

Why You Don't Need a Savior

By Steve Lim

Jesus said that He came to save the world. Many people, however, believe that they don't need a Savior. They assume that they are good enough, or that there is no such thing as sin, or even that there is no God to judge them. Let's look at these assumptions and their weaknesses.

"God accepts me as I am."

Eighty-eight percent of respondents in one survey held this conviction,¹ the large majority of whom do not make God their priority in life. Typically they believe, "I'm as good or better than most people I know — such as my neighbors, co-workers and relatives. This includes my Christian acquaintances."

The majority of people have confidence that they will make it into heaven.² Only a tiny percent think that they deserve to go to hell.

If God truly accepts people as they are, obviously they don't need a Savior. If in error, their belief becomes the most dangerous delusion imaginable.

Writer C.S. Lewis wisely observed, "When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less."

Divine Appointments



I was born in 1972 into a home where alcohol, drugs and family abuse were the norm. I began smoking at age 7 and drinking at 9. The abuse that I and my brothers and sister endured was horrible.

When I was 12, I was home alone mowing a nearby yard. A wire about a quarter of an inch long came out of the mower and went through my throat, severing my left vocal cord. It didn't hurt, so I continued to mow the grass until I realized that I was bleeding. I ran across the street to my house, grabbed a towel to stop the bleeding and called for help.

The doctors said I should have bled to death. With only one vocal cord, they predicted speaking would be difficult; however, I can talk with no problems.

In 2001, at age 28, I was walking home in Carlisle, Pa. An attacker hit me, crushing the back right corner of my skull, and left me for dead. That was between 10:30 and 11:30 at night. I don't remember how I got back to my apartment. I awoke in my apartment at 5:30 the next afternoon.

The neighbors took me to the hospital, thinking I was suffering a hang-over (I was a nondrinker at the time). At the hospital I blacked out again and awoke at 8 p.m. It turns out, internal bleeding from the blow to my head was causing this. I was transported to Hershey Medical Center where doctors removed a blood clot covering the left side of my brain. They said it was impossible that I survived, since the blood clot was there for at least 20 hours. However, I only lost about 20 hours of memory.

In 2006, after marrying my wife, Krystal, and having the first of our three children, my lower back gave out. I was unable to walk for a week. The doctors said they could do nothing. After a week of some of the worst pain one could imagine, I went to a healing service at Harvest Chapel in Abbottstown, Pa. I was able to walk out of that service pain free and still am after three years.

So here I am at 36, now a father of three, with my life preserved and my back healed and doing all the backbreaking work you do when you have a flooring business. And what is the central point to this story? On Aug. 12, 2007, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. I gave my life to Him because He gave His for me.

That day put everything else into focus for me. God saw me right where I was — as a kid in a family that would not serve Him, as a young man doing my own thing and nearly dying in the process, and as a new husband and father living without the direction of the Holy Spirit. God saw it all, and in His mercy turned my life around on Aug. 12, 2007.

He can do the same for you.

— Jason Dattoli attends Celebration Community Church in Dillsburg, Pa. (Mike Hammer, senior pastor).

I Know That I Know

I'm just an old country boy born in a farmhouse when everyone still farmed with horses. The only way we had to go anywhere was by wagon. So you can guess there was very little traveling. We just worked, slept, ate and went to church on Sunday, which was about the only time people got together, the highlight being a midsummer revival.

Back then, all I ever heard preached was "hellfire and brimstone," never the Lord's love and compassion. I thought God was sitting up in heaven with a big hammer, and if I got out of line He was going to smack me into the ground. When I was 12 years old, after some coaching and pushing by the pastor and evangelist, I joined the church and was baptized in a nearby creek.

I grew up, married and raised three sons. I was always a decent, honest man who treated my fellowmen with respect, worked hard, took my family to church, sang a lot and served on committees.

After my boys were already grown and away from home, the Holy Spirit started dealing with me about my salvation, and I realized that I had never been saved. If I died, I knew I was going straight to hell. I started reading my Bible earnestly and praying to God, and He in His mercy saved my soul. Praise His holy name.

I discovered God had a plan for my life and had been looking out for me for years. I thank Him every day. He can see into the future and guide our lives, even when we are sinners and living outside His will.

When a man is truly saved, God fills his heart with love and gives him a hunger for lost souls. I was no different. The hunger He instilled within me is a hunger to witness to lost church members — the hardest people in the world to reach. I know there are thousands of people just like me who are mired in false tradition and security.

