

God loves you and created you for a relationship with Him.

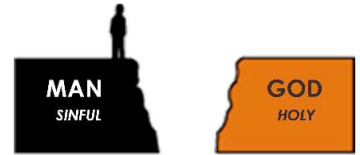
Originally, people lived in perfect harmony with God and others, but that perfect connection was broken by sin. Sin is a choice we make that goes against God’s perfect standard. Many people claim to be good people. But since nobody’s perfect, how good is good enough for God? In the Bible, we see that God has a standard for what a “good” person is. Let’s look at just five of the 10 commandments and 3 other questions.

The Good Person Test (Answer yes or no)

1. Have you ever told a lie? Yes or No
2. Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)? Y N
3. Have you ever disobeyed or disrespected your parents? Y N
4. Have you ever looked at someone with lustful thoughts? Y N
(Jesus calls this committing adultery in your heart)
5. Have you broken the 1st commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me”? Y N
(This is giving something a more important position than God in your life.)
6. Have you given money to charity? Y N
7. Have you gone to church regularly? Y N
8. Have you tried to read your Bible regularly? Y N

The Bad News

Go ahead and cross out the last three questions. These questions don’t apply to how you stand before God. Giving money to charity, going to church, and reading the Bible are all good activities, but none of them impress God. In fact, if you broke even one of the five commands listed, you have failed the test. James 2:10 clearly says, *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”* Isaiah 64:6 also says, *“We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.”* This means that all of our "righteous deeds" can never make up for the fact that we’ve broken God’s commands. The picture on the right illustrates how sin separates us from God.



Think of it like this: A person was guilty of a serious crime, like murder. At the trial, the murderer shares about how he gave money to charity. Does giving money to charity make up for his crime? No. The person’s crime still must be paid for. This "good deed" will mean nothing to the judge when he passes the sentence.

Based on your answers to the questions, if God judges you by his standard, would you be... Innocent or Guilty? If you got the punishment you deserved, do you think you would go to... Heaven or Hell?

The Good News

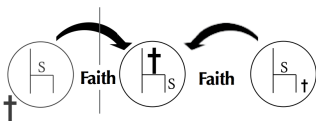
God is perfectly just and he must punish your sin, BUT he is also full of love for you.

Imagine again that you are in a courtroom and you are guilty of a very serious crime. The judge says, "You have a fine of 5 million dollars to pay or you go to prison." You don’t have anywhere near that amount of money. So, they begin to walk you out of the courtroom. Then, someone you don't even know runs up to the judge with a check and says, "I'll pay the fine." Now that the fine has been paid, the law no longer has any hold on you. You are free to go because that person gave you that gift. This is what God did for you by sending Jesus to die on the cross.



Jesus Christ died in your place. You don’t have to go to hell, because the payment for your sins was made by Jesus on the cross. Romans 6:23 says *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”* After Jesus died, he then rose from the grave and defeated death. John 3:16 tells us, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”* In John 14:6 Jesus said he was the only way to God, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* The picture on the right shows how Jesus is the only bridge for us to get to God.

For us to receive this gift of forgiveness, God asks us to **repent**. To repent means to change your mind about your sinful and self-centered life. We must decide to turn away from living for ourselves and decide to live for Jesus.



The illustration on the left shows three kinds of lives. The left circle represents a self-directed life, with Christ outside of your life. The middle circle represents having Christ on the throne of your life and you yielding to him. The right circle represents a person who has received Christ, but is not currently following him as the Lord of their life. Which of these circle best represents your life right now? Which would you like to have represent your life?

To receive Christ, all you have to do is believe Jesus died for your sins, turn from those sins, and surrender your life to following Him. The following is a sample prayer. The exact words are not important; what matters is the desire of your heart to give your life to Jesus.

“Jesus, I’m sorry for my sin against you. I want to turn from those sins. Thank you for dying on the cross for me and rising from dead. Please come into my life and be my Lord. I want to live for you from this day forward. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? Would you like to pray it right now?

If you have truly given your life to Jesus, you will begin to see some changes in your life! You will notice an increased love for people, a desire to learn God’s word, and a desire to connect with other Christians.

