is a collection of 27 books. If you never read from this collection of books then how can you believe what it says? Will you only take someone else's word for it? By reading and studying the Word of God you can become a believer in Christ.

There are four specific things a person must do to obey Christ and to receive God's forgiveness. Remember that Christ came into the world on a mission from

a loving, personal God. In Christ's own words he said, "I have come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) Friend, when will you acknowledge your own mortality? You are going to die! Unless Jesus Christ returns to the earth first, you are going to die! What are you counting on? Do you HOPE for nothing? Or do you hope for a home with God? There are four specific things a person must do to obey Christ and receive the forgiveness of their sins. (1) Number one – there must be faith! "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6.) God not only wants the world to believe in Him and His Son Jesus, but God wants the world to believe that He rewards those who diligently seek Him through His Son Jesus. The reward is eternal life with the Creator of the universe. Some people asked Jesus, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "**This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.**" (John 6:28-29 ESV). God wants the world to acknowledge the coming of His Son into the world. To receive the forgiveness of sins Faith in God and Christ is necessary.

(2) Number two – repentance is necessary in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. Sinners are traveling in the wrong direction. They are following Satan to an eternal ruin. Repentance is when a person decides to travel in the other direction toward God and heaven. Repentance is a decision. It is a decision that springs from a believer's broken heart. Repentance begins with sorrow, sorrow for our sins. Jesus told people, "unless you repent, you will all...perish." (Luke 13:3 ESV.) Jesus' apostle Paul said in Athens, Greece, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this [God] has given assurance to all by raising [that man] from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31 ESV.) Of course, the man God raised from dead is his Son, Jesus Christ. God has appointed Jesus to be the Judge of all the humans who have ever lived. He will also be your judge and mine. Will He be your savior? Repentance is necessary in order to receive God's forgiveness.

(3) Number three – Confession of Christ is also necessary to receive the God's forgiveness which he purchased for you at the cross of Christ. The crucifixion of Christ for the sins of the world was the **only** way God could justify Himself for forgiving sins. Therefore, this is the reason that Jesus is the world's **only** Savior, because his faithfulness in going to the cross is the only thing that can save us from the penalty of our sins. This is the reason a person must believe in Jesus and confess that he is the Christ, the Son of God. He is the **Only** Savior! The apostle John tells us that there were some chief priests in Jerusalem who believed in

Jesus, but they were afraid to confess Him. John said that “they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.” (John 12:42, 43.) Do you love something more than God? Do you love this world more than the hope of eternal life? Furthermore Jesus said, “**Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. (33) But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.**” (Matthew 10:32-33 KJV.) Confession of Christ is necessary in order to receive God’s forgiveness granted at the cross.

The fourth thing that a sinner must do in order to receive God’s grant of forgiveness is to be immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ. This is called baptism. The word “baptism” literally means to “immerse” or “dip”. Just as water proved to be the dividing line between the saved and the lost in Noah’s day, the water of baptism is also a dividing line today. It was Peter who likened the water of baptism to the water of Noah’s flood. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (19) in which he went and [preached] to the spirits in prison, (20) because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. (21) Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.” (1Peter 3:18-22 ESV.) This is the reason, after receiving the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter commanded believing people to “Repent and be baptized every one 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 ESV.) Jesus himself commanded his disciples to “**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**” (Mark 16:15-16 KJV.) This is called the “great commission”, and it is no wonder because Jesus assigned his disciples a huge task. Matthew’s summary of this commission reads, “Go teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and look, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:19, 20.) Friends, in this four-fold path, you too can receive the forgiveness of your sins and receive

the hope of heaven. Believe this good news that Christ died for your sins, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Jesus Christ, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and an inheritance in the home of the soul.