

MEETING 4

THE RESPONSES GOD REQUIRES OF PEOPLE

Review of the previous lesson.

Review the 5 steps that God has taken through Jesus Christ in order to solve the problem of sin and suffering.

Question.

What do you think would be an appropriate response to God for everything he has done for you?

Sharing in the group.

Share what you think is an appropriate response to God and why you think it is an appropriate response.

Teaching from the Bible.

God certainly desires, requires and therefore expects a response from man.

The following are 5 responses that God requires of people who desire to come to him:

A. GOD REQUIRES THAT PEOPLE CONVERT

1. The response that God requires is to convert.

What is the meaning of “repentance”?

- **To change your thinking. Mark 1:14-15.**

Jesus Christ says, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” “To repent” literally means “*to change your mind*”. To repent means to change your thoughts from mere human opinions to what God says in the Bible. You change your thinking about God, yourself and the world. You change your attitude from pride to humble remorse about your sin. You change your self-righteousness (“I am right”) to God’s righteousness (“God is right”). You change your unhealthy independence to healthy mutual dependence. You change your thinking that you could save yourself to the acknowledgement that you need the Saviour, Jesus Christ. You change your lies to the truth. And you change your self-defence to submission.

- **To change your behaviour. Acts 3:18-20.**

Paul said, “Repent, then, and turn² to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ” “To turn” literally means “to turn away from the wrong direction to the right direction in life”, “to reform your life” (Matthew 7:13-14). You turn from darkness to light and from Satan to the God of the Bible (Acts 26:18).

Repentance (conversion) means that you change from doing what is wrong in God’s eyes to doing what is good in God’s eyes. In short, you change the direction of your life. This includes changing your thinking, attitudes, motives, speaking and behaviour. When you repent, your sins will be wiped out. Even the sins, which you have committed in ignorance, will be wiped out. And when many people turn to God, then even your country will receive “a time of refreshment” or rather “a time of respite” from the judgement of God!

2. What are the implications of conversion to Jesus Christ?

- **Jesus Christ is the only Way that leads to God. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5.**

Jesus makes it very clear that the only way to God is not determined by man, but by God himself! Jesus Christ died and was resurrected. He completed the work that leads to salvation. That is why only he determines how people can convert.

It is not true that “all religions lead to God”³. Jesus Christ says, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” And the apostles say, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*” And the apostle Paul says, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Jesus Christ is the Only One who came to seek what is lost and heal what is broken (Luke 19:10).

- **Conversion is a command of the Lord that must be obeyed. Mark 1:14-15.**

“Repent and believe the gospel”. Both verbs are commands of Jesus Christ and not merely suggestions. People *must* repent/convert!

- **Conversion leads to sorrow as God intended. 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.**

The sorrow of the world. Some people do not repent/convert, but only feel a sorrow as the world does. They feel sorry and mourn because their sins have come into the light and they are confronted with feelings of guilt and shame. They feel

¹ Greek: metanoëō

² Greek: metanoëō kai epistrefō

³ A lie of Hinduism and New Age which in essence is Hinduism.

sorry that they lost their possessions, received a bad name, lost their position of power, etc. because God brings his present judgements over them (Ezekiel 14:21).

The sorrow as God intends. People, who really repent/convert, feel sorry as God intends. They take what God calls “good” and “evil” (Isaiah 5:20) seriously and worry about the consequences. They fear evil and long for what is good. They are indignant about evil in the world and acknowledge that evil must be punished. They are zealous for doing the will of God.

3. How would you be able to repent practically?

- **Repentance must be followed by faith in the gospel. Mark 1:14-15.**

Jesus says, “Repent and believe the good news.” *Repentance (changing your thinking) is incomplete without believing in Jesus Christ. Conversion (turning away from evil) is insufficient without turning towards the God of the Bible.* Faith is the direction to which you turn. Repentance/conversion is only complete when you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and that he lives to give you eternal life.

- **Faith in the gospel must be followed by confession of sin. James 5:16.**

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, so that you may be healed.” Confess the transgression you committed (only to the person against whom you transgressed). Confess all your sins to God, because all sin is a transgression against God.

