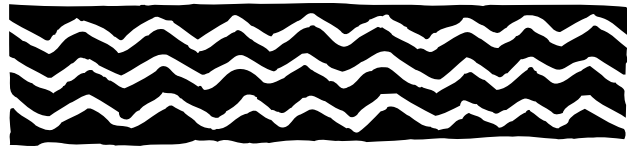


FAITH TRACKS

Basic Guides to Spiritual Growth • Track 2



HOW CAN I EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS?

So now you are a Christian, but there are times when you still blow it. Like the day when you're angry at a classmate who is getting straight A's without even studying when you barely make B's, and you study all the time. After school that day, you went outside to play with your dog and while throwing a stick for him to fetch, you were so angry that you threw too hard ... right into your neighbor's front glass window! Now you have to pay for your anger and bad attitude. Suddenly, you think to yourself, "I'm a Christian now. I shouldn't be so angry and upset about other's successes." Let's take a look at what to do and how you can experience God's love and forgiveness, especially when you mess up.



1. THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

It's helpful to understand why you need to be forgiven. Let's take a look at what God's Word says.

- Read Romans 3:23 and Isaiah 53:6.
- According to these verses, how many people have sinned? _____
- Define sin: _____
- What is the result of sin? _____
- Read Hebrews 9:22. What is the requirement for forgiveness? _____

2. DIFFERENT BIBLICAL SACRIFICES

The Bible often talks of sacrifices. In the Old Testament, various animals were sacrificed by priests to forgive or atone for people's sins. But the New Testament describes God's perfect solution, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, to forgive people of sins. Let's look at the differences.

1. Differences in Priests

- Read Hebrews 7:23-28.
- List the differences between the Old Testament priests and Jesus.

Old Testament Priests

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

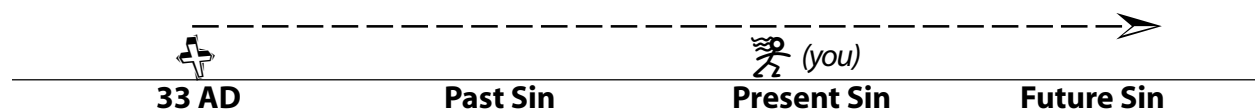
Jesus, our High Priest

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. Differences in Sacrifices

- Read Hebrews 10:3-4,11.
- How often did priests perform duties and offer sacrifices? _____
- Could this take away sins? _____
- Read Hebrews 10:12-14.
- The priest described in these verses is Jesus Christ, our High Priest. How many times did He need to offer sacrifices? _____
- What was the result of Jesus' sacrifice of dying on the cross (verse 14)? _____
- What else has Jesus done since His sacrifice (verse 12)? _____

3. THE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S FORGIVENESS



- Read Colossians 2:13-14 and Psalm 103:12. How many of your sins did Christ die for when He died on the cross? _____
- Does this mean all sins committed in the past? _____ All in the future? _____
- How many of your sins were future when Christ died on the cross? _____
- If all future sins are forgiven, can you just go out and sin all you want and take advantage of your forgiveness? _____ Why or why not? _____
- The Bible is clear that if you really understand and accept God's love and forgiveness, you won't want to continue to sin. Do you agree with the following statement: "A God who is willing to send His Son to die for me must care deeply for me. If He did all this for me, He must want the best for me. I want to do what He wants for me." _____

4. HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Christ died for **all** your sins – past, present and future. Thus as a Christian, you're totally forgiven by the God of the universe. Even though this is true, you may not always feel or experience this love and forgiveness. Let's look at how you can.

1. Relationship vs. Fellowship with Others

- What is the difference between a relationship and fellowship (say with you and your father)?
- Relationship: _____
- Fellowship: _____
- Suppose you have an argument with your father, where you are wrong. What do you need to do in order to experience your father's forgiveness? _____

- Even if your fellowship changes, will your relationship (the fact of being your father's child) ever change? _____

2. Relationship vs. Fellowship with God

Similarly, you have both a relationship and fellowship with God. Sometimes you may take the control for your life (control that belongs to God) and do what you want to do. As a Christian, your relationship is not affected because you will always belong to Him, but your disobedience and selfishness will affect your fellowship with God. Also, even though you are forgiven for your sins, your rebellion may keep you from experiencing God's love and forgiveness. It's times like these you may feel far away from God.

3. Restoring Fellowship with God

Since your relationship with God doesn't change, you must take steps to restore your fellowship with God when it is broken or strained. That involves confession and turning away from what God says is wrong and doing what's right. Remember, the reason for confession is not to satisfy God but rather to benefit you and restore your relationship with God.

- You can follow these steps:
 1. Confess or agree with God that what you've done is sin. (Confession in the New Testament means to "agree with God about your sin." It's like saying, "God, I admit I was wrong.")
 2. Thank God that He has already forgiven you.
 3. Turn from your sin.
- Knowing how important it is to confess your sins, realize that God does not intend for you to spend all your time digging for your sins to confess. Rather, you are to confess those sins you know and are aware of, then you are to trust the Holy Spirit to give you the power to live as He wants you to live.

4. TRUSTING GOD'S PROMISES

As you continue to grow in your relationship with God, it's important to know and remember the promises He has given. Let's look at His promise to forgive.

- Write out 1 John 1:9 - _____

- Read Proverbs 28:13, and Psalm 32:5. What does God promise in these verses? _____

- On your own, take some time to read God's Word and discover more of His precious promises.