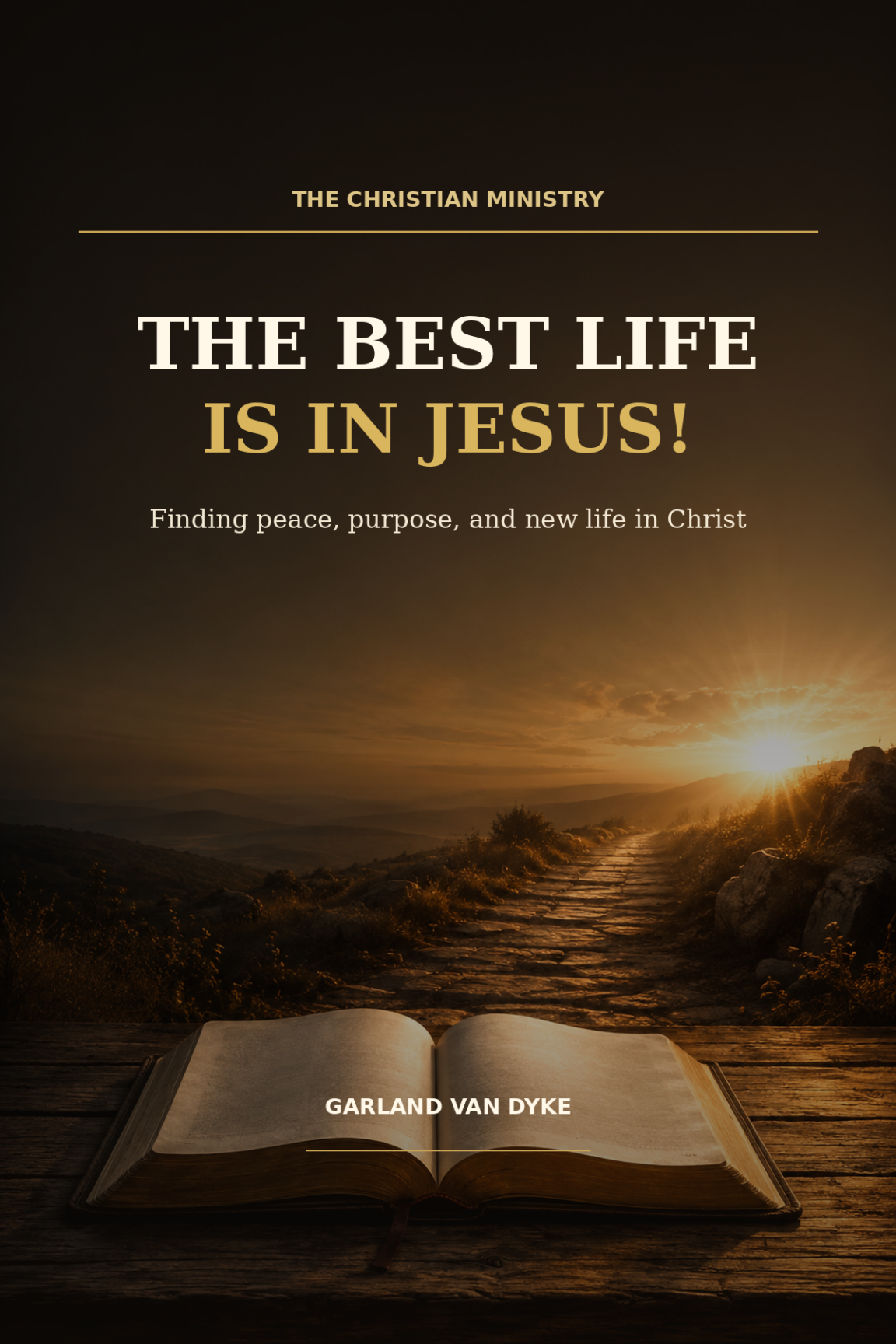


THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

THE BEST LIFE IS IN JESUS!

Finding peace, purpose, and new life in Christ



GARLAND VAN DYKE

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Jesus • Faith • Life

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Introduction

We eventually get tired of all the garbage in our lives, especially since we cause most of our own problems. At some point, we say, “That’s enough. I don’t want to live like this anymore.”

Wouldn't you like to be free of yelling, screaming, and intense anger? Of a truth, Jesus can fix that for us. The best life is simply living in Jesus. If we listen to Jesus, our lives can turn to a peaceful way of living. Oh, there'll still be issues and difficulties, but Jesus teaches a way to get above all that by learning from Him and trusting Him for everything.

I say that Jesus is God, and since God furiously loves us, He teaches us to live in love. There’s no better life than that, loving Jesus and being loved by Him.