- **Faith in the gospel must be followed by restitution (i.e. giving back things, compensating). Ezekiel 33:14-16.**

Repentance/conversion must lead to righteousness, including returning (compensating) stolen goods.

- **Faith in the gospel must be followed by crushing your idols. 2 Chronicles 34:3-7.**

Idols may be made by the hands of man from materials or may be devised by the mind of man from his imagination. All idols must be destroyed. You could crush the idols and altars in your home and scatter the dust.

- **Faith in the gospel must be followed by burning your wrong books. etc. Acts 19:18-20.**

You could burn all occult devices, amulets and masks, pornography, bad DVD’s etc.

- **Faith in the gospel must be followed by turning away from the darkness to the light and from Satan to the God of the Bible. Acts 26:16-20; Matthew 7:13-14.**

Guilt in God’s eyes disappears when you accept his forgiveness. Shame in the eyes of people (family and neighbours) disappears when you receive God’s loving acceptance. Evil deeds change by starting to do good deeds. Bad habits change when you adopt good habits. Repentance/conversion must lead you to entering the narrow gate and walking along the narrow path that leads to life. Note: in every instance faith in the gospel must follow your repentance/conversion (*Mark 1:14-15*)!

Summary. It is God’s will that all people repent from their sin and believe the gospel. Repentance means changing your thinking and conversion means reforming your life. REPENTANCE IS THE REACTION WITH YOUR FAITH (CONVICTION) AND CONVERSION IS THE REACTION WITH YOUR BEHAVIOUR. In repentance you change your thinking about God and his revelation in Jesus Christ, about sin, atonement of sin and a change of behaviour and lifestyle.

B. GOD REQUIRES THAT PEOPLE RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

1. The response that God requires is to receive Jesus Christ.

What is the meaning of “receiving”?

- **Not every person will receive Jesus Christ! Luke 2:34.**

Jesus Christ is destined to cause the falling of many and to be a sign that will be spoken against.

- **A man is born again by receiving Jesus Christ. John 1:9-13.**

Jesus Christ came to the world which he created himself and gave all people a certain measure of knowledge about God (John 1:9; Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-15). But even his own people (i.e. the nation of Israel) did not *know (recognize, acknowledge his claims)*⁴, did not *welcome or receive him*⁵! They are the people who stumble over Jesus Christ and are finally crushed.

“But all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” They are the people who “are born of God.” They are the people who have been raised out of an immoral and dead life and build their lives on the Foundation Jesus Christ. How someone responds to Jesus Christ, determines whether he goes to eternal punishment or to eternal life (Matthew 25:46)!

⁴ Greek: ginòskò

⁵ Greek: paralambanò

2. What are the implications of receiving Jesus Christ?

- **To receive Jesus Christ together with all his claims. John 1:10-12.**

It means to *know* Jesus Christ personally, to *acknowledge* his claims and to *welcome* him in your life.

- **To receive Jesus Christ as the Lord whom you obey. Ephesians 3:16-17.**

Jesus Christ lives in the believer by faith and the believer is rooted in and founded on love.

- **To acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. Colossians 2:6-7.**

By receiving Jesus Christ into your heart, you allow him to rule over your life. You obey his commands. You develop your invisible relationship with Christ by roots downward and develop your visible ministry for Jesus Christ by building upwards. Receiving Jesus Christ is the beginning of a continuous walking with Jesus Christ just as a newborn child remains in his family. Receiving Christ is the beginning of an everlasting relationship with Jesus Christ in which he controls your life, makes you grow to maturity and cause you to bear fruit that remains.

3. How could you receive Jesus Christ practically?

- **Open the door of your heart and invite Christ into your heart and life. Revelation 3:20.**

If you hear the good news concerning Jesus Christ today, open your heart and by prayer ask him to come into your heart to live there. He promised that he would do this immediately!

- **Believe in Jesus Christ as he has revealed himself. John 1:12-13.**

When you believe in Jesus Christ, you will receive him into your heart and life. That is how you are born from above or born anew by the Holy Spirit to become a child of God! “To receive Christ” is the same as “to believe in the Name of Christ”. “The Name” of Jesus Christ represents the characteristics/attributes of God and the works of God just as he revealed them in Jesus Christ. It does not represent the way how some people and some religions view Jesus Christ. Believing in Jesus Christ means believing in Jesus Christ in exactly the way the Bible reveals him!

