

Why You Will See Nonbelievers Saved When You Grasp These 3 Things

Belief determines behavior.

When I was born again, I glorified God in seeing nine of my closest family and friends born again as well. When my wife and her parents were converted, the six siblings at home all followed suit, and my close friend, Ché Ahn, also saw his entire family come to faith in Christ.

Coincidence? Or could it be cooperation with the plan of God that some don't believe in or have never understood?

For over 50 years I've equipped God's people not to "limit the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 78:41 KJV) but be missional, persevering and trusting for His divine initiative and intervention in reaching lost family and friends.

Scripture teaches that God draws people to Himself through the creation and our conscience (-6, Rom. 2:14-16) and through the truth of the gospel.

There are some important questions to ask yourself to cooperate with God and see people you genuinely care about converted. The miracle of salvation is a beautiful blend of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man with the accent on God from start to finish!

What Do You Believe?

What exactly do you believe about how people get saved? Does God want everyone to be saved? Does God predestine some people to hell? Do we have a free will?

What you believe about how people are converted to Christ is

not an insignificant topic. It is not just a theological issue best left to the scholars and intellectuals. This is a matter of eternal importance that affects our entire understanding of God's character.

Passivity in evangelism and intercession for those outside of Christ are usually byproducts of people who deep down inside don't really believe God longs to redeem all humanity. Pastors who are so inclined usually don't lead the people in much outreach, share personal illustrations of their evangelistic engagement and often delegate Great Commission work to an evangelism team, usually of energetic young people in "campus ministry."

Asking questions today on doctrines often brings up embarrassing responses:

- "Are you a Calvinist?" A jeans designer? A character in Hobbs' comic strip?
- "Are you Reformed?" A former criminal?
- "Are you Armenian?" Someone from a former Soviet republic?

I believe the time has come for a "theology for dummies," examining a balanced approach to understanding the way people are saved.

Embracing the ABCs

To see those you love and care about saved, here are the scriptural ABCs:

A. Acknowledge: "God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3b-4).

B. Believe: "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23b).

C. Cooperate: “So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you in Christ’s stead: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Calvinist View of Salvation

From the 1500s come John Calvin’s core beliefs on salvation, summarized by the acrostic . There are hyper-Calvinists (beware), but historic Calvinism looks basically like this:

T – Total Depravity (man has no free will and cannot repent unless God brings it about).

U – Unconditional Election (God, by a sovereign decree, has determined before the foundation of the world, who shall be saved and who will be damned).

L – Limited Atonement (Jesus’ sacrificial, substitutionary death was for the predestined elect).

I – Irresistible Grace (God’s grace overcomes man’s refusal and brings him to faith in Christ).

P – Perseverance of the Saints (the elect don’t lose their salvation).

According to Calvin: “God has once for all appointed, by an eternal and unchangeable decree, to whom He would give salvation, and whom He would devote to destruction” (Calvin’s Institutes 3.7).

Another Alternative

According to John Wesley (1700s) there was another way, and he rejected Calvinism, stating:

“Call it therefore by whatever name you please, Election, Predestination, or Reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly

saved and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved.”

Throughout church history, there have been many iconic Christian leaders who have embraced the doctrines put forth by Calvin. Augustine, Luther, Jonathan Edwards, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd Jones, J. I. Packer, R.C. Sproul and John Piper are some, and they are to be honored.

Other titans of the faith took an alternative view, usually very passionate in their pursuit of evangelism like Jerome, John and Charles Wesley, Finney, Tozer, C.S. Lewis, D.L. Moody, General Booth, Billy Graham, John Wimber, Pat Robertson and David Wilkerson. Their alternative would be something like the following, which many “reformers” embrace in part.

T – Tremendous value of men and women. Although we are all “dead in our sins,” we are made in the image of God in need of His mercy.

U – Unfathomable love of God toward sinners. “God demonstrated His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

L – Limitless opportunity offered to all who are lost. “Whosoever is thirsty, let him come; and whosoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev. 22:17).

I – Irrefutable goodness of our Savior. “He is patient with us, because He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

P – Promise of security in Christ to His faithful. “We are cautioned to “continue in the faith” (