

How Can I Know God?

Six simple steps from missing the mark to becoming a child of God

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

JOHN 1:12

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Everyone has missed God's mark, and we can't fix it ourselves. But God built a bridge to us through Jesus. All we have to do is receive Him.
SCRIPTURE	Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23 · Matthew 5:48; 11:28-30 · John 1:12; 3:16-18 · Revelation 3:20 · 1 John 1:9
LENGTH	About 15 to 20 minutes; ideal for an outreach night or as a follow-up conversation
BEST FOR	Middle school and high school, especially students exploring faith
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and a whiteboard to draw the bridge

Start here: can a person really know God?

Lots of people believe God exists. Far fewer believe they can actually *know* Him: talk to Him, be loved by Him, and belong to Him. The Bible says you can. Here are six steps, using the picture of a bridge.



1 Admit your spiritual need

We are all sinners. People don't always like that word. The most common New Testament word for sin is the Greek *hamartia*, which means "to miss the mark," like an archer whose arrow falls short of the target.

So what is God's mark? Jesus said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Unless a person is perfect, he has missed the mark. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Not some. All.

ILLUSTRATION

Imagine everyone in the room trying to jump across the Grand Canyon. Some people jump farther than others, but nobody makes it. It doesn't matter if you're a better jumper than your friend. Everyone falls short. That's sin: not just doing bad things, but being unable to reach God's perfect standard on our own.

2 Understand the result of sin

"For the wages of sin is death..." **ROMANS 6:23**

A wage is what you earn. Every one of us has missed God's mark, and what our sin earns is death: separation from God, now and forever. That's the gap in the drawing.

It's important to understand that God isn't eager to condemn anyone. Jesus said, "he who does not believe is condemned already," and that the light came into the world, but people "loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:18-19). Those who end up separated from God are those who reject the truth and the rescue He offers.

3 See what God has done

We could never measure up to God's standard on our own, so God reached out to us. We can't solve the problem of sin, but God, who is perfect, can and has. He became the bridge.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." **JOHN 3:16-17**

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus lived the perfect life we couldn't, died to pay for our sin, and rose from the dead. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

4 Decide at the crossroads

If a person admits they are a sinner and understands that Jesus is the solution, they are standing at a crossroads. They can reject God's solution and accept the consequences, or they can accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

What does it take to accept this gift? Simply receive it. Jesus invites, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

5 Respond to His invitation

"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). What do you do with a gift? You take it. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart. If you would like to receive Him right now, you can pray something like this, sincerely, from your heart:

A PRAYER TO RECEIVE JESUS

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. Right now I turn from my sins and open the door of my heart and life. I receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank You for saving me. Amen.

The words aren't magic. What matters is that you mean it. If you prayed that prayer and meant it, Jesus has come into your life and forgiven all of your sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

6 Start growing

Your decision to receive Christ means you are now a child of God and will be with Him in heaven one day. That's a lot to be thankful for! Now take some simple steps to grow strong:

Read the Bible

Start with the Gospel of John, one chapter a day.

Pray

Talk to God every day about everything. He's your Father now.

Go to church

Get connected with other believers and a youth group.

Tell someone

Tell a leader or a Christian friend what you decided today.

FOR THE LEADER

Give students a quiet moment to respond, and don't pressure anyone. Invite those who prayed to tell you or another leader afterward, and follow up within the week with a Bible, a simple reading plan, and a personal conversation. Let parents know when appropriate.

TALK IT OVER

1. What does it mean that sin is "missing the mark"? How is that different from just "doing bad things"?
2. Why can't we cross the gap to God by being good enough?
3. Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us "while we were still sinners." What does that tell you about God?
4. Jesus says He stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20). Why do you think He knocks instead of breaking the door down?
5. If someone has just received Jesus, what are the most important next steps for them?

TAKE IT HOME

Draw the bridge on a card and practice explaining it in two minutes. If you received Jesus today, tell a leader this week and start reading the Gospel of John. If you already know Him, pray for one friend who doesn't, and ask God for a chance to draw the bridge for them.

God built the bridge. All that remains is to walk across.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.