

How do I become a follower of Jesus?

In one way that is a very easy question to answer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved (Acts 16:31). If you already know what this means then by all means do it. If you don't let's discuss what it means.

It starts with God.

The fact that you are looking at a page like this probably means God is already at work in your life. That's encouraging and you should not ignore it. Perhaps you are going through a difficult period in your life or perhaps you have become convinced that there is more to life than just existing from day to day struggling to make enough money to keep your head above water. Whatever the reason, you can be sure that this sense of need you have is an indication that all is not well and your desire to find a solution to this emptiness is really the voice of God drawing you to him. The Bible has a name for God's activity as it relates to us and our rescue. It's called the Gospel (good news) and the Gospel starts with God. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-just as well as several other alls thrown in. He created us in his image, part of which means we have the capacity for self-awareness, love, a sense of the eternal, and a will that is our own. Our problem is that we have used the free will God has given us and belittled God by ignoring him, or flat out dismissing him as unimportant, or running away from him like hunted prey runs away from its pursuer. In any case we think we know better and so we look for satisfaction in other places. We have decided to live our lives independent from him. This is what the Bible refers to as sin. We are infected with it, all of us. We have, therefore, lost our relationship with our creator, thus our sense of emptiness and our never ending pursuit to fill it.

The history of religion is one of trying to mend this relationship by offering some kind of sacrifice to God in order to force his hand and appease him so that he will look favorably at us. In the modern world, rather than offering animals or virgins to an angry god, we usually try to clean up our act, or we adopt a vaguely spiritual lifestyle thinking that our undefined god will somehow be pleased with our attempts at goodness. The Gospel begins not with our attempt to sacrifice to God but with God looking at us with mercy and compassion. Knowing we could never offer enough sacrifices or clean ourselves up sufficiently through good works, or determination to live better lives, he took the initiative. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him will have eternal 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). God's son, Jesus, allowed himself to be killed, because this was his Father's will, in order to pay the price that forgiveness and justice demanded. But then God raised him from the dead confirming everything Jesus had said about himself and assuring us that this is more than just wishful thinking. Through him, forgiveness, eternal life, and reconciliation with our creator is available. To believe on him means that we abandon all of our self-effort and repent, which means to change our mind about God and turn to him, accepting his terms for our surrender. When we do this the Bible tells us that God places his very Spirit into our lives (1Cor. 12:13) and our new life begins (2Cor. 5:17) which is activated by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. This is called "eternal life" and it is so different that the Bible uses a different word to describe it. Human life is described in the Bible using the word

“pseuche.” It is a Greek word and it describes the life we inherit from our parents which is a wonderful thing. But it is flawed in its inability to last and its inability to be pure. When God gives us his Spirit we receive a different kind of life. The Bible uses the word “zoe” to describe this life. Usually the word “eternal” is put in front of it as a way to describe it further. This is the life we don’t have and cannot receive in any other way except through our faith in Christ. It’s the kind of life that God possesses and gives to us. So Jesus describes it as being “born again (John 3:2). That’s why Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life (zoe). No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6). Being given this life through our faith in Jesus we find that now we have a desire within us to follow Jesus, to read and understand the Bible, and to live in relationship with God. As we do this, the Holy Spirit begins to produce in us the qualities of this zoe kind of life which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self- control (Gal. 5:22-23). Then we are assured when our bodies die, our zoe life takes over completely and we face God having already been forgiven by him. Without this we face God as our judge (Hebrews 9:27) and will have to explain ourselves to him having nothing more to offer than lame excuses for belittling him all of our lives. To which he will say, “Depart from me, I never knew you (Matthew 7:23, 25:41).

So that is the gospel. God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. The sense of loneliness, emptiness, and angst that you have is a way God uses to communicate with you that all is not well. His creation tells you that he is really awesome and that he loves beauty and order. And yet all is not well there either. So he gives you both external and internal communication that you need something that you don’t have. Namely, his life and a true relationship with him. His solution is for you to turn, to acknowledge Jesus and all that he did for you, and then follow the way of Jesus as his Spirit tells you that you are now a child of God. This is the gospel. This is how you become a follower of Jesus.

If this is what you desire, simply tell him by responding to the communication he has already started with you. Tell him you agree with his solution and are giving up ignoring him and trying to fill your eternal emptiness with things that are superficial. This is prayer. He’ll forgive you and his Spirit will enter you. Then, if you don’t already have a friend who is encouraging you in this way, find a community that will nurture you in your new relationship with God.