The result of believing in the Name of Jesus Christ is that you receive your birthright with all the spiritual blessings attached to it. It means that you have been born again, have become a new creation, that you have been baptised with the Holy Spirit! Regeneration does not occur by belonging to a particular nation or race (Galatians 3:27-28), not family ties (i.e. blood relationship) and not by the free will of man (i.e. the flesh) and also not by natural birth (i.e. the will of a man).

- **Faith comes by hearing, believing/trusting and obeying. Hebrews 11:6-8.**

“Believing” in the Bible has three elements: hearing the truth from God, believing that God speaks the truth and obeying the truth of God! Noah first received an instruction from God, an indication of a future event that cannot be seen. He believed that God’s word was the truth. And he acted in obedience to this word! He received a warning from God with regard to the flood, believed that God spoke the truth even though most people around him mocked him. He took many years to build the ark. His faith had enormous consequences for the whole of mankind!

Abraham first received a calling from God with respect to moving to another country. He believed that God’s Word was the truth. And then he acted in obedience to that Word.

Thus, “faith” in Jesus Christ means:

- that you first *hear* and understand the good news
- then *put your trust in* Jesus Christ
- and finally *obey* Jesus Christ.

- **Faith that Jesus Christ speaks personally to you and personally meets you.**

Romans 10:13-17. “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ”. Faith does not only come through hearing the word about Christ (the gospel). Faith also comes by hearing the voice of Christ addressing you personally. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ! You hear with your ears, believe with your mind and heart, and receive Him with your whole being into your heart and life by means of a simple prayer.

“Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that you died for my sins and that you have been resurrected from the dead and now lives!

I open the door of my heart and ask you to come into my life to be my Saviour and my Lord.

I will keep on trusting you and obeying you for the rest of my life. Amen.”

Summary. It is God’s will that all people receive Christ into their hearts and lives. A person begins his relationship with Christ by receiving him. RECEIVING IS THE REACTION WITH YOUR MIND AND EMPTY HANDS on the basis of your faith. You acknowledge his claims and receive him into your heart and life as Saviour and Lord.

C. GOD REQUIRES THAT PEOPLE CONFESS JESUS CHRIST

1. The response that God requires is to confess Jesus Christ.

What is the meaning of “confessing”?

- **Confessing means “saying the same thing”. Matteüs 10:32-33.**

“Confessing” means literally: “to say the same”, i.e. to say with your mouth what your heart believes! Confessing is openly telling what lives in your heart. Jesus promises that every person who confesses him before people, he will also openly confess before God in heaven as someone belonging to him.

But Jesus also warns that a person cannot be a secret Christian. If a person is silent about Jesus Christ in front of people, Jesus Christ will also be silent about him in front of God. Thus, if you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is your Saviour and Lord, then you need to express this in words. Whoever believes with his heart and confesses with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Lord, will be saved!

- **Confession means to openly declare. Romans 10:9,13.**

“Confess” means literally “to publicly declare”, “to openly acknowledge” or “to witness with boldness and conviction”. “Confessing” is your verbal declaration about Jesus Christ. But note, it is a declaration with your mouth of the faith in your heart! God wants you to openly tell other people that you believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and Lord and that he is your Saviour and Lord!

A person that denies Jesus Christ, does not have God (1 John 2:23)! But a person who confesses Jesus Christ, also has God! A person cannot belong to God without believing in Jesus Christ!

No man can have two different masters (lords) in his life (Matthew 6:24)! Every human being is placed before a choice: he must choose and his choice will be clear from whom he keeps on talking about.

2. What are the implications of confessing Jesus Christ?

- **You need to tell this to other people. Mark 5:19-20.**

A Christian confesses that he is a Christian to his own family, his friends and his colleagues and tells them about the great things that God through Christ has done for him.

3. How do you practically confess Jesus Christ?

Romans 10:9-14. In the beginning of your Christian life, you confess Christ with your mouth by means of a prayer in which you call on his Name and receive him into your heart and life. Your open confession is the outward expression of your inner conviction that you have been justified (saved) by faith. You tell that you believe that Jesus Christ died in your [place, but was also resurrected to guarantee a complete new life for you. So, ask Jesus Christ to come and live in your heart and life.

