

HOW TO HANDLE A CRISIS

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For the sake of clarity, all Scripture quotations and parenthesized Scripture references have been placed in italics.

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to the person who is facing the greatest crisis you have ever faced. May what is written here inspire you to turn to God with all of your heart and to trust Him like never before. May your *crisis* become the *catalyst* for a fresh encounter with Jesus Himself.

Introduction

Not everything in life is a crisis. Some people would have you to believe differently, but I'm telling you the truth...not everything is a crisis. A flat tire isn't a crisis (unless you're driving down the interstate!). A cavity isn't a crisis. A leaky roof isn't a crisis. These things are inconveniences, but they're not crises.

Life only has a few real crises. Cancer is a crisis. A serious car accident is a crisis. The death of a loved one is a crisis. Losing your job is a crisis. Not having enough money to pay the bills and put food on the table is a crisis. War is a crisis.

One of my favorite books in the Bible is the little Book of Esther. It's tucked away in the Old Testament and only contains ten chapters. You can easily read it in less than an hour. Interestingly, this little book never mentions the name of God. Think about that...a book in the Bible that never mentions God's name. When we read this book, we don't read God's *name*, but we do see His *hand* working behind the scenes. We see His hand of providence, protection, and provision mightily at work. While God's *name* is never mentioned, His *presence* is nonetheless there.

The same is true for you. The crisis you are now facing may have caught you off guard, but God saw it coming. He not only *saw* it coming, but He also *allowed* it to happen. While we may never understand all the reasons why, we do know this: *God is with you in your crisis, and He wants to take what the enemy (Satan) meant for evil and turn it around for your ultimate good.* As someone has said, “God has a wonderful way of turning *disappointments* into *His appointments*.” He always gets the last word on everything we face in life, and that includes the crisis you are now facing.

In the pages that follow, I want us to think about a major crisis the people of God experienced many, many years ago. We’ll use the Book of Esther as our primary source. As we learn what the Jewish people did when their crisis seemed insurmountable, we’ll discover how we can face any crisis that ever comes our way.

The Crisis Recorded in the Book of Esther

The Jewish people had rebelled against God. They had not been faithful to Him. Many had worshipped pagan deities and fallen headlong

into a life of sin. As a result, judgment fell on God's people and that judgment came through the Babylonians. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians (under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar) invaded Jerusalem, devastated the city, and destroyed the Jewish temple. If that wasn't bad enough, the Babylonians then carried the Jewish people (at least most of them) away to Babylon. The Jews became captives there. God was punishing them for their sinfulness, and yet, He hadn't given up on them.

Many years before God's people were taken into Babylonian captivity, God had spoken of the plans He had for them after the captivity would end. He said, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope*" (Jeremiah 29:11). His plan all along was to forgive His people, restore them, bring them back to Israel, and enable them to rebuild the decimated temple. This all eventually happened. Before it did, though, we learn from the Book of Esther that the Jews faced yet another crisis.

Back in those days, the strongest nation ruled (for all practical purposes) the entire world. This was true of the Assyrians. It then became true

of the Babylonians. There came a time, though, when world empires would fall. The Assyrian Empire fell to the Babylonians. Many years later, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians. As we read the Book of Esther, we learn that the Persian king was a man named Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes I). And this is where the Book of Esther begins.

To celebrate the vastness of his kingdom, King Ahasuerus held a feast. It was not only massive, but it also lasted for quite a while. At one point in the celebration, he sent word for the queen (a beautiful lady named Vashti) to come and show everyone how beautiful she was. Well, surprise of all surprises, she refused to attend. She evidently didn't feel comfortable being put on display like that, so she declined the invitation. While the full details of this are recorded in the Book of Esther, let me just say here that her refusal to submit to the king's orders caused quite a stir among some of the men. As a result, they persuaded King Ahasuerus to dethrone Vashti and find a new queen. This he did.

The process, though, of selecting a new queen was not a speedy one. Much time was devoted to finding the perfect partner for the

king. So an extended beauty contest took place. Many young ladies were brought before the king, and he was responsible to choose the one he wanted as queen. As time went by, he eventually chose a beautiful young lady named Esther to be queen. Esther was a Jewish girl. So now, the Persian king had a Jewish queen...even though she hadn't revealed her background and nationality to the king yet.

