



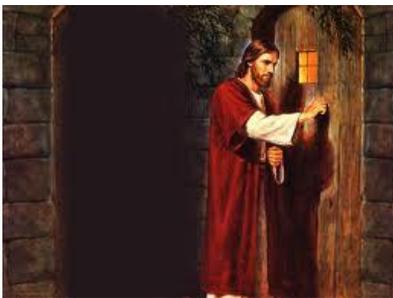
# LESSONS FOR LEADERS

*Biblical Principles for Successful Leadership*

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## How to Develop a Personal Relationship with God

Is God an unknowable, impersonal force out there somewhere? Or is he a personal and caring God who loves you deeply and longs to draw you into the most intimate and fulfilling relationship you have ever experienced?



The atheist says there is no God. The agnostic says maybe. Many religious people believe in God, but don't know him in a personal way. (Acts 17:23). But to those who open their hearts to him and come to know him in a living way, he becomes the greatest blessing that they have ever known! What is he to you?

In Revelation 3:10, Jesus says: **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”** This is the greatest invitation which can ever be given to a human being – that of a personal fellowship and relationship with God, himself. And that is what true Christianity is!

### **I. CHRISTIANITY IS A RELATIONSHIP, NOT A RELIGION.**

Nicodemus was a very religious man – a priest, Bible scholar and full-time practitioner of the Jewish religion. Undoubtedly, he attended his church daily and participated in all of its rituals, ceremonies and traditions.

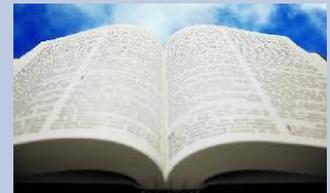
There was just one problem – he didn't know God! One day, Nicodemus, fascinated by Jesus, made a radical decision. He took a secret trip at night and met with him one-on-one. Jesus diagnosed his spiritual condition and spoke these immortal words: **“Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7). Why would he say this to a faithful and religious man? Your eternal future may hinge upon finding out!

“*And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God”*  
John 17: 3

### **II. NICODEMUS SERVED GOD, BUT DIDN'T KNOW HIM.**

Nicodemus was as religious as a person could be. But Jesus wanted to offer him something deeper and more personal - a vital and life-changing relationship with the living God. He called this experience being **“born of the Spirit”** and added that without it, no one could **“see”** or **“enter into the “kingdom of God”** (John 3:3:5). That sounds like pretty important stuff! Would you like to learn more about it?

### Scripture of the Week



*“Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness ...but that which is through the faith of Christ...that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.”*

*Philippians 3:8-10*



### III. GOD WANTS US TO KNOW HIM.

God *wants to be known* and has gone out of his way to reveal himself in a multitude of ways:

- Through the wonders of the Creation
- Through His Old Testament revelation to the nation of Israel
- By giving us the written Word of God
- By visiting us in the Person of Jesus Christ

### IV. BUT THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING.

These outward revelations of God may be enough to convince us that he exists, they aren't enough to bring us into a *personal relationship* with him. Just to know *about* God without an *inward experience* of his reality can leave us, at best, sincerely religious but still *spiritually empty* on the inside. Have you ever felt that way? If you have, you're not alone!

The Bible calls this “**being alienated from the life of God**” (Ephesians 4:18) or “**excluded from the life of God**” (NASB) and it is the condition of the entire human race. We all have, as some have said, “God-shaped hole” which can only be filled by God himself!

### V. WE WERE MEANT TO KNOW GOD

Here's the problem. Though God created all of us to know him and to enjoy intimate fellowship with him, most human beings, beginning with Adam and Eve, have chosen to find their pleasures elsewhere. This turning away from God, called by theologians the Fall of Man, has plunged the entire human race into a state of spiritual “**death**” (Romans 5:12) or separation from God.

Though it's easy to blame Adam and Eve for this, The Bible tells us that we have all played a part in this drifting away from God: “**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.**” (Romans 3:23)

Adam and Eve did their part, but we have all added to it through our own **disobedience** (violation of God's commandments) and **idolatry** (making other things more important than God). Consequently, we have robbed ourselves of the glorious experience of knowing God in a personal way!

**The salvation of Jesus Christ opens the door for us to have The most blessed, satisfying and fulfilling relationship possible for a human being - an intimate relationship with the living God.**

### VI. THERE IS GLORIOUS ANSWER!

Sin has so short-circuited the relationship between man and God, that the Bible says “**Your wound is incurable**” in Jeremiah 30:12. It is a wound for which there is no human solution. No self-help program, human effort or system of religious works can heal it, for our sins still separate us from God.

But God has provided a glorious solution – a way in which our fellowship can be restored– and that is the supernatural salvation of Jesus Christ.

The Bible calls the announcement of this divine remedy “**the glorious gospel of Christ**” (II Corinthians 4:4). The fact that Christ has paid for our sins reuniting us with God and allowing us to partake of his life is the greatest news which the human race has ever heard! The apostle Paul thus exclaims: “**Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!**” (II Corinthians 9:15) Have you received this gift – and do you know what it means?

### VII. HAVE YOU RECEIVED SALVATION?

If you haven't, it may be for one of the following reasons:

- You do not understand the terminology
- It has never been clearly explained to you
- You do not believe that you need it
- It is outside of your religious experience

Please, do not let any of these things hold you back from the greatest blessing which God has to give! Let's consider them one by one.



### VIII. DON'T BE PUT OFF BY TERMINOLOGY

If someone offered to give you ten million dollars via an Electronic Funds Transfer to your bank (or E.F.T.), would you turn it down because you were unfamiliar with the terminology? Sure, you'd want to check it out to see how it works. But would you refuse the gift just because it was a *new experience* for you? I doubt it!