Summary. It is God’s will that all people confess Jesus Christ with their mouths as Saviour and Lord. CONFESSION IS THE REACTION WITH YOUR MOUTH on the basis of the faith in your heart. You confess that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and Lord, as well as your personal Saviour and Lord.

D. GOD REQUIRES THAT PEOPLE FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST

1. The response that God requires is to follow Jesus Christ.

- **To follow Christ as his disciple. Luke 9:23.**

Jesus Christ commands Christians to deny themselves *once for all*, to carry their cross *once for all* and *to keep on* following him as his disciple. In John 1:37 two men followed Jesus Christ in the sense that they went after him. But in John 1:44 Jesus Christ called Philip to follow him as his disciple. Christ himself sets the conditions for discipleship, i.e. what a person is required to do if he wants to follow Jesus Christ.

There are conditions for following Jesus Christ as his disciple. The Bible makes it very clear that people cannot set the conditions for how they come to God and how they follow him. This remains the privilege and authority of God and his Christ.

2. What are the implications of following Jesus Christ?

- **Following requires self-denial and carrying your cross. Luke 9:23.**

To deny yourself means to say “no” to governing your own life and “no” to your ambitions that are at odds with the interests of the kingdom of God.

Carrying your cross means being willing to bear the rejection, shame and persecution that sometimes go along with suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ.

- **Following requires walking in the light. John 3:19-21.**

Continuing to follow Christ means much more. Following Christ implies walking in the light, i.e., to have an open and transparent life on the basis of God’s truth, righteousness and holiness. “Light” is collective name for all the characteristics

of God as his righteousness, holiness, love, mercy, truth, etc. “Darkness” is a collective name for ignorance, godlessness and unrighteousness; for every method of spiritual deceit, moral perversity and financial corruption. Avoid getting involved in secret organisations, in underhand activities and every form of moral and spiritual perversity.

- **Following requires carrying the cross of Christ. Matthew 11:28-30.**

“To take up the yoke of Christ” means to join Christ in his mission in the world, whether worldwide or in the local congregation. Following Christ means to be completely dependent on Christ, to lean on Christ and to learn from Christ. He is the teacher and I learn to obey all his commandments. He is the Team leader and I follow him wherever he leads. It does not necessarily require giving up your job or leaving your family, but it does mean serving Christ within your job and family.

- **Following requires joining other Christians. John 1:44-46.**

To follow Christ means joining other Christians who are also following Christ, participating in Christian activities and discovering and experiencing what it means to be a Christian.

- **Following Christ requires serving together with Christ in the extension of his kingdom. John 12:26.**

Following Christ means serving together with Christ in the extension of his kingdom.

- **Following Christ requires becoming a fisher of men. Matthew 4:19.**

Following Christ means being a fisher of men who would also be fishers of men.

3. How do you practically follow Christ?

In John 6:68-69 the disciples of Jesus Christ say, “You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” You will only follow Christ when you believe that only he speaks the words that lead to eternal life and that only he is the promised Saviour.

Summary. God requires that all people follow Christ as his disciple. This means, that you learn from him and obey him, serve him while living honest and transparent lives. This means being zealous to extend his kingship. FOLLOWING IS THE REACTION WITH YOUR FEET on the basis of the faith in your heart.

E. GOD REQUIRES THAT PEOPLE LOVE HIM

1. The response that God requires is to love Him.

- **God requires that you love him with your whole being. Mark 12:30-31; (Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Leviticus 19:18).**

God requires that people love him with all their heart, soul, mind and power and to love their neighbour as they love themselves. A person who does not love the God of the Bible, cannot love at all. He cannot love himself and he can also not love other people. The Bible makes it very clear that the relationship of love between God and people is the best way to express a genuine relationship with God, much more than observing religious requirements⁶.

