

# What does it mean exactly, that the way to a relationship with God is through Jesus?

Written by Bob Stone

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The story of Jesus centers around what happened to Him on the cross.

Everywhere you go, you see the symbol of the cross: sometimes empty, sometimes with Jesus hanging on it. People wear crosses around their necks and in their ears, and they hang them outside churches.

## **Have you ever stopped to think about how strange this is?**

The cross was an instrument of torture and death; so it is a bit like walking around with a miniature set of gallows hanging from your ears, or a model electric chair dangling from your neck. The reason people focus on the cross, however, is because one of the most important accomplishments Jesus fulfilled was to die on a cross.

The central message of the Bible is that Jesus was crucified for us.

- It says He was wounded for the wrongs we have done.
- He took the punishment we should have received for our wrongs.
- As Jesus was dying on the cross, He shouted out something very strange: "It is finished!" At first this may seem like a cry of despair ("It's all over, I'm dying, I've had it, I've failed.") But in fact, that is not at all how the people standing nearby would have understood what Jesus said. The expression Jesus used would normally have belonged to the world of business. Far from being a cry of defeat, it was a shout of victory!
  - "It is finished!" means, "The deal has been struck, the business is done." Or if you like, "The price has been paid in full." The price Jesus paid was His own life in exchange for ours.

One last point:

We can hardly imagine how much it cost God to allow His only Son to die on the cross. But what about the cost to us in accepting His offer?

- There is a cost.
- Becoming a Christian means putting God in control of your life.
- That means other people's opinions cannot rule your life anymore.

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- Being a Christian means change. God will want to change you. But He will change you from the inside out. He will actually make you into the person He intended you to be in the first place. He will make you *more* yourself, not less. how do you receive God's present of forgiveness?

Talk to God in prayer. As you pray, you need to:

- **Accept what Jesus did by dying in your place.** This can be done silently or aloud. You can stand, sit, or kneel. It makes no difference. What matters is your honesty.
- **Repent of your sin, turn from the road you are on; or if you want to use my illustration from England, cross over the line and go in the opposite direction.**
- **Submit your life to follow Him all the days of your life.**

Make sure, however, that following Jesus is what you want to do.

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If so, read the prayer that follows.

"Father God, I want to become a real Christian. I admit that until now, the wrong things I have done have cut me off from You. There are many things I have said and done and thought that I am ashamed of and sorry for. I do not deserve Your love or forgiveness, but I know it is available to me right now. I trust that Jesus died for me on the cross, so I can have a new relationship with You. Please forgive me now, especially for keeping You on the sidelines of my life, and not allowing You to really be my God. I place my life into Your hands. I want to serve You from this moment on. I want to be a follower of Jesus for the rest of my life." Amen.