But, here’s the deal: we have to truly want to change from deep within if we want a Jesus- filled life. We have to want Jesus’ love above all else; all else. Ready? Let’s go.

SECTION 1

The Right Relationship

A better life begins with a right relationship with Jesus.

God created people with souls. Therefore, if you have a soul, you're God's. The problem is, everyone, you and I, doesn't live like we belong to Him. We do whatever we want, but that's not a good thing, because we mess things up in a big way. That's called sin, and sin keeps us away from God.

Things are not good for us as long as we are separated from God. Consider the following from 1st Timothy 1:9- 10: "...people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders, people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching."

You can imagine these things, and everything like these, make quite a mess for us. We need someone greater than

ourselves to rescue us from all this. No doubt you've heard that salvation is only in Jesus. He came to earth to save us from our sins. He came to save us from ourselves. Luke 19:10 has this: "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

Just like in business, the right relationship is everything. So, in marriage, too. Many people know the pain of being tied to the wrong person.

Want a better life? Get a better relationship with Jesus, the Son of God, who loves us and sent His Son to die in our stead. Everyone knows John 3:16, right? Well, here it is: "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

Well, the question then becomes, "How do I get a relationship with Jesus?" It's probably not as you may think. There are so many, "Say the Sinner's Prayer," or "Just believe and you'll be saved."

None of that is in the Bible, meaning it isn't true. Those are made up by people to sway you into believing you are saved.

The New Testament states that Jesus preached salvation as a right relationship with Him.

Jesus has the steps to have the correct, right, and good relationship with Him. Steps? Yes. There are things we must do to have a good relationship. Here they are:

1. One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior, and our Lord. If He is Lord of your life, then you have to give up every way of thinking and living to His way of life. Jesus said this in John 8:24, "That is why I said that

you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.”

Is Bible faith the same as blind faith? No. Our Bibles teach us that faith comes by understanding God’s word. “So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. ” That’s Romans 10:17. That’s the only way to know and believe that Jesus truly is who He says He is. Without faith, you can go no further than having a good, even great, life.

Take the time to investigate Jesus in the Gospels, specifically in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We can help with this, if you’d like.

What’s next?

2. Once you conclude that Jesus really is the Son of God, you must repent. Repentance means you want to turn your life from sin, grossness, and meanness to love and worship. Frankly, you need to stop doing ugly things.

Luke 13:3, “And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God.”

Yes, anyone who does not repent will end up in the fires of hell. All of us must repent or be sentenced to that hellish fire. It’s time to say, “I give up my way of messing things up. I want to live as Jesus says.”

And then? Step 3. Jesus requires that we make a public confession of our belief.

Here’s Matthew 10:32-33, “Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

If I wanted salvation, I would certainly want Jesus to tell the Father that I am one of His. Can you imagine how scary it would be for the Father not to know us by name?

I'm for that. I hope you are, too.

But then what?

4. You must be baptized (full immersion in water) to be saved. Lots of people argue this, but they are only arguing with Jesus saying, "Baptism isn't necessary for salvation."

Jesus said it, Mark 16:16, "Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned."

It's clear, by Jesus' own words, that baptism must be done. His apostle also said it: "Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," Acts 2:38.

Then you have what you desire, a new life in Christ Jesus.

Here's Romans 6:3-5, "Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was."

SECTION 2

What Jesus Did

He died so that others might live.

While God has laws about sin and death, heaven and hell, He doesn't want anyone to go to hell (the final place of those who disobey Him). Instead, He wants everyone to repent and come to know Jesus (2 Peter 3:9).

We could say to God that we're sorry, like apologize, but apologies won't work; this won't do by God's laws (we're not little kids saying, "I'm sorry," hoping all our misdeeds will be forgiven).

Or we could change to be excellent, moral people, but that won't work either. We can't be with God in heaven because we're good people doing good deeds. This won't eliminate our sins. Besides, God owes us nothing, and what good could we possibly do that pays for our sins?

We need a Savior – or it's hell for us. Only Jesus will do as a Savior. He is uniquely qualified to be so. No one else can be our savior; Acts 4:12, no one. No human could do this. No one. Get the idea?

“What’s so special about Jesus,” one may ask? Consider this: Jesus is holy, and there is no darkness in Him, sin, or impurity. He was an entirely perfect human (but also God at the same time). There is none like Him. It was through Jesus that Jehovah created everyone and everything, John 1:3. So, we know God designed us, and Jesus made us when we were conceived, Psalm 139:13-16. The universe belongs to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So, being holy, God requires holiness. Otherwise, we can’t be with Him. Well, sin is our death penalty, “The wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23, which means hell and eternal separation from God. That’s God’s law on the matter.

