

Will I be saved? How do I get to Heaven?

Objective:

Perhaps the most important question every person needs to be able to answer is this: What do I need to do in order to inherit eternal life? How do I get to Heaven? Many people oversimplify their answer to this question and believe it is enough to simply be a good person, to avoid breaking the commandments, and to go to church. Although all these things are extremely important in the journey towards heaven, not enough attention is paid to the importance of following Jesus. In fact, Jesus is rarely mentioned. However, Jesus is THE way to heaven and being in a relationship with him is key to inheriting the Kingdom of God.

Father Mike Schmitz proposes that there are 4 things necessary to get to heaven:

1. Baptism (John 3), 2. The Eucharist (John 6), 3. Faith (Romans 10:9), 4. Doing the Father's will (Matthew 25:31-46)

In other words, we can't do this on our own. We need to receive God's grace(s) and then it is up to us to choose Him by responding to those opportunities of grace.

Suggested Song : Amazing Grace

Bible & Catechism Readings:

Mark 10: 17-22

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.'" He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

John 14:1-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where [I] am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Luke 13:23-24

Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough."

Matthew 7:13-14

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few."

Ephesians 2:4-8

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

James 2:14-8, 26

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone may say, "You have faith and I have works."

Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Catechism 851

... Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. ...

Catechism 1821

We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved."

Saint: Saint Michael the Archangel - Saint Michael the Archangel isn't a saint, but rather he is an angel, and the leader of all angels and of the army of God. This is what the title "Archangel" means, that he is above all the others in rank. St. Michael has four main responsibilities or offices, as we know from scripture and Christian tradition. 1) To combat Satan. 2) To escort the faithful to heaven at their hour of death. 3) To be a champion of all Christians, and the Church itself. 4) To call men from life on Earth to their heavenly judgment.

Vignette: One day, John and Thomas were having a conversation about Heaven and Hell. John said, "Won't it be great when we get to Heaven!"

Thomas wasn't so sure. He said, "I don't know if I am going to make it to Heaven. Actually, I am kind of afraid. I just don't think I am good enough to deserve that. I mean, I am basically a good person. I haven't killed anybody. But, I don't think my faith is strong enough, nor have I done enough to earn a spot in Heaven, and I don't know if I ever will do enough."

John thought about that, and replied, "Well, you are right about a couple of things. You aren't good enough, nor will you ever do enough to deserve Heaven. But the thing is, almost no one is good enough or will do enough. It is only by the grace of God that anyone gets to Heaven. God is so loving and merciful, and you are His beloved son. He loves you more than you can imagine, and He wants you to be in Heaven more than you do. You are belong in Heaven, that is your home. He is going to do whatever He can so that ultimately you choose Him, over Hell."

Thomas still wasn't convinced, saying, "The bible says somewhere that Jesus said that the 'road is wide that leads to hell, and there are many on it', or something like that. He didn't say 'few', he said 'many'. How am I any better than the 'many'? "

John pondered this, and said, "That is true. But the bible also says, 'strive to enter the narrow gate'. He didn't say you had to be perfect, He said you had to 'strive'. God grants you so many graces during your life. You have been baptized, you go to Mass and receive Holy Communion every week, and Jesus is walking with

you every day. He is just showering you with graces. I think the key is how you respond to those graces. So, each day, recognize that you are meant to be in Heaven, and just decide to 'strive' to respond to those graces."

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

When did you make the decision that heaven is your ultimate goal? What brought you to that point of decision?

Heaven is our goal, but we need to be intentional about aiming for this. We don't just fall into heaven. How do you intentionally direct your life towards heaven?

Jesus looks at you with love and then asks for whatever keeps you away from him, whatever may keep you out of heaven. What does he ask of you? Are you able to give it to him?

What does "strive" mean to you? Does it mean simply working harder to "earn" heaven? Or, does it mean doing whatever you can to follow Jesus? What are you doing to "strive to enter the narrow gate"?

References:

1. Do all good people go to heaven? Father Mike Schmitz (a must watch!)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT4JAxfhgcQ>
2. On Formed.org – "Metanoia" series, Session 2 "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"
3. Dare we hope?
<https://www.wordonfire.org/hope/>
4. How to Get to Heaven
<https://www.catholic.com/qa/how-to-get-to-heaven>
5. Aren't we saved by faith alone
<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/arent-we-saved-by-faith-alone>
6. Is Judas in Hell? Father Mike Schmitz
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVWRva38J-E>

Action Plan:

1. Our decision to follow Jesus is a constant choice, one that we make time and time again. Take a few minutes this week to consider what God has done for you and how he has loved you, been patient, kind and merciful.
2. Decide what you can do this week to follow him.

Author: Steve Frazer