

# How will you get to Heaven?

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A lot of people have a lot of different ideas...*but it only matters what God has said...*

## **I do many good things.**

The Bible says... *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9) Good works are good, but they cannot save your soul. When a policeman catches you speeding, it won't matter how safely you usually drive; you broke the law this time, and you'll have to pay for it. Good works won't negate a speeding ticket, and they won't negate your sin before God. And if doing good things was enough, then why did Jesus have to die on the cross?

## **I'm basically a good person.**

The Bible says... As it is written: *"There is none righteous, no, not one.* (Romans 3:10) That's how God sees us. Compared to God, no one is good. His standard is perfection, for He is perfect. Nothing less than perfection will be good enough for Him.

## **I go to church.**

The Bible says...*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."* (Luke 18:10-14) Two men went to church. Only one had a right relationship with God. Being in church accomplished nothing for the Pharisee, and if that's what you're depending on for your salvation, it won't accomplish anything for you, either. Anyone can walk into a church building at the right time on the right day and attend a religious service; how can that qualify you for Heaven?

## **Mary will take me safely there.**

The Bible says... *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5) Either Paul was writing the truth when he penned these words, or the Bible contains a mistake. Mary gave exactly one command in the entire Bible, and that is in John 2:5 - "Do whatever He tells you." She wants us to obey Jesus, not herself, or someone would have said so in Scripture. Anyone who says differently is contradicting the Bible.

## **We're all going to Heaven.**

The Bible says...*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* (Matthew 7:13-14) These words of Jesus don't make it sound like we're all going to the same place, do they? There is a road that leads to life, and a road that leads to destruction. Which road are you on?

## **I've been baptized.**

The Bible says...*"in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* (1 Peter 3:20-21) This verse has confused many. Note that water didn't save Noah; he was saved through it (out of it), not by it. Likewise, baptism can't save you; you're saved "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is the pledge of a good conscience toward God, but how can your conscience be good toward God if

your sin hasn't been dealt with? Baptism is a good work, and Ephesians 2:8-9 says that our good works cannot save us. Don't gamble your eternity on a sprinkle of water. You'll lose.

### **I keep the sacraments.**

The Bible says... *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”* (Titus 3:5) Some of the sacraments are described in the Bible; others are totally absent from God's Word. Either way, they have no power to save us, because it's God's mercy that saves us, not our righteous acts. If we can work our way into Heaven by our own actions, then Christ died for nothing. The fact that He endured six agonizing hours on a cross He didn't deserve, suggests that His sacrifice was the only way, and the rest of Scripture bears this out.

### **A loving God would not send anyone to Hell.**

The Bible says... *“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (Revelation 20:15) A loving God does not want anyone to go to Hell. He has provided a way for anyone to escape such a fate. But a just and perfect God cannot allow sin into His presence. If you reject the way to Heaven that God has provided, then you are sending yourself to Hell. The choice is yours; don't blame God.

### **I'll repent on my deathbed.**

The Bible says... *“whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”* (James 4:14) You have no guarantee that you will get a deathbed. People are suddenly killed in auto accidents, house fires, violent crime; they are struck down by heart attacks and embolisms. Many who make it to their deathbeds are mentally incapacitated by strokes and Alzheimer's. How do you know you'll have a chance to make things right with God "later?" The time to make things right with God is right now, because right now is all you can be sure you've got.

### **I pray all the time.**

The Bible says... *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”* (Matthew 23:14) Jesus spoke those words to the Pharisees of His day, but they apply to us today as well. The fact that you pray a lot means nothing to God if your heart is far from Him. No matter how long, how frequently, or how fervently you say your prayers, those prayers won't bring you one step closer to Heaven. If anyone can gain access to God by "saying the magic words," regardless of his/her position before God, that would be unjust of Him, and God cannot be unjust.

### **I'm better than a lot of "religious" people.**

The Bible says... *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23) Finding someone who's worse than you doesn't make you any better, especially when God's standard is perfection. Hell is filled with "religious" people; if you wind up next to them, will it be any comfort knowing you were better than they were on Earth? In God's eyes, sin is sin, and no one is any better than any other. We've all missed the mark and fallen short of His perfection, and the degrees of difference between one sinner and another won't make the difference between Heaven and Hell.

### **God's Spirit is on me.**

The Bible says... *“Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matthew 7:22-23) This may surprise many who seek spiritual gifts, but the presence of such gifts is not proof of salvation. This verse says so. It doesn't matter if you speak in tongues, prophesy, laugh in the Spirit, or heal the sick; your soul may still be on the wide road to eternal destruction.