If you answer the question, "If you died today, do you think you would go to heaven?" with "I think I'm all right," then something is terribly wrong. If you are truly saved, then you *know* you are all right.

During our ministry, I've seen people come to know the Lord who thought they had been saved for years. They realized, just as I, that they had never truly repented of their sins and committed their lives completely to Christ.

When you completely commit your life to the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart. He can do that because you will have different desires in your life. You will want to be around the people of God. You will want to talk about Him, tell others what He has done for you, and do your best to show people by the words of your tongue and the way you live what a wonderful God you serve.

Perhaps you are in the same situation as I was. Have you truly repented of your sins and asked God into your life and committed yourself completely to Him? You can live in the grace and joy the Lord has for you. Then and only then when asked the question, "Are you ready to meet God today?" you can answer without a doubt or hesitation, "Yes, praise His holy name. I know that I know that I know that I am saved."

— Joe Bass lives in Conway, Ark.

Why You ~~Don't~~ Need a Savior

After former Cambodian dictator Pol Pot led the slaughter of 1.5 million of his countrymen, his government was overthrown. He fled into the jungles. When finally captured several years later, he declared, "Am I a savage person? My conscience is clear."

When I speak about Christian faith to college groups, the question often arises, "What about Gandhi? He was one of the most moral persons who ever lived. Certainly you don't mean to say that he won't make it to heaven just because he didn't accept Jesus as Savior?"

I respond by quoting Gandhi's own words: "It is constant torture to me that I am so far from Him whom I know to be my very life and being. I know it is my wretchedness and wickedness that keeps me from Him."³

"There's no such thing as sin."

The large majority of people believe that there is no absolute right or wrong. If they are correct, then they can't be guilty of wrongdoing or sin, since all claims to right and wrong would be relative. Their logical conclusion would be that they don't need a Savior. They assert, "It's up to the individual or culture to determine what is moral and what isn't."

Yet when pressed, the most ardent moral relativists acknowledge that they believe certain things are wrong — such as torturing children, rape and genocide.

In fact, people often express outrage at the gross injustices and suffering in the world. They even rail against God, even while claiming not to believe in Him: "I

can't believe in a God who would allow these things to occur."

But where did they get their passionate conviction about injustice? If we live in a universe without God, as they claim, and we came into being by chance, then any concept of right and wrong or justice would be meaningless. By their outrage, they affirm a standard of justice that is not relative. Recognizing a standard of justice points to a Lawgiver, or God, who established that standard.

One of the world's leading philosophers and atheists, Antony Flew, renounced his atheism. He came to recognize the "almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements" needed to produce life.

"There is no God."

A growing number of people live as if there is no God, or as if God doesn't matter. If there is no God, there is no one to judge their wrongdoing. Again, if they are correct, there would be no need for a Savior.

With the developments of science in the past several generations, however, atheism has become a position difficult to defend. The discovery of an instantaneous beginning to the universe and the incredible "fine-tuning" of so many factors in the cosmos to enable life on Earth are hard to explain without God.

Esteemed physicist (and agnostic) Stephen Hawking admitted, "It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should

have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us."⁴

Several years ago, one of the world's leading philosophers and atheists, Antony Flew, renounced his atheism. He came to recognize the "almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements" needed to produce life. He concluded that "intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together."⁵ As a result, he wrote the book *There Is a God*.

In recognizing God, however, we need to consider our relationship with Him and whether or not we are accountable to Him for our actions and our lives. Through His revelation in the Bible, God clearly indicates our need to live by His laws and standards.

Sin and the need for a Savior

Moreover, God's Word says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, NIV), and that the result of sin is separation from God and a sentence of eternal death (Romans 6:23). We are guilty, not only of sinful actions and attitudes, but of rebellion against God by choosing to live for ourselves instead of for God

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Finding an Unseen God

*Truth was dead.
God had never lived.
Life was filled with pain.
And death was the end of life.*

These beliefs formed my worldview as a young woman: I sincerely believed that there was no God.

God had not created man. Man had obviously created God.

Most of life's truly painful problems were never going to be answered by science, reason or experience. So it was understandable that individuals and entire cultures would create mythical beings — call it God or call them gods — to fill in the gaps and calm their fears. As a young atheist, I simply considered myself a realist who preferred unanswered questions over fairy tales.