“How do we get rid of our sins?” According to God, we need a sacrifice, a perfect sacrifice. God says in Hebrews 9:22, “And without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness.” So, Jesus had to be the perfect sacrifice on our behalf!

What’s being communicated is this: we sin, we die; there’s no way to remove sin unless we have a perfect sacrifice. Ever heard of John 3:16? Here it is, “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” So, Jesus is our perfect sacrifice to remove our sins. “What’s so perfect about Jesus?” See the following.

- Jesus came from heaven.
- Jesus is Deity who took on man’s flesh.
- Jesus performed miracles – things no human could do.
- Jesus performed signs and wonders – miracles that astounded.
- Jesus was born of a virgin.

- Jesus taught a perfect way of life.
- Jesus never sinned, never, not once – He was, after all, God.
- Jesus always did and said what the Father wanted.

What else about the perfect Jesus?

- Jesus saw humanity's weakness and helped us.
- Jesus, as God, submitted to God the Father.
- Jesus willingly went through several illegal trials.
- Jesus was slapped, spit on, cursed, mocked, and scourged.
- Jesus was led away to be crucified but never said a word because He was the blood sacrifice needed to offer salvation.
- Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross (one of the most horrible ways of death invented).
- Jesus, by His death, removed the barrier between God and man. Thus, a saved person may speak to God anytime, anywhere.
- Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.
- Jesus died, and his body was washed and wrapped in cloth.
- He was buried in a rock tomb with an enormous rock door over the opening.
- Jesus overcame death, being resurrected to life.
- Jesus fulfilled prophecy being raised on the 3rd day, as He said.

Can I say more? What does He do now?

- Jesus created His church and only His church more than 2,000 years ago. He is the head of the church.
- Jesus mediates between God and us.
- Jesus is our advocate before the Father. He pleads for us.
- Jesus loves us.
- Jesus is our “High Priest,” offering one perfect sacrifice for sin for all time.
- People are in Jesus’ family after their sins are washed away.
- Through Jesus, people are God’s children.
- Jesus overcame death so that we might not fear it.
- Jesus defeated the devil.
- Jesus is now in heaven, reigning over heaven and earth.

What else? What will Jesus do?

- Jesus will one day appear in the sky. There will be a resurrection of all souls. After this, there will be a judgment. All the evil persons will be sentenced to hell, and the saved will live forever in a place so beautiful we can’t imagine it, heaven.
- Jesus offers a way for our sins to be forgiven.
- Jesus is always with His brethren.
- Jesus will judge the nations rightly and fairly; there is no respecting one person above another.

Something to know, something to remember:

Mat 26:26 As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take this and eat it, for this is my body.”

Mat 26:27 And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, “Each of you drink from it,

Mat 26:28 for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.

Mat 26:29 Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.”

God required the blood sacrifice of a perfect being. Only Jesus could have done that.

Heb 10:10 For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.

Heb 10:11 Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins.

Heb 10:12 But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

By this, everyone may come to Him for salvation.

SECTION 3

Jesus Is Good for Us

His goodness meets our deepest spiritual need.

In the Bible, good means pleasant, enjoyable, happy, agreeable, excellent, upright, and honorable. Jesus is all these things. Here's Matthew 10:17-18 - "As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Matthew 10:18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

If Jesus is Deity, then He is God. God died for our sins. Jesus is better than good. He is the Father's grace to salvation.

Jesus said this: John 6:44, For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. John 6:45 As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

How, then, are we drawn to Jesus? God does that by teaching us. If we hear what the Father says about Jesus and salvation, we understand Jesus' goodness and are drawn to that. What, then, can we say about His goodness?

John 6:35 He is the bread of life – He is our spiritual sustenance. We are kept spiritually alive by Him.

John 8:12 He is the light of the world. We can clearly see our path to heaven through Jesus.

John 10:10 He is the door to heaven. Only through Jesus can we come to salvation.

John 10:11 He is the good Shepherd who lays down His life for those who follow Him.

John 11:25-26 He is the resurrection. Jesus promises all who belong to Him a resurrection and eternal life.

John 14:6 He is the way, the truth, and the life. Want heaven? It's ours if we walk in the way of true life. There isn't any other way to heaven but through Jesus.

John 15:5 He is the vine; if one remains in Him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. Bearing fruit brings much glory to God.

We can undoubtedly say that Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to earth so that we might have forgiveness for our sins. As God, Jesus came to earth as a human, lived perfectly (as only God does), and willingly died for our salvation.

We can also say that Jesus felt compassion for people while on earth. Time and again, He raised the dead, healed the sick, cast out demons, and lamented over the lost sheep of Israel. Jesus cared for people and His creation and about

you and me. He did everything God could do to bring us home. Jesus is good, and good for us.