When Esther was young, her parents had died. As a result, she was raised by her older cousin, Mordecai. Mordecai was really more like an uncle to Esther, but technically he was her cousin. He was a man of great faith and commitment. His godly character sustained him in an ungodly environment.

Shortly after Esther became queen, King Ahasuerus promoted a man named Haman to a high and lofty position. Haman became the king's right-hand man. The king, to solidify Haman's authority, ordered that everyone bow down to Haman and pay homage to him. This the people did, with the exception of Mordecai. This godly and devout Jew refused to bow down to any man. His worship was reserved for God alone. Well, as you can imagine, this humiliated and infuriated Haman. So he set out to destroy

not only Mordecai but Mordecai's people as well.

Haman and his followers cast what were called Pur to determine the day on which the Jewish people should be destroyed. This would be the equivalent of rolling dice today to try to make a decision. From the casting of the Pur, it was determined that the Jews should be destroyed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month named Adar. Haman went to the king, obtained his permission, and the decision was made. On the thirteenth day of Adar, the Jews would be annihilated.

Now that's a crisis. The orders were sent throughout the vast Persian Empire about what was to happen on the thirteenth day of Adar. As the Jews learned of this devilish plot, their hearts sank. Their days were numbered. What would they do? What *could* they do?

And *what can you do* when you face a crisis in your life? As we continue, we will discover *three things* we can all do when the foundations of our lives are shaken to the core.

How to Handle a Crisis

1. Let your crisis lead to cries for help.

Many times, our crises lead to complaining. At other times, they lead to criticizing others or maybe even to criticizing God. These are unwise, unhealthy, and unproductive uses of our time and energy. We learn from Esther that there is no need to *complain* and no time to *criticize* when we can *cry out to God* in prayer.

Esther, of course, as queen, lived in the palace. Mordecai, though, didn't. When he found out about the intended extermination date of himself and of his people, he sent word to Esther and begged her to appear before the king and speak to him on behalf of the Jewish people. He instructed her to do everything within her power to save the Jews. She sent word back to Mordecai explaining that she couldn't just show up in the king's presence. In fact, she explained, anyone who did that would be executed. So she didn't feel like it was wise to go into the king's presence without first being invited.

Mordecai sent word back to Esther that she simply had no choice. He reminded her that God had placed her in the position she was in to be a blessing to others and not simply to try to

preserve her own life. In fact, he told the liaison to warn Esther that if she didn't try to help the Jews that she herself would also be killed and that God would raise up someone else to help His people. Listen to Mordecai's impassioned plea: *"Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esther 4:13-14).

Mordecai urged his younger cousin to rise to the occasion, to do the right thing, to seek mercy for the Jews from King Ahasuerus. When Esther processed Mordecai's message, she knew in her heart that he was giving her good advice. She knew he was right. She knew she had no choice but to go into the king's presence and plead for the lives of her people. But before she *acted*, she decided to *pray*. She sent word to Mordecai asking him to get all the Jews living in the capital city of Shushan (also known as Susa) to enter into a three-day season of prayer and fasting. She told Mordecai that she and her assistants would fast and pray as well. So three days were set aside for prayer and fasting before Esther appeared before the king. She was

seeking *the favor of God* before she sought *the favor of King Ahasuerus*.

Here we learn one of the greatest lessons we will ever learn in life: *Prayer should always be our first response, not our last resort*. We should pray before we panic. We should pray before we act. We should pray before we speak. We should pray before we do anything. We should follow Esther's example and seek the help of God before we seek the help of anyone else. If you are facing a crisis, the wisest thing you could do would be to set aside a specific amount of time for prayer and seeking help from the Lord.

I recently read Acts 3. The first verse of that chapter says: "*Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour*" (Acts 3:1). Peter and John were going to the temple in Jerusalem at 3 p.m. to pray. Why 3 p.m.? Because that was the designated hour of prayer. Let me ask you a question: *Do you have an hour of prayer? Do you have half an hour of prayer? Do you have a time set aside in your daily schedule for the purpose of prayer and seeking the Lord?* If not, you need one...especially during a crisis. You need to intensify your praying when a crisis presents itself. You may need to fast as well.

You may need to take a day's vacation (or maybe a week's vacation) just to pray.