That was the end of the matter, at least in the beginning. Over the years, I transitioned from quiet confidence in my choice to a vocal critiquing of others' choices. I found it perplexing that intelligent humans would engage in the self-deception required to birth and feed faith. Observing people fabricate (or inherit) a culturally customized version of a supreme being, assign deity to their construct, and then claim that their invention gave them "peace" was disturbing for sure, but not devastating.

After all, everyone had coping mechanisms for living. Some buried themselves in work or a cause. Some turned to drugs or drink. Some focused on fitness or fixated on chocolate, and some consoled themselves by hoping for a better afterlife or deferring to a benevolent designer. All were attempts at managing the unresolved.

As an emerging adult, however, my atheism gained momentum and developed a less tolerant edge. Faith did seem to empower some to be more optimistic, but what did it matter if it was not based in reality?

I would rather be sober than sappy; discouraged than in denial.

Then one day, without warning and without invitation, my atheistic worldview was shattered like fine glassware on a concrete floor, leaving me bloodied, stunned and speechless. It was as though something you were absolutely certain existed only as the stuff and fluff of fairy tales knocked loud and clear and then stood there offending all your senses on the doorstep.

It was true that God's existence would change everything. But I had never intentionally lied to myself before, and I was not going to start then. I could not live in denial of the encounter even for the sake of maintaining my life's equilibrium.

Yes, my spirit whispered. Yes, I believe.

With that response, my soul was suddenly and surprisingly released. I felt carried. The realization that God was and that God wanted me was overwhelming. A warm hope began to fill me.

I had never considered myself a prisoner, but instantly I knew that I was free. I had never considered myself dead, but now I knew that I was alive. The encounter was depositing within me a gift: faith — a living, growing substance not made by human hands. Escorted by faith, I entered an indescribably beautiful, stunningly satisfying, adventure-filled mystery:

*Truth is not dead.
God has always lived.
Life is full of pain.
Death is but a door.
And the God who is, aches to love us.*
— Alicia Britt Chole

From Finding an Unseen God: Reflections of a Former Atheist by Alicia Britt Chole (Bloomington, Minn.: Bethany House, 2009). Excerpted with permission. A free discussion guide is available via download at truthportraits.com.

Why You ~~Don't~~ Need a Savior

(Romans 1:21). We cannot rationalize away our sin and need for a Savior. And we cannot make ourselves good enough for God. We need a Savior.

The good news is that God provided a Savior for us. "Not wanting anyone to perish" (2 Peter 3:9) eternally apart from Him, God himself became a human being in the person of Jesus and took the penalty for sin by dying on the cross. Now God freely forgives those who repent of their rebellion and makes us His beloved children now and eternally (John 3:16).

Lack of fulfillment and the need for a Savior

We were created for relationship with God — to know, love, worship and serve Him. In this purpose we find our highest fulfillment, for God is the greatest Person and Reality in the universe. To live contrary to reality distorts and diminishes our life, and ultimately destroys it. To live according to reality brings wholeness and human flourishing. Jesus said, "I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

Tom Brady, quarterback for the New England Patriots, was interviewed on *60 Minutes*. He stated, "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? ... It's got to be more than this. I mean this isn't, this can't be, what it's all cracked up to be." When interviewer Steve Kroft asked, "What's the answer?" Brady replied, "I wish I knew."⁶

The emptiness in our hearts and our ability to achieve only partial, temporary fulfillment point to our need for God. We need to deal with the problem of self-centeredness or sin so that we can experience the forgiveness

and the abundant and eternal life that God wants us to experience.

We need a Savior. **e**

¹ Barna update, Aug. 9, 2005.

² ABC News poll, cited by *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, April 16, 2006, p. 19.

³ *Gandhi, An Autobiography* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948), p. 170.

⁴ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books), p. 127.

⁵ Antony Flew, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, p. 75.

⁶ CBSNews.com, Nov. 6, 2005.

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E-mail your comments to pe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

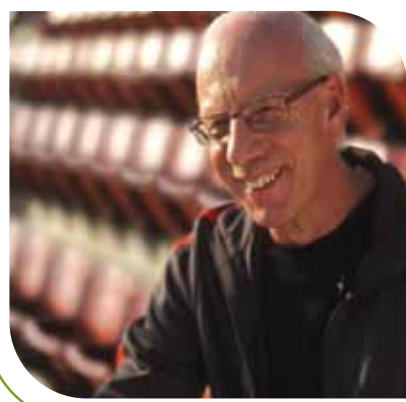
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

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