

HONORING THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF
BILLY GRAHAM

How to Find Christ

by Billy Graham – *“Hour of Decision,”* 1958

The world is embroiled in a battle between good and evil. We tend to focus on the good and evil deeds of the human race, but the Bible says that man’s heart is wicked. What hope do we then have for change? This is the question that plagues mankind.

I will never forget walking across a university campus to give an address some years ago, and a sophomore came up and said, “Mr. Graham, you won’t let us down, will you?” I was puzzled, so I asked him what he meant. He explained, “Please tell us how to find God. That’s what we need.”

When I was speaking at another university, a student said: “Mr. Graham, we hear a lot about what Christ has done for us, the value of religion, and what personal salvation is. But nobody tells us how to find Christ.”

This lament of an honest student became a serious challenge to me. Since then, in every sermon before university and college students I have tried to tell the students simply and plainly how to find Christ.

The Bible teaches that God has made the plan of redemption so plain that anyone may be saved. I would like to tell you very simply how to find Jesus Christ and have the assurance of salvation.

First, you must recognize your need. You will never come face to face with Christ unless you are convinced that you need Him. If you feel that you are self-sufficient, capable of meeting life head-on under your own power, then you will probably never find Him. A reading of the Gospels will reveal that Jesus did not impose Himself upon those who felt self-sufficient, righteous and self-confident.

But He went out of His way to open the eyes of blind Bartimaeus who cried, “Jesus, have mercy on me.” He was quick to give the water of life to the Samaritan woman who said, “Give me this water, that I may not thirst.” And He was instantly at the side of the sinking Peter when Peter prayed, “Lord, save me.”

There must be a recognition of your own sinfulness and spiritual need before there can be a response from Christ. He came to call not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

Many divine promises hinge on a human condition: “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). “If we walk in the light ... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all 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 1:7, 9).

Second, you must understand the cross. This sounds almost impossible, because even the greatest theologians have never understood the mysteries of the cross. The Bible says that the natural man cannot comprehend the things of God, so how can a person understand the cross before he finds Christian assurance?

Many intellectuals have made up theories as to why Christ died and what the eternal significance of His death was. None of the theories seem to satisfy us. It is only when we understand that Christ was dying in the place of sinners, for sin, that we find the elements of satisfaction. Yet how can we understand it?

Here is where the miracle lies. Just as Peter by a divine revelation said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), so by a miracle the meaning of the cross will be given to you by the Holy Spirit.

I remember a young reporter in Glasgow who attended the meetings at Kelvin Hall as part of his assignment. He heard the Gospel night after night, but it seemed to make no impact upon him.

However, one day when one of his colleagues asked him, "What are they preaching down there?" he tried to explain the Gospel, and in so doing, he said, "You see, it's this way—Christ died for me ... Christ died for my sins ..."

And when he said that, he suddenly realized that it was true! The full meaning of those words burst miraculously in upon him, and then and there he received the assurance of salvation.

How vivid, how alive, the cross becomes when Paul speaks of it: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). When you see Him high and lifted up, the Son of God, smitten, marred, bruised, and dying for you, and can say with Paul, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me," you have taken the second step toward Christian assurance.

Third, you must count the cost. Jesus discouraged superficial enthusiasm. He urged people to consider well the cost of being a disciple. Many times when great crowds were following Him, He would turn and say, "Have you counted the cost? Do you realize that if any man wants to come after Me, he will have to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me?"

He also said, "Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost? ... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:28, 33).

Many people come to Christ without first counting the cost. The cost includes repentance, the forsaking of sin, and a continual, daily, open acknowledgment of Christ in your life.

These are the minimum requirements of discipleship. The Christian life is not for the weak, the soft or the cowardly. However, it's worth everything it costs. You will soon find that the cross is not greater than His grace. When you pick up the cross of unpopularity, on the campus or wherever you may be, you will find God's grace is there, and it's more than sufficient to meet your every need.

Fourth, you must take a definite step. One day at Stanford University, a student of a non-Christian faith came to me and said he was convinced that Jesus is the Son of God but said he couldn't confess Him publicly. He said that back in his own country the cost socially would be too great.

I had to tell him that the Bible says: "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

Like the rich young ruler of old, the student went away sad. He had counted the cost and was not able to pay the price of open acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as his Savior.

We ask people to make a public confession of Christ in our meetings because Christ demanded a definite commitment. Christ had reasons for demanding that people openly follow Him. He knew that an unwitnessed vow is no vow at all. Until you have surrendered to Christ by a definite act of your will, you are not a Christian.

Have you taken this definite step? The Bible says, "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).

Fifth, allow God to change your life. When you come to Christ, you are considered a spiritual baby. As you read the New Testament, you will see how the early disciples, during the first days of following Christ, faltered and often failed. They quarreled, they were envious, they were contentious, they were unfaithful, and they often grew angry.

However, as they became emptied of self and filled with Christ, they developed into the fullness of the stature of a Christian.

Conversion is just the beginning. A new life begins in you the moment you receive Christ. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence. During the rest of your lifetime, He will be busy conforming you to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, you will be a target of Satan, the enemy of Christ. When you walked Satan's way in the world, he didn't go out of his way very much to bother you. He had you; you were his child. But now since you have received Christ and are a child of God, Satan will use all his diabolical techniques to thwart, hinder and defeat you.

If you are faithful in church attendance, prayer, Bible reading, and witnessing, Christ will work in you and through you. You will be able to say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). You will find miracles happening all around you as you discipline your life to the pattern of a true Christian.

Would you not like to know that every sin is forgiven? Wouldn't you like to know that you are ready to meet God? It could happen today, if you will only let Christ come into your heart. Invite Him in right now. The Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).