

WHY WE NEED A SAVIOR

MAN

GOD

IN THE BEGINNING . . . The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created by God and enjoyed perfect fellowship with Him. They were without sin and lived peacefully in a beautiful garden that supplied all their needs. God gave them only one rule, which was not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. However, Satan tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit by saying it would benefit them. They ate it, and that act of disobedience against God was the first sin. It severed Adam's and Eve's relationships with God because He is holy and cannot have fellowship with evil.

MAN

SIN

GOD

OUR CONDITION TODAY . . . Since we are all Adam's descendants, every child in the world has been born with his fallen nature. Instead of coming into the world desiring to do right, we are all born with an inclination toward sin and evil. Proof of this natural downward tendency is abundantly evident anywhere human beings are found. Our sin results in tremendous pain, sorrow, and suffering. The consequences of sin reach far beyond this life because those who reject God and die in a sinful state will go to Hell and be separated from God eternally.

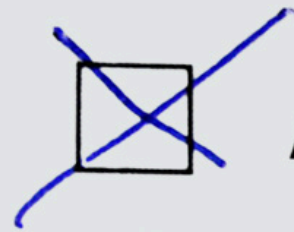
MAN

JESUS

GOD

GOD'S PLAN . . . God wants to remove sin from our lives so that we can have a relationship with Him and spend eternity in Heaven. However, the penalty for sin is death, and that penalty must be paid. Out of His great love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus lived as a man and died in our place for our sins. Because of that, if we follow the steps that God has laid out in the Bible, our sins can be forgiven. God will change our desires and give us power to live without sin so we can enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven one day.

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Atheist



AN ATHEIST MEETS A BELIEVER

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After years of arguing about religion,
Barry met a Christian who wouldn't argue.

By Barry Heid

I was a religious skeptic.

Although I grew up in a family that went to church every Sunday, I became critical of the church and dissatisfied with religious philosophies. Soon I found myself not wanting anything to do with church or religious people. In fact, for thirteen years I did not set foot inside a church except to attend my grandmother's funeral. Eventually I called myself an atheist. When I encountered religious people, I watched their lives just to prove to myself that they were only hypocrites.



I enjoyed arguing religion, and researched subjects like evolution to arm myself for potential confrontations.

THE WITNESS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN

Then, God brought me into contact with a real Christian. I needed to hire a secretary, and one day as I looked through a stack of job applications, I noticed one had made references to Sunday school and church activities. I thought, *If this person is hired, I will probably be getting sermons!* But during the interview, the only reference the applicant made to anything religious was that she was a leader in the Sunday school at her church. It turned out that she was the most qualified applicant, so she was offered the job. After she came to work, I watched her life, looking for signs of hypocrisy. I couldn't find any. Actually, her work was outstanding so I was happy with my choice.

Once, just to start a conversation, I asked if her church believed in creation or evolution. She replied that she believed in creation. I thought to myself, *Oh, good! I'm going to have a little fun with this!* I wasn't planning to be mean-spirited about it, but just to enjoy a little debate. However, when I brought up my questions, she just said, "Well, rather than arguing with you, I'll bring you a tract that explains better than I could what my stand is on that subject."

The next day, she brought me a tract on creation versus evolution. After reading it, I felt different than I ever had before when I'd tried to get into a religious argument. Something inside me said, *Who am I to be critical toward someone else's beliefs?* From then on, I had no interest in getting into religious arguments.

SECRETARY TAKES A STAND

Several weeks later, a situation came up at work where I didn't want to talk with a certain consultant until after I had an opportunity to verify some information. So I instructed my secretary that if the consultant called, she should tell him that I wasn't in the office. She quickly responded, "I won't do that. I can't lie and tell him that you're not here when you are." I was shocked because I hadn't really considered that I was asking her to lie. I felt guilty. Here I had been thinking I was moral and doing all right, and yet I was trying to get somebody to lie for me. I left the office telling her, "Okay, I'm actually going to leave."