One of my favorite Bible verses says this: *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe"* (Proverbs 18:10). Think about that. In times of danger, we have a refuge. The name of the LORD is our strong tower. We can run to Him for protection, peace, and help. But how do we approach our strong tower? Through prayer. Prayer is our lifeline to God, and it's often our only lifeline.

At one critical time in my family's life, I set aside thirty minutes a day just to pray for the situation we were facing. This wasn't my quiet time. This was in addition to my quiet time. This was urgent praying, desperate praying, life and death praying...and it became one of the sweetest and most rewarding experiences of my entire life.

I encourage you to pray whether you're going through a crisis or not. Peter and John weren't praying in the temple at 3 p.m. because of a crisis; they were praying because God instructs us to pray. In fact, the Jews used to pray at three different times during the day. They prayed at 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m.¹ They did this because of a verse in the Old Testament. In the Book of Psalms, we read these words: *"Evening and*

morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17). Three times a day they prayed. When they faced a crisis, they prayed even more than that. So should we.

A crisis calls for extra praying, intensified praying, and extended seasons of praying. A crisis often calls for fasting of some kind, too.

After Esther and the other Jews had prayed for three days, things began to happen. God not only *heard* their prayers, but He also greatly *honored* them. He went to work on their behalf.

The first thing that happened was that the king noticed Esther in the court, and “*she found favor in his sight*” (*Esther 5:2*). As a result, he invited her into his presence. God caused the king to look favorably upon Esther. This allowed Esther to go into the presence of the king and eventually explain to him the evil plot that had been devised against the Jews. Even though the king had given Haman permission to carry out this wicked plan, he didn’t understand that it involved destroying Esther and her people. Remember, Esther had not initially revealed her background to the king (*see Esther 2:10, 20*). So naturally, Haman’s plot angered the king once he understood that it was against Esther and the rest of the Jews.

As a direct result of prayer and fasting, Esther was able to seek the king's help without being killed in the process. God gave her favor in the king's sight. God always honors those who seek to honor Him (*see I Samuel 2:30*). God made a way for Esther to communicate with the king. God always makes a way for us when we involve Him in the crisis we are facing.

As the story unfolds, we see God taking care of His people in truly astounding ways. After King Ahasuerus discovered that Mordecai had actually saved his life some time earlier from two would-be assassins, he decided to promote Mordecai to a position even higher than the one Haman had. And he made Haman proclaim to everyone how great Mordecai was. Haman was now honoring the one whom he had tried to have killed. In fact, Haman's wife had advised Haman to have some gallows built to hang Mordecai on since Mordecai refused to pay homage to him. Towards the end of the story, King Ahasuerus (upon fully realizing the wickedness of Haman's plot to annihilate the Jews) had Haman hanged on the same gallows that Haman had intended to hang Mordecai on. We continue to see God turning the tables on those who sought to do His people harm.

The tables are completely turned by the end of the story. Esther persuaded the king to give

permission to the Jews to defend themselves and even to kill those who sought to kill them. And that is exactly what happened. On the day the Jews were supposed to be annihilated, they actually destroyed those who sought to destroy them. The Bible says it this way: “*On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them*” (Esther 9:1).

The Jews living *outside the capital city of Shushan* celebrated their deliverance the day after they killed so many who sought to kill them. Esther persuaded the king to allow the Jews living *in the capital city* to have two days to fight their tormentors. Then they celebrated on the third day. So, in total, two days were spent celebrating what God had done...one day of celebration took place *outside of the capital city*, and the other day of celebration took place *in the capital city*.

The celebration was known as the Feast of Purim. It was named after the Pur that had been cast to determine when the Jews would be killed. Think about that. An attempt to *destroy* the Jews ended up being a celebration *for* the Jews. They celebrated God’s great deliverance. The Bible describes it this way: “*And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near*

and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor” (Esther 9:20-22).

That’s what God does. He turns our *sorrow* into *joy*, and He turns our *mourning* into a *celebration*. Each year, Jews around the world celebrate the Feast of Purim. They exchange gifts and enjoy great food. The children even dress up in costumes...some are dressed as Mordecai, some as Vashti, some as Esther, some as King Ahasuerus, and some as wicked Haman.² They dress up so you cannot see their faces. Their faces are covered with the faces of the characters in the Book of Esther. This is a reminder to them (and to us) that even though we cannot see God’s face, He is always there. He is always with us...protecting us, providing for us, and making a way where there seems to be no way.³ He always responds when His people call out to Him.

