

Jesus Loves You: God's Plan for Your Salvation

by Bev Marshall-Goodell

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One of the most popular Christian hymns in churches around the world is, **Jesus Loves Me**. The words were written by Anna B. Warner, and were first published in 1860 in a novel called *Say and Seal*, written by Susan Warner. In 1862, William Batchelder Bradbury who found the text of "Jesus Loves Me" in a book, and wrote the tune to accompany the lyrics and added his own chorus "Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me..."

The song is wildly popular for both its simplicity and the power of the message it conveys. People were not created by some accident, and this hymn reminds us that God deeply desires a personal relationship with each one of us through his son, Jesus. This message of love is presented over and over again throughout the Bible. Here are some popular places you can look for these reminders:

Job 10:12 *You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit.*

Psalms 23:6 *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.*

Psalms 33:18 *Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love.*

Psalms 63:3 *Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.*

Psalms 136:1 *O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

Isaiah 54:10 *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life.*

1 John 3:1 *See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it does not know him.*

Unfortunately, we are separated from God by our sinful nature. Sin is our failure to measure up to God's level of holiness. Sin includes our thoughts, words and actions. We are all sinners. Romans 3:23 tells us, *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*

Many people think they will be punished or rewarded according to how good they are. Others think they should make things right in their lives before they try to come to God. They find it hard to understand how Jesus could love them when other people don't seem to. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, *"For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not of works, so that no one can boast."*

Although we cannot understand how, God said my sins and your sins were laid upon Jesus and

He died in our place. He became our substitute. In Acts 17:30 we read, *“While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to repent.”*

You become a Christian through repentance, that is, turning away from your sin. The good news is, God does love you! There is nothing you can do to stop God from loving you. Roman 8:38-39 says, *“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Yes, we all deserve to be punished because of our sins, but God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die for our sins. In Romans 5:8 we read, *“God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Only God can rescue us from our sins. He is willing to do this not because of anything you can offer Him, but just because he loves you.

It's God's grace that allows you to come to Him - not your efforts to "clean up your life" or work your way to heaven. You can't earn it. It's a free gift. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

All that's left for you to do is to accept the gift that Jesus is holding out for you right now. *“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) God says that if you believe in His son, Jesus, you can live forever with Him in glory.

In Acts 16:30-31, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas: “. . . ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They answered, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved’” Simply believe on Jesus as the one who bore your sin, died in your place, was buried, and whom God resurrected. His resurrection powerfully assures that the believer can claim everlasting life when Jesus is received as Savior. *“But to all who received Him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”* (John 1:12). Simply put, *“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13).

So, how can you invite Jesus into your life to become your personal Savior?

- **Admit** that you are a sinner in need of God's saving grace.
- By faith, **believe** that Jesus is the Son of God, lived a sinless life, shed His blood on the cross for your sins, and rose from the dead.
- **Confess** your sins to God, repent and be willing to turn away from your sins, and **pray** to receive the free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. By faith, you are forgiven of sins. You are to walk in newness of life as a new creation in Christ.
- Get **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ as an obedient outward demonstration of your repentance and faith in Christ.

The Sinner's Prayer

Here are examples of prayers to accomplish these goals (another version of the Sinner's Prayer, adapted from the Alpha Course, appears in the Grace UMC Passport to Discipleship):

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I do not deserve eternal life. But, I believe You died and rose from the grave to make me a new creation and to prepare me to dwell in your presence forever. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation and I accept your free gift of eternal life. Amen.

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen.

Dear God, I am a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ shed His precious blood and died for my sin. I am willing to turn from sin. I now invite Christ to come into my heart and life as my personal Savior. Amen.

"Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Once you have prayed such a prayer in faith, your salvation is assured, and cannot be taken from you. However, to continue to grow and mature in your Christian faith, you need to do even more.

1. Read your Bible every day to get to know Jesus Christ better.
"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)
"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." (Psalms 119:105)
2. Talk to God in prayer every day.
"Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22)
"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.." (Philippians 4:6)
3. Worship, fellowship, and serve with other Christians in a church where Jesus Christ is preached and the Bible is the final authority.
"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" (Matthew 28:19)
"Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.." (Hebrews 10:25)
"All scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness:" (2 Timothy 3:16)
4. Tell others about Jesus Christ.
"And he said unto them, Go into all the world, and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)

"If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no grounds for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16)

Understanding God’s Plan for Your Salvation

(To be completed after the first full week since you started.)

1. Admit you are a sinner. In your own words, acknowledge your need for Jesus.

2. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In your own words, describe your understanding of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished.

3. Confess your sins to God and pray for forgiveness and eternal life. Indicate when you prayed a version of the “Sinner’s Prayer” and accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

4. Have you been baptized? If so, give the date. If not, when will you make arrangements to be baptized?

(To be completed thirty days after you prayed the Sinner's Prayer.)

This month I was able to read my Bible ___ of 30 days.

This month I was able to talk to God in prayer ___ of 30 days.

This month I have attended worship ___ times.

If you are not yet connected with a church:

Describe your plan for finding a church where you can live out your faith.

If you are already connected with a church:

Describe your plan for finding a place of service within the church.

Describe your plan for telling others about Jesus Christ.



Part of the Passport to Discipleship Program
at Grace United Methodist Church
Tiffin, Iowa