But millions of people *do* turn down God's gift of salvation just because they are uncomfortable with expressions like "being saved," "accepting Christ," or "born again Christian." But if it means getting you into heaven and helping you to discover joy of knowing God, does it really matter if you call it being "redeemed" "regenerated," "reconciled," "saved," or "born again"? Just call it an Eternal Forgiveness Transfer and enjoy!

### IX. WHAT BIBLICAL SALVATION REALLY IS

- (A) It is a *free gift* of forgiveness and new life based 100% what Jesus Christ did on the cross to pay for our sins (Ephesians 2:8). It was "paid in full" 2000 through the shedding of his precious blood and needs nothing added to it. It's a done deal: **"By grace...through faith; and... not of works, lest any man should boast"** (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- (B) It grants us total forgiveness of our personal sins- no matter how bad or many (I John 2:2).
- (C) It allows the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in our hearts (John 14:17) filling us with God's life. (I Peter 1:4) The God who was "out there" now lives in us and begins to change us from the inside out **"from glory to glory"** (II Corinthians 3:18)
- (C) It gives us the assurance that when we die, we will be accepted in heaven (I Peter 1:3-4).

### X. WHAT BIBLICAL SALVATION ISN'T:

- (A) It isn't working our way into heaven by doing Good deeds, acting religious or participating in ceremonies or rituals. The Bible tells us that this is impossible: **"For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"** Galatians 2:16). It's a **"free gift"** (Romans 5:15,16,17)
- (B) It isn't turning over a new leaf, trying harder to be good. It is becoming a **"new creature"** on the inside through a spiritual rebirth (II Corinthians (5:17).

(C) It isn't hoping that we will go to heaven because we are good or belong to a certain church. It's knowing that we will go to heaven, because we are forgiven. As one preacher once said "Going to church won't make you into a Christian any more than going to McDonald's will make you into a hamburger." Note: Jesus didn't tell Nicodemus to go to church (He went there seven days a week!). He told him: **"Ye must be born again."**

### XI. GOOD PEOPLE DON'T GO TO HEAVEN

Many people fail to receive the gift of salvation because of two false beliefs: (1) That good people go to heaven and (2) that they are good people! If you believe this, you are *wrong on both counts*. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that good people go to heaven. What the Bible says is that there *are* no good people.

Romans 3:12 says: **"There is none that doeth good, no, not one."** And Romans 3:10 says: **"There is none righteous, no, not one."** (Romans 3:10) Viewed against God's standards of perfect holiness, none of us ("**no, not one**") is good enough to go to heaven on our own merits. Therefore, yes, every one of us does need to receive the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus Christ to go to heaven!

### XII. DON'T SETTLE FOR SUBSTITUTES

Religion, "churchianity," traditions and human goodness are all substitutes for the *real thing* – a vital relationship with the living God. Though they may be what you're used to, they are but shadows of what Christ has to offer. They will not either save or satisfy your soul. But Christ can!

### XIII. REALIZE WHAT YOU HAVE TO GAIN

God who is perfect and holy offers to be your daily companion as you live out your days on the earth. You can share his very life and experience what Jesus meant when he said: **"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"** (John 10:10).

And you will know that this relationship, once begun on earth will continue in heaven forever!



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**XIV. YOU HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE.** You are not going to accidentally end up in heaven! Nor will you wake up one morning and find to your surprise that you are enjoying a wonderful relationship with God. Your eternal destiny and are squarely in your hands. It's your move! God made his 2000 years ago when he sent Jesus to the cross to pay for your sins.

- (A) **The benefits of accepting Christ are immeasurable, infinite and out-of-this world!** One Bible scholar counted 7843 promises which God makes to the person who believes in him and chooses to walk with him. But though there are countless earthly benefits to knowing God, but the greatest blessing of all is eternal salvation and the knowledge that we will enjoy the perfections of heaven forever!
- (B) **Similarly, the consequences of rejecting Christ are immeasurable and infinite!** Jesus tells the story of a man who was invited to a wedding banquet that a king had prepared for his son: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man which had not on a wedding garment." The king asked the man why he had showed up without the proper attire **"and he was speechless"** (Matthew 22:2,11-12) as he was turned away.

Clearly this parable concerns the ultimate tragedy – a person who thought he was outfitted for heaven only to discover that he was not qualified to enter. This tragedy is completely avoidable if you will make your future sure now by accepting Jesus Christ. A prayer like the one below will suffice if you pray it sincerely:

Dear Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay for my sins. Please forgive my sins, come into my heart to live and let me know that when I die, I will go to heaven to be with you. Help me t live my life close to you and to learn to do your will. Amen.



## Greetings!

I am Pastor Dale Walker – Chaplain at New Yorker's Family Research Foundation. Surveys show that most people believe that they are going to heaven, but less than 10% can give a correct Biblical answer about how to get there!,

After being a pastor for over 30 years, I still find it amazing how few people take the time to discover the truth about a subject of such supreme importance. That is why I wrote today's Bible study.

Please know that I am praying on a daily basis that you will come to know the awesome experience of knowing God and making your eternal destiny secure.

I would be happy to speak with you about these things or to pray with you concerning any of you other needs. You are important to God and I know that he loves you!

I can be reached at (518) 588-8395, 462-0459 X232, or 585-225-2220 or email me at [dale@newyorkfamilies.org](mailto:dale@newyorkfamilies.org).

*Rev. Walker is affiliated with New Yorker's Family Research Foundation and with Capitol Ministries of Washington, D.C.*



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