If Jewish people today celebrate the deliverance of their ancestors that took place

thousands of years ago, how much more should Christians celebrate the deliverance that we have experienced through Jesus Christ. In His death, burial, and resurrection, He has made forgiveness and salvation possible. Through our faith in Him, He has forgiven us and saved us forever. He has delivered us from Satan, from sin, from death, and from hell. He has delivered us from our lostness. He has made it possible for us to live forever with Him. God has shown us His favor. God has rescued us in an even greater way than He rescued the Jews in Persia. Our deliverance has eternal consequences. We will live forever...and we will live forever with Him. As Christians, we should celebrate that deliverance every day of our lives.

If you are in a crisis today, I encourage you not to waste any time complaining or criticizing. Instead, devote yourself to prayer. Call out to God. Let your crisis lead to cries for help. God will honor that. He has promised to do so in His Word. In one of my favorite Bible verses, God says this: *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”* (Psalm 50:15). God promises to deliver us when we call out to Him. In response to the prayers of Esther, Mordecai, and the Jews living in Shushan, God delivered His people. In response to your prayers, God will (one way or another) deliver you as well.

2. *Let your cries for help lead to complete confidence in God...regardless of the outcome.*

Esther made a decision to appear before the king even before he invited her into his presence. She prayed first for divine intervention, of course. She asked God to spare her life. But make no mistake about it...Esther was going to ask the king to spare the Jews whether she was invited into his presence or not. Listen to her passionate words: *“And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (Esther 4:16)*. She made a decision to trust God regardless of the results of her actions. And this leads us to a very important point: *We have to put our faith in God, not in a desired outcome.*

A lot of people have “lost their faith” because they never had it in the right place to begin with. Instead of trusting God and moving forward, they placed their faith in whatever it was they wanted God to do for them. Let me try to illustrate how this happens.

Let’s pretend that a man’s wife has cancer or some other life-threatening disease. And so he prays for her to be healed. He asks God to perform a healing miracle in his wife’s body. He prays for the cancer to be cured, and he believes

with all of his heart that God will do it. He is believing with every fiber of his being for a miracle to take place. Time goes by. He keeps praying. He keeps believing. In fact, he is more convinced with each passing day that his wife will be healed. His faith is really strong. And then, his wife dies. And the man wonders: "What happened? I was believing for her to be healed. I was expecting her to be healed. I guess faith doesn't work." Well, in that heartbreaking scenario, while the man was sincere, his faith wasn't really in God. His faith was in what he wanted God to do. His faith was *genuine*, but his faith was *misplaced*.

Or consider another illustration: Let's pretend a teenager's parents are going through a divorce. The child is devastated by the news and calls his Sunday School teacher on the phone. The Sunday School teacher says: "You believe that God can do anything, don't you? You believe that God can save your parents' marriage, don't you?" The student says, "Yes, of course. I know that nothing is too hard for God." The Sunday School teacher says, "Then tell God you are trusting Him to restore your parents' marriage." And so the teenager tells God that, and he really means it. He is trusting God with all of his heart to put his parents back together again. He is believing for God to do that. As the weeks go by, his faith gets stronger

and stronger. And then, a few months later, his parents get divorced. The boy's faith is shattered. What he was believing for didn't happen. "What went wrong?" he wonders.

Well, what went wrong was that the boy's Sunday School teacher, while well intentioned, set the student up for disappointment. While the teacher correctly explained to the young man that God has all power and can obviously do anything, he failed to explain that his parents also have a free will. They can make decisions that God wouldn't want them to make. The teenager can't control that. One of the parents may not even be able to control the situation. And God is not going to take away the other parent's free will.

The Sunday School teacher should have said, "Listen, you and I both know that God can save this marriage, and we're going to ask Him to do so. And we're going to trust Him to do so. But we've got to take our faith up one notch higher than that. We're going to trust God to take care of you whatever happens in this situation."⁴

We all believe that God can heal diseases. We all believe that God can restore relationships. We all believe that God can keep our houses from flooding and that He can help us get the job we want. We believe that. But we

have to raise our faith up one notch higher and say: “God, I know that You *can*, but even if You *don’t*, I choose to trust You.” We have to put our faith in *God*, not in a *desired outcome*.

