



August 11, 2007

 Search ☐ dailypress.com ☐ Web enhanced by

Subscribe Today! Login or register

[Home](#) > [Life](#)**Classifieds**

Jobs
Cars
Real Estate
Apartments
Dating
Pets
Place an ad
Shopping
Grocery coupons

News**Resources**

Weather
Hurricane Guide
Traffic
White & Yellow
pages
Living Here

Opinion**Obituaries****Business****Sports****Entertainment****Life**

Family & Consumer
news
HR HealthBeat
Gardening
Home
Taste
Special Occasions
Life columnists
Comics & more
Lottery results

Travel**Newspaper services****Site Services**

Believing in Jesus is no small thing

August 11, 2007

Have you ever wondered why Christianity makes such a big deal about belief? Why do Christians care so much about believing in Jesus? Does it ever seem almost too magical, like a trick you can play in your head? "Just believe in Jesus Christ, and you'll receive forgiveness, peace with God, eternal life!" That's what the good news of Christ actually says. But shouldn't there be more to it, some requirement to clean up your act, to do right things to earn all this? Do Christians make it too simple to be saved?

To answer that, first we have to recall what it means to be saved, for that word has become religious jargon; it has lost its meaning outside of Christian circles. It just means to be rescued. You need not view it in a religious way to see that. To be saved from drowning is to be rescued from drowning. Christians mean just that sort of thing when they use the word. It's being rescued from ourselves, and from the trouble we've gotten ourselves into.

God has standards for us, and none of us lives up to them. Nobody even lives consistently according to their own idea of what's right and wrong. Surprisingly, the Bible actually seems to say (in Romans 2) that if you don't know the Biblical law, God won't necessarily judge you based on that law. Instead, your own moral standards will be your test. And nobody passes.

There is a penalty for this falling short: eternal separation from God, the source of all love and goodness. It is eternal death. Salvation means rescue from this fate. It also has to do with being freed (rescued, in a way) from our own internal contradictions, the passions within that war against our own selves. Ultimately it means living forever with God.

So why should believing qualify us for these great gifts? God knows we cannot live up to our own standards, much less his own; we can't rescue ourselves, and we can't gain true, eternal life on our own. Christ's life, death, and resurrection were God's gift to pay the penalty for our sins and open the way for this. It could never be something we earn, for it's far beyond our reach. God offers it in the only way we could receive it: as a gift, to be accepted by simple believing.

But let's not overstate how simple that believing really is. It is a deep thing. To a great extent, our beliefs are who we are. They determine every choice we make. I'm not just speaking of religious beliefs now. If you choose to go to school, it's because you believe something good will come of it. If you choose to love your spouse, it's because of your beliefs about that relationship. If you lie or steal, it's because you believe some greater good (also defined according to your beliefs) will come to you for it. If you indulge in any temptation, it's because you believe the pain of denying it would be greater, or more consequential to you, than the damage you cause yourself by giving in.

If you believe in God, you choose to order your life according to an entirely different reality than if you do not. There is a very short distance, Biblically, between believing in God and obeying him. In Hebrews 3:16-19, and in Hebrews 4:2 and 4:6, "unbelief" and "disobedience" are used interchangeably. In Hebrews 11, the Bible's famous "faith hall of fame," the Old Testament heroes' faith was shown in every case by what they did — by their actions. One book later in the Bible, in James 2:14-23, it's explicitly stated that faith and deeds cannot be separated.

Believing in Jesus Christ comes first. It always remains the basis for our relationship with God, the beginning and foundation of a changed life. God asks no more of us than that when we enter into relationship with him. But it is no mere mental check-off, no simple assent to a creed; it's something that in the end alters our whole approach to life. It is inevitably expressed through the way we live. What we believe determines what kind of persons we are.

Article Tools

[E-mail](#)
[Print](#)
[Single page view](#)
[Reprints](#)
[Reader feedback](#)
text size:

ADVERTISEMENT**Popular stories**

[Fire started from extension cord](#)
[The Eagle has landed](#)
[York deputy charged with fondling woman commits suicide](#)
[Looking to April, and to Richmond](#)
[Former governor's son pleads guilty to mismanaging funds](#)
[More most viewed](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

It's no small thing to believe in Jesus Christ — it's the first step of a complete turnaround. It means that we experience all of reality in a new way. It kicks off a positive change in our character. It starts us on a new life, a life of peace with God, and the freedom of forgiveness; it opens up the power (through Christ living in us) to truly love, to give, to have joy, to have self-control, patience, kindness, and more. It provides the potency by which we can have a powerful positive effect on the world. None of us experiences these changes completely on earth, but ultimately belief in God opens the door to live eternally with God.

So if you wonder whether there ought to be more to it than mere belief, you're partly right.

All God requires of us, to be rescued from ourselves and to receive his life, is that we believe in him. But when it comes to Jesus Christ, genuine belief is the start and foundation for a good and great transformation of your heart and your life.

Gilson is the director of strategic processes for Campus Crusade for Christ. He can be contacted through his Web log at www.thinkingchristian.net. Gilson is the director of strategic processes for Campus Crusade for Christ. He can be contacted through his Web log at www.thinkingchristian.net.

[More articles](#)

Copyright © 2007, [Newport News, Va.](#), [Daily Press](#)

Would you recommend this?

Rate it: 

[Copyright © 2007 Daily Press](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

[Newsroom](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Daily Press Jobs](#) | [Internships](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[CareerBuilder.com for Jobs](#) | [Cars.com for Cars](#) | [Apartments.com for Rentals](#) | [Houses for Rent](#) | [ShopLocal.com for Shopping](#) | [FSBO](#) | [Open Houses](#)