

CHAPTER 10: Discovering the “Ah-ha!” of life

Taking the First Step of a Faith Commitment to Follow Jesus

Reference: *Surprised by Faith*, pages 124-130; and 148-156 (fourth edition); pages 112-117; and 132-138 (third edition)

Getting Focused

- How can becoming a Christian be both hard and easy at the same time?
- What do people mean when they say they know God personally?
- Is there one God or three?

Becoming a Christian and knowing God is easy because it’s a free gift—offered by God through His grace. Discovering the “Ah-Ha!” of life is only a prayer away. In confession, on our knees at the foot of the cross of Jesus, we receive God’s gift of forgiveness; are created with new life by God the Holy Spirit; and are adopted as spiritual children into His family. The transformation that results is fulfilling and deeply meaningful in our life now—and assures us of living in heaven with God for eternity. People of every race, nationality, gender, age, status in life, culture and geographic region all testify to its reality in their experience.

Making the Discovery

1. God _____ the world by his infinite wisdom and power (Intelligent Design). Genesis 1:1.
2. Two thousand years ago God became _____ in the person of Jesus Christ and lived in the world He had created. John 1:14.
3. Jesus Christ was my _____ in His death on the cross as payment for my sin. Romans 5:8.
4. Jesus Christ was my _____ from sin into a forgiven and personal relationship with God. Ephesians 1:7.
5. Jesus Christ broke the power of death by His _____ from the grave. John 5:24.
6. I enter into a personal relationship with God upon _____ with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and _____ in my heart that He was resurrected from the dead. Romans 10:8-9.
7. In taking this step to know God, I confess that Jesus Christ is
 - a. My _____
 - b. My _____
 - c. My Resurrected _____

DISCOVERY #10

“Ah-ha!” I can experience a vital relationship with God and the assurance of life after death by a confession of faith in Jesus Christ through prayer!

Application and Reflection

1. **The Bible says** that salvation is a gift of God and available only through faith in Jesus.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

What else does the Bible say about salvation? Record what you discover in each passage below.

- Romans 3:20-24

- 1 John 5:11-13

- Ephesians 2:8,9

- Titus 3:4-7

2. **The Bible says** that as a result of our confession of faith in Jesus, we are redeemed from sin and eternal death and stand humbly before the throne of God without judgment.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8:1-2).

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you (James 4:7-8, 10).

3. **The Bible says** that God’s will is for all to have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, and that He personally guarantees our resurrection from the dead.

“For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40).

What is the proof for life after death? Identify the main arguments from the following.

It is important to recognize that having a longing for life after death is a good thing. C.S. Lewis once wrote:

...a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next (Mere Christianity, [New York: Macmillan, 1952], p. 118).

A Gallup poll taken in 1994 revealed that 71 percent of people in the United States believe there is life after death. What evidence is there for this? There are four lines of evidence, three circumstantial and one direct. First, medical studies of the relation between body and spirit, primarily by studying near death experiences (NDEs), suggest there is more to people than just the physical. Conscious memory seems to exist even when machines indicate flat brain waves and no heart rhythm. Second, physiological studies on the brain itself have revealed that there seems to be a separate identity and existence apart from the body. We are

more than the sum total of our cells and anatomical structure. The third circumstantial evidence has to do with unsatisfied longings or unfulfilled desires. C.S. Lewis wrote, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world” (*Mere Christianity*, pp. 119-120). This may explain the meaningfulness of certain themes of Scripture, for example, Psalm 23, John 10, and Revelation 7 and 21:1-5.

The only direct evidence that there is life after death is that a real person in human history demonstrated it to be true! The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ—supported by the facts of His empty tomb, of at least ten post-resurrection appearances, of eyewitness testimony, and of the transformed lives of His disciples—is the basis for certainty about life after death. Jesus died and then spent forty days physically on earth after he rose from the dead, appearing at one point to more than 500 people simultaneously (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). He said, “*I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies...*” (John 11:25). Jesus’ promise to His followers is that He is preparing a place for each one in heaven, saying also, “*I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:2-3).

If you have not yet made a faith commitment to follow Christ, share what is keeping you from doing so.

If you have already made a personal faith commitment to follow Christ, explain what brought you to that point and how it has changed your life. If it was a very recent commitment, explain how you expect it to make a difference in your life.

As a Christian, you may be accused by some of believing in three gods. The discussion below will help you to give them a better understanding of the trinity.

The Christian concept of God as Trinity is based on God’s own revelation of Himself in the Bible. It is not a man-made scheme or distortion. For example, we are instructed to baptize in the name (singular) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). The Trinitarian benediction is given as the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). However, the Bible also affirms that God is “one” (Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 4:6). How are we to understand this?

The “oneness” is in reference to God’s being, substance or essence as “spirit” (John 4:24), rather than a “material” substance. As spirit, God is invisible (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16) and personal, i.e., with intellect, will and emotion. In this divine spiritual essence God is infinite, omniscient, holy, just, omnipotent, etc. But the Bible’s assertion of oneness teaches a multiplicity in unity. For example, the Bible’s teaching that in marriage the two become one flesh does not eliminate that there are still two persons. Jesus’ prayer that His disciples would all be one (John 17:21) does not mean they have ceased being separate persons. This is the meaning of multiplicity in unity.

The “threeness” of God—the Father is God (Galatians 1:1), the Son is God (John 1:1; 5:18) and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—is in reference to persons. There are three persons within the divine unity or spiritual essence. Thus, we do not have a contradiction. We affirm one in regard to essence. We affirm three in regard to persons. This may be difficult to comprehend, but it is not irrational or illogical.

Illustrations of the concept of trinity are never perfect, but sometimes help. Water is one chemical substance or essence (H₂O) but exists in three forms as solid (ice), liquid, and gas (steam). One family consists of father, mother and child. We are one being with body, soul and spirit. So, why not a God who is both one and a plurality in the Godhead? The Trinity is the most consistent view of God from all the strands of biblical data.

Answers to “Fill in the Blanks”: 1. created; 2. incarnate; 3. substitute; 4. redeemer; 5. resurrection; 6. confession, believing; 7. Creator, Redeemer, Lord