There are a lot of reasons why we don’t always get the desired outcomes we pray for. First, we live in a fallen, sinful world where bad things happen to the saved and the unsaved. Second, God gives people a free will. Third, there are mysteries in life that we’ll never understand on this side of heaven. And fourth, in some cases, what we want may not be what God wants. What we need to do is to put our faith in God regardless of how the situation works out.

We need the faith that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had in Old Testament times. When King Nebuchadnezzar threatened to throw these three Hebrew boys into the fiery furnace if they didn’t bow down to the gold image he had set up, they responded with a faith that demonstrated their confidence that God *could* deliver them, yet a faith that *didn’t demand* Him to do so. They said it like this: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. **But if not**, let it be

known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:16-18, emphasis added).

We need a faith like that. We need a “*but if not*” kind of faith. We need a faith that says: “I know that God *can*...but if (for whatever reason) He *doesn't*, I'm still going to trust Him.”

Jesus said, “*Have faith in God*” (Mark 11:22). Notice He didn't say, “Have faith in what you want God to do for you.” No. Not at all. He simply said, “Have faith in God.”

Is your faith in *God* or in *a desired outcome*? We all have situations and circumstances in life where we want God to do things for us. We *need* God to do things for us. We need God to heal a disease. We need God to restore a relationship. We need God to perform a miracle. In these situations, often times He does, but sometimes He doesn't. If our faith is in *a desired outcome*, we are on shaky ground. But if our faith is in *God Himself*, we will still be standing regardless of what happens.

In your crisis, the best advice I can give you is to trust in God. Believe with all of your heart that God can do anything. And even believe (as long as you think that it's God's will) that He

will do what you are asking Him to do. But take your faith up one notch higher. Trust in God regardless of which way the situation goes. Develop a “*but if not*” kind of faith, and you’ll be building your faith on *God Himself* instead of on *a desired outcome*.

3. *When the outcome of a crisis is not what you had prayed for, remember that you have an opportunity to glorify God in that disappointment.*

In the case of Esther, Mordecai, and the Jews of their day, the outcome of their crisis turned out exactly like they had prayed it would. In fact, it turned out even better than they had prayed it would. Sometimes that is our experience, too. Sometimes, though, it isn’t. So what do we do when we don’t get the outcome we had prayed for, longed for, and even believed for?

Well, as I have already said, we *trust God* in those situations. But there’s something else we should do. We should look for ways to *glorify God* in the midst of our disappointment and heartache. We should look for ways to worship and honor Him.

There’s an interesting event that happened in the life of Simon Peter, one of Jesus’ closest

disciples. He, of course, had denied knowing Jesus on the night before Jesus was crucified. After that sin, Peter thought his days as a preacher were over. He eventually ended up back in Galilee and started doing what he had done before he met Christ. He went back to fishing. After the resurrection, Jesus sought Peter out one morning on the beautiful shore of the Sea of Galilee. He restored him to the ministry. He commissioned him to a life of service. And then, He told Peter how his life would one day end. Listen to the words of Jesus: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish”* (John 21:18).

Jesus explained to Peter that one day he would be taken somewhere he didn't want to go. In other words, he wouldn't experience the outcome he desired. Jesus, of course, was explaining the type of death that Peter would one day face. The next verse makes that clear: *“This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God”* (John 21:19).

Church history tells us that Peter was crucified in Rome, upside down, for his faithful witness of Jesus Christ.⁵ That wasn't what Peter

was hoping for, but that's what happened to him. But notice what the Bible says of the experience that Peter would one day have: "*by what death he would glorify God*" (John 21:19). We don't think of glorifying God in our *death*. We think of glorifying God in our *life*. But we should glorify God in *both*.

Back in Persia, we can easily understand why the Jews implemented the Feast of Purim after God's amazing deliverance. God had spared their lives. They lived on. That was reason to celebrate. That was an occasion to glorify God.

Peter, though, was headed for a different type of experience. His life wouldn't be spared. There would be no last-minute rescue. He would die an agonizing death in Rome... something he didn't want to endure. And yet, even there, he would have an opportunity to glorify God.