### **I prayed a sinner's prayer.**

The Bible says... The Lord says: *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments*

*of men.'* ” (Matthew 15:8-9) Many religions have ritual prayers for various reasons, and God is impressed with none of them if the person praying does not have a right relationship with Him. The words that come out of your mouth have no power to save your soul. A sinner's prayer is supposed to be an outward expression of your heart-attitude toward God, and if your heart was nowhere near God when you prayed it, it was nothing but empty words, launched into the air to land nowhere.

### **I love God.**

The Bible says... *“then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’* (Luke 13:26-27) Jesus' warning was for those who want to be saved, but don't do anything about it. Loving God, and wanting to be with Him, are good things. But they are not enough. Lots of religious people love their God or gods, but their sin has not been dealt with, and that is the key issue when it comes to knowing God. If that element is missing, all your religious passion and fervor are just wasted energy.

### **I believe in God.**

The Bible says... *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble.”* (James 2:19) Is it enough just to believe in God? Satan believes in God! But it won't save him, and if that's all you're counting on to get you to Heaven, it won't save you, either.

### **I do the best I can.**

The Bible says... *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”* (Matthew 5:48) That's the standard Jesus has set for us. Not "good enough," not "the best I can," but "perfect." It's not a suggestion or a guideline, it's a holy command. Unless you are truly perfect in God's sight, your best won't be good enough.

### **There's no such place as Hell.**

The Bible says... *“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”* (Luke 12:5) By some counts, Jesus spoke more often about Hell than He did about Heaven. He regarded it as a real place, a horrible place, a place where no one would ever want to go. But many will go there. Refusing to believe in it will not change your eternal destiny. Hiding your head in the sand doesn't cut it with God.

### **I keep the Ten Commandments.**

The Bible says... *“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”* (James 2:10) So you keep the Ten Commandments, do you? First question: can you name them all? If not, how can you be sure you obey them? Second question: have you ever broken one, ever? Even if it's just a little white lie or a little coveting of your neighbor's goods? If so, according to this verse, you might as well be an adulterous murderer who bows down to idols. No one has ever kept the Ten Commandments, except for Jesus Himself.

### **I've never sinned.**

The Bible says... *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* (1 John 1:8) Oh, yes, you have. Anything you've ever done that was contrary to God's Word is a sin. Lying, losing your temper, envying others... there are no "big sins" or "little sins" in God's record books. He is equally offended by all sin. And it takes only one sin to keep you out of Heaven.

### **There are many paths to God.**

The Bible says... *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* (John 14:6) Was Jesus right in saying this, or wasn't He? If He wasn't, then He was either a satanic liar or a complete lunatic. But if He was right, then there is only one way to Heaven. Do you know what that one way is?

### **My parents were Christians.**

The Bible says...*“and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”* (Matthew 3:9) John the Baptist had these words for those Jews who thought their ancestry was enough to get them into a right relationship with God. And if Abraham, who was called "the friend of God," couldn't benefit his descendants, will you fare any better by trusting in your own parents for salvation? Their faith may have been enough to save them, but they cannot save you.

### **I'll pay for my sins in Purgatory.**

The Bible says...**absolutely nothing about this!** Purgatory is not in the Bible. Jesus never spoke of such a place; neither did the apostles or the old-testament prophets. If there really were such a place, wouldn't God have said something in His Word about it? Also, consider this: the idea behind Purgatory is that there are some sins that we have to pay for ourselves. In other words, there are sins that the perfect blood of Jesus wasn't enough to pay for, but we can somehow pay for them. Are we greater than Christ? Greater than the Christ who, on the cross, cried out, "It is finished" (Greek: "paid in full")?

### **I've given a lot of money to my church.**

The Bible says...*“But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”* (Acts 8:20-22) Many through the years have thought they could buy God off - that He would be impressed with a monetary gift. Peter's words close this door with no room for misunderstanding. God doesn't need your money. And if money could get you into Heaven, that would leave the poor without hope, and that would be totally unjust on God's part.

### **I'll just cease to exist when I die.**

The Bible says...*“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”* (John 5:28-29) This is a popular belief among evolutionists, and also among Jehovah's Witnesses. But it's not what Jesus said. He said everyone will rise again at some future point in history, give an account to Him, and face a final judgment. What will you say to Him on that day? "I'm not supposed to be in existence anymore" won't be appropriate.

