

# Invitation

[For my family members and friends who are not yet  
“reconciled to God.” If you are, please let me know.]

## You're invited. Really, you are.

You're invited to join a family gathering at a wonderful, ongoing celebration of Peace, Love, and Beauty, better than any party you could ever imagine.

I was discussing this invitation with a man whom I know and respect. I said, “All anyone really has to do is say ‘Yes.’” He corrected me by saying, “All they have to do is not say ‘No.’” He was right.

God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — invites you, when you come to the end of your life on earth, to join Him in His home in Heaven. He wants you to join His family, to be His own adopted child, and to live joyfully with Him and His other children forever. He invites you to enter into that relationship now, with all of its blessings.

How do I know this? Let me tell you.

For many years, when I was young, I was afraid of dying, because I knew I would go to Hell. I had lied, stolen, broken other laws, disobeyed my parents, and done quite a number of other things that I knew were wrong. I believed sinners go to Hell. I'd rather go to Heaven, because Hell is certain to be horrible; but I knew I was damned. Mostly I avoided thinking about it — after all, I still had many years ahead of me.

So for years I lived with a burden of guilt and fear. Until one day I learned the truth, from a class where God's word, the Bible, was being taught: God really does not want me to go to Hell. My sins deserve punishment — but Jesus Christ took all the punishment my sins deserve. He suffered and died to pay for all of my sins — and also for yours, and for everyone's. I am forgiven! And you are forgiven. Hallelujah!

Who says so? God's word, the Holy Bible, says so, in several places, like this:

*For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)*

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of [doing good] works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

What did I have to do so that my sins would be forgiven? Nothing. Jesus did it all, for me.

What do you have to do for your sins (many or few) to be forgiven? Nothing. Jesus did it all, for you.

God is saying to me, and also to you, “Please say you want to live with me forever in Heaven. I love you. I want you to be with me. That is the special destiny I have planned for you. That's what I created you for. Please say ‘Yes.’”

Is that it? Is that all there is to it? Just tell God, ‘Yes,’ and then go on with our lives as we have been? Well, no, not if we really mean it. Our “Yes” has to be “Yes!” — not “Yes, but ... “

We can't come into God's family on our terms — it has to be on God's terms. If that sounds like there's a “catch” to it somewhere — well, there is.

If you were to adopt a four-year-old, you would soon grow to love the child, of course. But would you want that child to stay four years old forever? Or would you rather have your little child grow up to become a superb adult? Similarly, God loves you just as you are, but He also wants you to become more than you are today; to grow and mature into the beautiful human being He created you to be.

The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross “justifies” us and makes us eligible to enter God’s Heaven. Saying “Yes” to God’s invitation is the beginning of a process that prepares us for our new life there.

Look at it this way: If you were invited to a grand formal party, you would not be comfortable going to it unbathed, in grubby shorts and sneakers. You’d want to take a bath and put on decent clothes, maybe the best ones you have. Without preparation, it wouldn’t be enjoyable.

God wants to prepare you and me for Heaven. He will clean us up — help us stop sinning, little by little, making us more and more like Jesus. And He will give us a new outfit to wear to the party — it’s called “the righteousness of Christ.”

Wow! That seems like a lot to sign up for! But relax — God’s Holy Spirit will do all the hard work. All we have to do is show up, and keep following His lead.

But it’s true that, if you say, “Yes, Lord,” and then do absolutely nothing, nothing will change. A truth I like to quote is, “You can’t steer a boat that’s dead in the water.” If the boat is sitting still, it doesn’t really matter in which direction it’s pointed, does it? It won’t go anywhere. So you need to do something to get the process going. Then the Holy Spirit can help you with directions.

Try this: say a short prayer, asking for God’s help. Maybe something like, “Lord, help me get started in the right direction.”

Then take another important step: find a church. If you have a spouse who goes to church, start there. If you get into a church that doesn’t believe that the Bible is God’s word, look for a different one. If you find a good church, two important things will happen: you will hear the word of God preached and taught, and you will begin to experience the beauty of God’s love being shared among that church family. I know, I’ve been there. I’m still there.

That’s all I’ll say about that. But I will promise you this: If you accept God’s invitation and start going God’s way, guided by His word and the Holy Spirit, rather than your own way, you will

agree and understand after a while that you did the right thing.

This, from the book of Proverbs, is one of my favorites among all of God’s promises. It is pure, practical wisdom:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

Our merely human understanding is often faulty. This proverbial warning is given twice:

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25)*

Jesus didn’t promise us a life without difficulties, but He did promise to be with us and help us with whatever comes our way.

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)*

There is no better way to go through life than to be “yoked” in tandem with Jesus, because He knows what to do, and He will pull most of the weight.

There are many more promises in God’s word. I’ll leave you with this one, from the Apostle Paul:

*I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)*

I am praying for you, and I’ll continue to pray that one day, according to God’s timing, we will celebrate together in the place He has been preparing for us, with Him, forever. Amen

With much love and a little trepidation —

*Roland*

[The Bible passages I’ve quoted are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.]