2. What are the implications of loving God?

- **There are four kinds of love, three are natural and the last is given only by God:**

- *Affection* (Greek: storge) is the love between parents and children
- *Sexual love* (Greek: eros) is the love between a man and a woman
- *Friendship* (Greek: filia) is the friendship between friends
- *Self-sacrificial love* (Greek: agape) is the love towards God, your neighbour and yourself. God requires self-sacrificial love, but also gives this self-sacrificial love to Christians! This love no one has by nature! It must be given (Romans 5:5)!

- **The nature of the God of the Bible is love and he expresses his love in the following ways:**

- Self-sacrificial love always takes the initiative instead of waiting around
- Self-sacrificial love gives instead of taking, serves instead of being served
- Self-sacrificial love involves all kinds of nationalities and not only the people of Israel
- Self-sacrificial love strives to attain the highest well-being for the other, namely, that he receives eternal life!

- **The God of the Bible is the Source of love:**

- The God of the Bible is the Only One who loves perfectly and only he is the Source of love (1 John 4:7-8).
- Whoever hates his brother is still in the darkness. He does not know where he is going (1 John 2:9-11).
- The God of the Bible requires self-sacrificial love of people, but also provides this love through his Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Self-sacrificial love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) only when the Holy Spirit dwells in you body (1 Corinthians 3:16).

- **The love of Jesus Christ is the standard for love (John 13:34-35).**

Jesus Christ commands his followers to love as he loves.

- **Self-sacrificial love comes with your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30-31)**

⁶ Religious requirements as ablutions and prayer, fasting and eating only clean foods, giving money, attending religious meetings, dressing in religious dress and circumcision, etc.

- **The “heart”** is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23), “the centre of your inner life with its thoughts, emotions and will”. The heart is the ability to know God and relate to him (Deuteronomy 6:6). The heart is the place where the Holy Spirit lives (Ephesians 3:17). Genuine love is determined by knowing the God of the Bible, by relating to him and allowing the truths in the bible to determine your thoughts, emotions, wishes, choices and decisions.

- **The “soul”⁷** is “the life which God gives at creation” and differs from every other form of life on earth (Genesis 2:7). It is the being of man that consists of a material and visible body and an immaterial and invisible human spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Revelation 6:9). Genuine love is always with al your being.

- **The “mind”** is the ability to know and to reason (Romans 12:2). Genuine love is only possible with the truth which God revealed in the Bible.

- **The “power”** refers to willpower and exertion. One may not respond to God’s love which is given whole-heartedly by half-heartedness! Genuine love is to do God’s will with commitment, with your whole being and on every area of life.

3. How do you love God (Christ) practically?

- **By faith. Romans 5:5.**

Without faith the Holy Spirit does not live in you (Ephesians 2:22; 4:17). And without the Holy Spirit you do not have “self-sacrificial love” within you (Romans 5:5)! Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). You can only love God if you believe in Jesus Christ (i.e. when the Spirit of Jesus Christ lives in you).

- **By the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:6,13,22-23.**

Without the Holy Spirit in you there is no self-sacrificial love in you. The faith in Jesus Christ is only effective through self-sacrificial love! Without self-sacrificial love faith remains theoretic, historic, not genuine (James 2:17,22; 1 John 3:16-17). And without self-sacrificial love all the characteristic features of a Christian are missing (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)!

- **By obedience. John 14:21,23.**

The self-sacrificial love is not the same as emotional sentimentalism, but manifests itself in obedience to the God of the Bible and the truths in the Bible.

Summary. God requires that all people love him with their whole being and with all their God-given abilities as heart, soul, mind and strength. **LOVING GOD IS THE REACTION WITH YOUR WHOLE PERSONALITY (BEING) on the basis of your heart.**

Summary. The 5 responses that God requires of people who come to him for salvation:

1. God requires that people *repent and convert*.
2. God requires that people *receive* Jesus Christ.
3. God requires that people *confess* Jesus Christ.
4. God requires that people *follow* Jesus Christ.
5. God requires that people *love*.

ASSIGNMENT FOR THE NEXT SESSION

1. During the next week, read the Bible passages again. Consider what the Bible says about the response which God requires of people who desire to come to him.
2. Consider if you desire to come to Jesus Christ. If you do, consider by which one or more of these five responses do you want to express your coming to God?

⁷ Hebrew: nefesh