That says to me that we can glorify God whether the outcome of our crisis is what we would have wanted or not. The outcome of our crisis, if you really think about it, is totally in God's hands. So we have a choice to make: *Will we glorify God by trusting Him and moving forward by faith, or not?*

Esther and Peter had different outcomes to their crises, but they have this in common: *They are both in heaven now*. God spared Esther's life in Persia, but she eventually died. Peter's life wasn't spared in Rome, but even if it had been, he would have eventually died, too. So whichever way the crisis goes, it ultimately ends in heaven. And when we get there and look back on our earthly crises from our new heavenly perspective, we want to be able to say that we trusted God and glorified Him as best as we could while we faced difficult circumstances on earth.

Esther and Peter had *different outcomes* to their trials, but they had *the same faith*. When it came time for Peter to die, he didn't run. He didn't hide. And he didn't deny Christ again. Sources tell us that when they were about to crucify Peter that he said: "No, no! My Lord died like that. I am not worthy to die as He did. Hang me on that cross head downward."⁶ Wow! That's faith under fire. He died *trusting* and *glorifying* God. And while Esther lived, remember what she said: "*If I perish, I perish*" (*Esther 4:16*). She lived, but she was ready to die. Her faith didn't depend on a desired outcome.

Whichever way your crisis goes, I encourage you to have the faith of Esther and Peter. I

encourage you to have a faith that says: “If I’m healed, I’ll glorify God; if I’m not healed, I’ll still glorify Him. If the relationship is restored, I’ll praise the Lord for that; if the relationship isn’t restored, I’ll still praise Him. If I get the job, I’ll give thanks; if I don’t get the job, I’ll still give thanks. If the problem is solved, I’ll praise the Lord; if the problem remains, I’ll still praise Him.”

Develop a faith that says: “I know God *can*, but He doesn’t *have to* in order for me to trust Him, love Him, and serve Him.” Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and cultivate a “*but if not*” kind of faith.

Let your crisis lead to cries for help. Let your cries for help lead to complete confidence in God...regardless of the outcome. And if the outcome of your crisis is not what you had prayed for, remember that you have an opportunity to glorify God in that disappointment.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of our time together, let me ask you a question: *Do you have peace with God? Do you know if your heart stopped beating right now that you would be immediately*

in heaven? If not, you are in the crisis of all crises. And you need to let your crisis lead you to make a cry for help.

The Bible says, “*For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13). This is one prayer that always gets answered with a resounding, “Yes!” Anytime a person calls out to God by confessing their sins, turning away from their sins, asking God to save them, and trusting Him to do so, God answers that prayer. Notice the Bible says, “*whoever.*” And that word “*whoever*” includes *you*.

If you would like to know for sure that Jesus is living in your heart, pray this prayer now...from your heart to His heart:

Dear Jesus,

I'm in a crisis...a spiritual crisis. I need to be forgiven of my sins. I need to be saved. I need You in my life.

I believe You died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I believe You rose from the dead three days later thus conquering death, hell, and the grave. And I believe You are listening to my prayer right now.

*I ask You now to come into my heart,
forgive my sins, and make me a Christian.
I ask You to save me, and I trust You to
do it.*

*Welcome to my heart, Jesus. Begin now
to make me the person You created me to
be.*

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer, God just answered it. Congratulations! And welcome to God's family. I encourage you to share your decision with a friend and then to make it public in a good Bible-believing church soon.

As you continue on in your journey of faith, just keep trusting the Lord. Whatever happens (or whatever doesn't happen), trust Him, and He will take care of you. And at the end of the journey, you will experience complete and permanent deliverance. Esther did. Peter did. And so will you. That's God's promise.

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2005, p. 1440.

² "Purim: Customs and Rituals," *Purim*, <https://www.reformjudaism.org/purim-customs-and-rituals> (accessed March 23, 2022).

³ Sybil Kaplan, “Why Do We Wear Costumes on Purim?” *Perspectives*, March 21, 2019, <https://thecjn.ca/perspectives/why-do-we-wear-costumes-on-purim/> (accessed May 16, 2022).

⁴ This illustration is adapted from an illustration Andy Stanley gave in one of his books. I cannot remember where I read this, but I give Andy credit for the illustration.

⁵ John Oakes, “What Is the Evidence That Peter Was Crucified Upside Down in Rome?” *Church History-General*, March 20, 2010, <https://evidenceforchristianity.org/what-is-the-evidence-that-peter-was-crucified-upside-down-in-rome/> (accessed March 24, 2022).

⁶ H.A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Gospel of John*, Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Neptune, NJ, 1984, p. 890.

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