

## The Basics

How did we get to this point? As a Christian one could be a Catholic or Protestant. If one is a Protestant then just what flavor? Baptist, Methodist, Charismatic, Spirit-filled, Lutheran, the list goes on. You could even be categorized according to your perspective on the last book of the Bible: pre-millennial, post millennial, or a-millennial. Additionally, it makes a difference if one raises their hands during worship, “dunks” new converts under water, plays a musical instrument in church, or even meets on Saturdays. Upon what can we agree? If we tried to explain our belief system to someone else, or even come to grips with it ourselves, what is our walk with God in a nut shell? What are the basics?

There are concepts that hold true for all Christians aside from the obvious acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The foremost truth would be to love selflessly and unconditionally. The Lord first (*The Lord your God is to be loved with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* Deuteronomy 6:5, Bible in Basic English) and others second (*Never get revenge. Never hold a grudge against any of your people. Instead, love your neighbor as you love yourself. I am the LORD.* Leviticus 19:18, GOD'S WORD® Translation). So important is the concept of selfless love and deferment to others, Jesus stated that these two commandments formed the foundation of Jewish moral law. (The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” Matthew 22: 40, New Living Translation). The prophet Micah stipulated that humanity should follow God’s direction with an earnest desire to do as He does and love what He loves, with an attitude of humility (*O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.* Micah 6:8, New Living Translation). God simply wants us to behave morally (*The LORD is more pleased when we do what is right and just than when we offer him sacrifices.* Proverbs 21:3, New Living Translation).

Left to our own devices everyone falls far short of the ideal God set before us. (*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.* Roman 3:23, New Living Translation). Sin has far reaching and dire consequences (For the reward of sin is death; but what God freely gives is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23, Bible in Basic English).

God has provided a means that allows each of us, as individuals, to communicate directly with Him. We can call on Jesus, God’s Son, and no longer depend on an earthly intermediary. (*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* John 14:6, New International Version). Jesus Christ is the basis of the new agreement (covenant) with God because humanity had not been able to personally or corporately keep God’s most basic commandments (For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16, New American Standard Bible). We don’t have the strength or ability to walk the pathways God has set before us, but Christ does (*I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.* Philippians 4:13, World English Bible). We have done nothing nor can we do anything to deserve or merit any intervention from God. (God saved you through faith as an act of

kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8, GOD'S WORD® Translation)

That is it in a nutshell. God wants us to behave in a moral loving manner toward Him and others so that we can have a joyous and satisfying life and eventually live with Him for eternity. We can't seem to behave on our own, so God provided a way via His Son and His strength even though we don't deserve it. Everything in the Word of God is either supported or extended by this basic concept. To add to or subtract from this fundamental tenant of Christianity is the doctrine of man and detracts from the simple beauty of God's plan.

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