That incident started me thinking. Maybe I really wasn't quite as successful at being moral as I had thought. For a number of years, I had either discounted Heaven or tried to convince myself that if there were such a place, I'd make it because certainly God would be grading on a curve and I felt I was better than many other people. But all of a sudden, my philosophy didn't seem very sound.

In the meantime, I had met my secretary's husband, and observed that they seemed so content with life and happy with their Christian faith. I started thinking that maybe religion wasn't as bad as I had labeled it.

AN INVITATION ACCEPTED

One day they invited me to their church, and I didn't have any reason to say no. Also, I had a certain amount of curiosity about it. Yet after I had committed myself to go, I started getting cold feet. I had never been inside a Protestant church, and I had no idea what to expect. But from the moment I walked into the building, I was pleasantly surprised.

Everybody was very friendly to me. When I had attended church as a child, we belonged to a large parish. The church was crowded and nobody said hello to anyone. But in this church, it seemed everyone walked up, greeted me, and introduced themselves. I was skeptical because I thought they were just being cordial since they knew I was coming. However, I watched and they were friendly to everyone. It was like a big, happy family. I was impressed with what I observed, though I was still apprehensive as to exactly what would happen in the meeting.

During the service, I enjoyed the music and even tried to join in with the congregational singing. But the testimonies really stopped me in my tracks. I had never heard people stand up in a meeting and tell what God had done for them. It impressed me. I was almost in awe as I listened to the people say how God had worked in their lives. For the first time, I thought maybe there really was something in this for me.

The sermon was exactly what I needed too. Interestingly, the preacher's subject was evolution. I thought, *Well I guess I deserve this!* I listened and then left thinking, *There is something here.* So I attended the next service, enjoying it and feeling good about religion, something I had never really felt before.

A GROWING INTEREST

From that point on, I became more and more interested in finding out about this thing they called "salvation." I asked questions and talked to the pastor. He encouraged me to read the Bible and pray. A couple of weeks later, I asked Jesus for forgiveness and gave my life to Him. He saved me. What a difference that made in my life!

From then on, I wanted to be in church. The Bible interested me and I loved singing the church songs. Other things were different too. For example, I stopped using swear words. Although I had not cursed much, I did when I hurt myself. But after I was saved, one time I hit my thumb with a hammer and was surprised that I did not curse. Instead, I laughed as I realized again what a different person I had become.

Like many new Christians, I had things to deal with as I started this new way of living. Day by day, the Lord helped me learn what He wanted. And He's still teaching me.

One of the lessons I learned was about making restitution. A number of years before I was saved, I had stolen some things from a former employer. They were not particularly valuable items, but they had cost something and I knew I had to make that right. I prayed about it for a while and finally felt that the Lord gave me a dollar figure that I should send to make it right. That was not an easy thing to do, because I really liked the people and felt I had let them down. But I knew I had to do it, so I wrote my former boss a letter and explained what had happened. I told him that I had been saved and wanted to make this situation right, enclosed the amount of money, and requested his forgiveness. A few weeks later, I received a nice letter from him. He was so appreciative that I had returned the money for the value of the material I had taken. Since that time, I have been back to visit him and the people I worked with, and still consider them good friends. The Lord worked everything out.

I deeply appreciate the example and witness of my former secretary that helped open my eyes to the truth of the Gospel. My prayer is that I will also be a light to everyone who crosses my path. ■

STEPS TO DELIVERANCE

ACKNOWLEDGE

Admit that you have sinned and need God's help.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

CONFESS AND REPENT

Be genuinely sorry for the sins you have committed and ask God to forgive you.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3)

FORSAKE

Determine that with God's help you are going to turn away from all sin in your life.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)

BELIEVE

When you have honestly and sincerely taken the steps above, then believe that God will hear your prayer and save you.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

RECEIVE

God will let you know that the work is done in your heart.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)