### **I'll be reincarnated instead.**

The Bible says...*“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27) God says we each die once, and then we are judged. According to the Bible, there is no reincarnation. This life is all you get, and your eternal fate rests on what you do with this life. What will you do?

### **There's no such place as Heaven.**

The Bible says...*“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”* (John 14:2) Jesus said there is a Heaven and that God lives there. Was He lying? Even the Pharisees never accused Him of that. Yes, Heaven exists, and those who are acceptable to God will go there when this life ends. The rest will be sent to a place of torment. It's one or the other. Where are you going? How will you get there?

### **It's too late for me - I'm too wicked.**

The Bible says...*“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9) As long as you're breathing, it's not too late. There is no sin that Christ cannot forgive if you ask him. Even if you've sold your soul to the devil, Jesus is greater than Satan and can nullify that bargain. The only obstacle is whether you are willing to be saved or not.

### **I want to be with my friends in Hell.**

The Bible says... *“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’”* (Luke 16:27-28) It's tragic that many of our friends will, indeed, be there. But there will be no happy reunions there, because no one will be able to focus on anything but their own torments. Seeing an old friend or family member there will bring no joy, but rather more grief that someone we love is subject to eternal agony.

### **I don't deserve to go there.**

The Bible says... *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) You're right. You don't deserve to go to Heaven. You're wise to realize this. But that's no obstacle for an all-powerful, loving God. He has made a way for your sins to be paid for so you can go to be with Him, in spite of your unworthiness.

### **I'd have to give up too much in this life.**

The Bible says... *“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”* (Matthew 16:26) You do not have to give up anything to be saved. But if you really want your life to be pleasing to God, you must renounce everything that the Bible calls sin. Ask yourself: what pleasures does this life offer that are worth going to Hell for? A hundred years from now, you won't remember those pleasures, but you may eternally regret the choices that those pleasures led you to make.

### **Hell will be just a great big party.**

The Bible says... *“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’”* (Luke 16:24) Where this lie about Hell being a fun place got started, I don't know. But there will be no partying in Hell. Hell is a place of torment and separation from God, without hope or relief, for ever and ever. No one in his right mind would want to go there.

### **Floating around with a harp would be too boring for me.**

The Bible says... *“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’”* (1Corinthians 2:9) Angels floating around on clouds, playing harps, is a popular conception of what Heaven will be like. But it is probably a false conception. We don't know exactly what Heaven will be like. But it will *not* be dull. Some verses of Scripture speak of us ruling the nations with Christ; others describe us as being in the very presence of God Himself. Don't throw away your eternity over a myth.

### **Heaven doesn't want me.**

The Bible says... *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9) Have you seen that "Heaven doesn't want me and Hell is afraid I'll take over" bumper sticker? It's a lie. Heaven does want you, and Hell is afraid of nothing but Heaven. God does not want anyone to perish and go to Hell, although many will go there because they reject the way out that He has provided. It has nothing to do with what you've done with your life - Christ can forgive any sin if you're willing to be forgiven His way. Anyone can go to Heaven. You may have to leave some baggage behind, but God has promised that it will be worth it.

### **I don't care.**

The Bible says... *“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”* (Hebrews 2:1-3) You have read these passages of Scripture. You cannot claim ignorance; you cannot say you weren't warned. God will call us all to give an account of our lives, and whether you care or not, you *will* answer to Him. What will your answer be? How can you not care where you spend all of eternity?

### **I'll think about it after I clean up my life.**

The Bible says... *"But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away."* (Isaiah 64:6) Your life will *never* be good enough or clean enough to impress God, so don't let that stand in your way. He just wants you to come as you are, and He will help you with the cleaning-up *after* your soul is saved. The question is, how will you come to Him?

### **It's impossible to know for sure.**

The Bible says... *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."* (1 John 5:13) So that you may *know*. Not "guess so," not "hope so," not "think so." God never meant for our eternal destiny to be a matter of guesswork - that would not be loving, and God is love. So if you aren't certain where you're going after you die, you'd be wise to find out, so you can be sure.

### **I don't know how to get there.**

The Bible says... *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."* (Matthew 7:7-8)

### **I've never thought about it.**

The Bible says... *"For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* (2 Corinthians 6:2) Putting off a decision about God is the same as telling Him "No." Today could be the day your soul is saved, or it could be the day you throw away your last chance. Make a decision today, right now, before something distracts you and you never think about Him again until it's too late.

### **By grace, through faith, plus nothing.**

This is the right answer!