Connect With Other Christians

Just as you were created to connect with God, you were also made to be a member of God's family. Even if you haven't committed your life to Jesus, take a look at these three reasons to join a Christian community:

1. You Become Like Those you Hang Around

Pro 13:20 says, "*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*" If you have wise friends you will grow wise; if you have foolish friends, you will suffer negative consequences. College is the time where you are making the most important decisions of your life, like your future career, who you will marry, and what you will believe about God. You need people who will help you make wise choices.

2. You Need A Spiritual Family

Hebrews 10:25 says, "*You should NOT stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing, but you should meet together and encourage each other.*" In order to stay strong in your faith, you need people to encourage you to keep going and pick you up when you fall.

3. You Have Something to Contribute

You have gifts, talents and abilities to contribute to the mission of God. The Church is like a body. 1 Cor. 12:18 says, "*But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.*" God gives each Christian a role to play. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "*God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.*" Most people find their faith really comes alive when they begin using their gifts to serve!

Which of these reasons for Christian community is most motivating for you?

Six Ways To Connect At Challenge

1. Challenge Weekly Meeting - Tuesday 8pm at Faith Presbyterian Church (Across the street from McDonald's on Montezuma. 5075 Campanile)

The Challenge weekly meeting is the best way to get connected. It is an exciting environment with a short time of energetic music and a practical, inspiring talk from the Bible (~30 min). We talk about topics like: decision-making, dating, hard questions about the Bible, and other topics students deal with. We also have a 10 min. party at the end where you can make friends and grab a snack.

2. Discovery Groups - If you want to connect on deeper level and learn God's word, then a Discovery Group is for you! These meet either on campus or in an apartment. We will have 10-15 mins to catch up and have 30 mins of Bible discussion. Everyone can benefit from these groups whether you have no background in the Bible, you are new to your faith, or want to go deeper. The Bible really comes alive when you start to study it in a group and you can make life long friends.

3. The Elephant Room - Wednesday Night 8pm - The Aztlán room #204A (on the 2nd floor of the Aztec Student Union)

At "The Elephant Room" we explore the tough questions about faith and culture college students are asking. We address topics like: Why trust the Bible? Why should I believe the resurrection? Is Jesus the only way? Creation and Evolution? And many other questions about Christianity and other religions.

4. Challenge Groups - These are groups of two to eight Christians who want to challenge each other to grow deeper in their faith through personal accountability. They study the Bible together and set goals for Bible intake and making disciples. They will also share struggles and pray for each other. These meetings can happen any time that those in the group are available during the week.

5. Service opportunities - Serving is one of the best ways to connect at Challenge! Many of our students help serve at our Challenge weekly meeting. We also occasionally do community service and homeless outreaches, and we have summer mission trips to Mexico, Germany, Toronto and China.

6. Special events, parties and retreats - At Challenge we enjoy holiday parties, beach bonfires, game nights, sports, and many other fun activities. During the Fall, we have weekend retreats in San Diego & Big Bear. In the Spring, we have a guys/girls retreat and over Spring Break we do a short mission trip.

Which of these would you be interested in trying to commit to this semester?

Next Steps For Spiritual Growth

1. Identify with God's Family Through Baptism - Baptism publicly announces to the world that you are not ashamed to be a part of God's family. It is not an optional ritual to be delayed or postponed. It is an act of initiation, not something to put off until you are spiritually mature. Baptism is a physical picture of a spiritual reality. For example, a wedding ring doesn't make you married, but it symbolizes your commitment. In the same way, baptism doesn't make you a member of God's family but it shows you are a part of it! Have you ever been baptized before? Would you be interested in getting baptized soon?

2. Get A Bible and Start Reading It - The Bible is a very large book and sometimes confusing. That's because it's actually a collection of 66 different books telling one story of God's love. So where should you begin? I recommend starting in the book called John. John is a good introduction to who Jesus was and taught. I recommend downloading the free Bible app on your smartphone called "*YouVersion.*" It would be good to buy an easy to read Bible like the "New Living Translation." Pray about what you learn and talk to God about anything. Nothing is too big or small to pray about; he cares about everything.

3. Check out These Websites

- **ChallengeSanDiego.com** - This gives you access to our events and Facebook group.
- **GotQuestions.org** - This website gives very good answers to your questions about faith.