Finally, Jesus invited everyone to come to Him, saying, “Come to Me,” “Abide in Me,” “Follow Me,” and “Whoever comes to Me, I will not cast out. These statements are in Matthew 11:28, John 15:4, John 10:27, and John 6:37.

Jesus taught hope and peace. He gave us a godly example of righteous living. He changes our lives, leads us to withstand life’s storms, and move forward on our journey home.

Doesn’t this plentiful evidence show how good Jesus is?

SECTION 4

Our Future Is Linked to Jesus

He is our Savior, our risen Lord, and our Judge.

Well, one day in the future (we don't know when), Jesus will return, and when he does, there will be a resurrection of the evil and the saved. Those are the only two choices. There is no such thing as purgatory, and there's no such thing as a time in limbo to get better at living.

You can imagine that if there's a group headed to hell and a group led to heaven, there will be a judgment. Acts 17:31 has this: "For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

God has declared a judgment day. It will be a time of justice for all. The evil will be eternally punished, and the saved will be forever blessed.

Jesus is shown to be the judge in the Bible, Acts 17:31. Inescapable. God proved this so by raising Him from the

dead. Jesus' resurrection is the bedrock of Christianity. No resurrection. No Christianity.

It's all straightforward. If one wants to go to hell (nobody in their right mind would choose this), they decide to be evil. You can be a good person and still go to hell, because you didn't give your life to Jesus. I don't have to list the evil; there's plenty out there for all to see and experience.

Good people go to hell because they do not choose to follow Jesus. And, frankly, many "Christians" follow a false Christianity by practicing things not in the Bible. And then, some folks practice false religion by adding their doctrine to the Bible.

Here's what the Apostle Paul once said. It's from Galatians 1:6-9 - "I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News."

Galatians 1:7 but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

Galatians 1:8 Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you.

Galatians 1:9 I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed."

Now, an apostle of Jesus Christ said that, and he got his information from the Holy Spirit. I wonder just how bad it is to be cursed by God. I think that's terribly frightening for anyone.

So, what is God's plan for salvation? This is for those who want to go to heaven (and certainly avoid hell).

God says you need faith. And this isn't some weird faith obtained by strange things or people. Genuine faith is a persuasion of the mind. You look at Bible evidence and see that Jesus really is who He says He is, and you build trust that He will deliver on His promise of heaven. Romans 10:17 states the only way to come to faith is to hear (understand) God's word.

That makes sense because God wants you to trust Him for salvation. If you do as God directs, you are promised eternity in heaven. His word on the subject is objective truth.

But it's not faith only, as so many falsely believe. Salvation is conditional – of course, it is. You can follow His plan or not, and that's certainly a condition. There's no such thing as the Sinner's Prayer in the Bible. Don't rely on some man-made gimmick to get you to heaven. Trust God to do as He says and receive heaven.

What are the conditions?

Well, by Luke 13:3, everyone must repent of their sins. That means turning away from the bad stuff to doing godly stuff. If we don't repent, Jesus says we'll all go to hell. Remember. He is the judge.

Repentance makes sense. Without it, we'd keep on doing sin, and that means hell. If we don't stop sinning, we'll end up there.

After that, we must publicly confess that Jesus is Christ. It's in the Bible in Matthew 10:32-33. You can also check out Romans 10:9-10. Confession is made because you agree

that Jesus is Christ, accept His Lordship, and submit to His will.

The next item gets really sticky for many people, but I will only give you what Jesus and His apostles said. Matthew 28:19-20 –

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

Mark 16:15-16 And then he told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.”

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

People quibble over the word “for” in that verse. Many people twist the Scriptures to say “for” means “because of,” which makes no logical sense. The Greek word “eis” (for) always means toward, never because of. If you want salvation, you must be baptized to remove your sins.

Well, there’s more. Acts 8:12 “But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized.”

Acts 10:47-48 “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the

name of Jesus Christ. Afterward, Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.”

Acts 16:15 “She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests.”

Acts 16:32-33 “And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.”.

Acts 8:36, 38 “As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?” He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.”

Acts 22:16 “What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.”

1 Peter 3:21 “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you— not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, NASB.”

Now, if someone were to ask you, “Is baptism necessary for salvation?” what would you reply?

A plethora of evidence shows that baptism washes away sins. It’s necessary. Jesus said so, and He’s the judge.

Your future, my future, and all people on earth are entirely linked to Jesus. He is our Savior. He is ultimately our judge.

I want to go to heaven. Don’t you?

Continue the Conversation

Thank you for reading this eBook. Garland Van Dyke offers a 30-minute Bible Talk for individuals and groups.

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