

How You Can Connect With God

(How to become a Christian)



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How You Can Connect With God (How to become a Christian)

You have just picked up a booklet that really can change your life and your forever after. For some, coming to an understanding of how you can connect to God happens quickly, for others it's a slower journey. Either way, we are so pleased that you are open to asking the BIG questions and we want to resource you and support you in the process. Our prayer as you read through these notes, is that by reconnecting with God, you will come to Belong in the greatest family ever and find the Great Purposes for which you were made.

Please ask God to speak to you as you read and don't hesitate to ask us any questions you have. No question is a dumb question! Your desire to ask and to know is evidence that God is already working in your heart.

Let us give you an overview of God's story and how Jesus is the key to it all. You will see that God wants YOU to be a part of it too.

God is a loving Being, no one is like God. God loved you from before you were born and wants a relationship with you and to partner with you for a supernatural, impacting, purposeful life.

When He first made humanity everything was perfect. God and people communicated easily and those first people potentially could have lived forever on what was then a perfect world. But God is not a dictator, or one who ever removes freedom of choice. In fact love demands a choice. And so He gave to those first people, and to you and me, the freedom to do what is right in His eyes or to live life our own selfish way. God inspired people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds over huge periods of time to write the Bible. All the parts of the Bible convey the same message. The first half of the Bible points to who Jesus is (i.e. both God and Man, the bridge to reconnect with God). The first half (The Old Testament) also explains that God is God and we are not. He is Holy (perfectly Pure) and has never done or thought to do anything wrong.

The Bible refers to God as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit existing in perfect community. God is the Father lovingly watching over us. God is the Son walking alongside us. God is the Holy Spirit living in us.

The Bible is the greatest selling book of all time, because the truths in it work. Most of the prophecies have been fulfilled. Archaeologists and sources outside of Christianity constantly validate what is written in it.

The second half of the Bible is called The New Testament and it summarises why we have become disconnected from God:

Romans 3:23

²³ All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

Take a moment and think about what that means.....

You and I might think we are good people, but are we really? Have you ever told a lie, stolen something, slept with someone you are not married to (or run that scenario through your head). Have you ever put things or yourself ahead of knowing God? Have you ever hated someone? Have you ever been rude to your parents? Have you ever believed an alternative to faith that doesn't line up with the Bible? Have you ever used the name of Jesus or God as a swear word?

When we do things like this we become 'contaminated' or 'toxic.' We become disconnected and therefore unable to connect with God (even though in our hearts we want to; we feel the emptiness). Have you ever been in an area where you lost cell phone reception and there was no wi-fi (you feel lost and isolated from the outside world, your natural connection is severed)? These toxins, or 'sin' as the Bible calls it, have the same effect on our relationship with God.

Romans 6:23

²³ Sin pays off with death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Just pause and think about that for a moment what do you think it means?

How can a contaminated person connect with God no matter how hard they try?

How can a polluted person one day inhabit an unpolluted heaven in God's pure and Holy presence?

God is our creator, God is loving, but God is also the ultimate judge and 'sin' has to be punished and dealt with.

You cannot earn forgiveness, but it can be a gift you receive if you want to trust in Jesus and what He has done for you!

John 3:16

¹⁶ God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

Pause and think about what this verse from the Bible means

Every religion of the world will tell you that you have to DO things, work hard at things to reconnect with God. Only Christianity says that there is nothing you can do to earn a reconnection. It's only by trusting in what JESUS has DONE. It's about receiving a gift – by faith. Jesus came and lived a perfect, pure, holy life and died to take the punishment for your sins, so that you don't have to. By trusting in Him you can reconnect by faith.

John 3:36

³⁶ Everyone who has faith in the Son has eternal life. But no one who rejects him will ever share in that life, and God will be angry with them forever.

Pause, ask God what this verse means

The biggest issue to resolve in any faith journey is: who is Jesus?

He claimed to be God, the Bible says that He is God and history records that He did God things, like forgive sins and control the elements.

Eventually He was nailed to a cross and killed by the authorities for claiming to be God. But that wasn't the end. Three days later He rose again and thousands saw Him over a period of 40 days (people who

would later transform the world).

Jesus' birth split history into BC and AD, but His rising from the grave has changed millions of people and the world. Wherever Christianity has spread the lot of women has improved dramatically; schools, hospitals, orphanages, etc have been started and miracles have followed.

It all comes down to who you believe Jesus is.

He never claimed to be a prophet,
or a good person,
or a moral teacher.

He claimed to be from God. He said, "I and the Father are One." He said that He could do God stuff like forgive sins, heal the sick and raise the dead. And for saying those things He was crucified cruelly on a cross.

Was He crazy? Was He self deceived? Or was He telling the truth?

If you are not sure, that's OK. This is the BIG question that only you can work out in your time. The links below may help you.

1. The video on our home page <http://www.whangareicbc.org/>

"How to connect to God" will give you a practical overview of what the Bible says in 20 minutes.

Our videos page has many more faith building clips.

<http://www.whangareicbc.org/videos/>



2. Go to <https://alpha.org/watch/>

(or the WCBC home page)

View Alpha live talks:

Session 1 "Who is Jesus"

Session 2 "Why did Jesus die?"



3. Go to <https://alltogether.co.nz/> and take the 10 Day Challenge

4. Karl Frazer: Olive Tree Media

<https://www.olivetreemedia.com.au/>

Towards Belief

Jesus the Game Changer



5. Long Story Short <http://www.longstoryshort.co>

Long Story short is a video series designed to unfold the story of the Bible.

6. Nua <https://nuafilmseries.org/>

NUA is all about exploration: it's a film series that encourages questions, acknowledges doubt, and offers an engaging perspective on the Christian faith.

7. Bible Project www.thebibleproject.com

The Bible Project creates videos that show the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. The Bible is literary genius and has divine wisdom for the modern world.

8. Questions of Life ... www.questionsoflife.com Long and short answers to commonly asked questions, and a place to ask your own questions.



If you have read this and you do believe that Jesus is The Way, The Truth and The Life, the way to reconnect with God, what then?

The Bible records a huge crowd of people who came to this same question in the book of Acts and chapter 2. We believe in who Jesus is, what now?

Acts 2:37-39

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were very upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Friends, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter said, "Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live."

If you want to regain your connection with God and you have come to a place of Believing in Jesus, please grab a Bible and look at what it means to become a Christian.

- Believe – if you've come to understand that Jesus died for you and is

Our relationship with Christ

What is repentance?

There is a word that you probably haven't heard before, and it's the word "Repentance." Now it's probably not a word you'd just throw into your everyday conversation with your mates at school or work. But it's an important word that helps us understand how people turn back to God.

Pastor Mark Driscoll has this to say about what repentance is.

"Repentance starts in the mind. It's a change of mind. All of a sudden, Jesus is the centre of your life. You're not the centre of your life. You want to do what pleases God, not what satisfies selfish desires. Repentance is literally turning. It's turning from your face towards sin and your back towards Jesus, to your face towards Jesus and your back towards sin. And it's an ongoing lifestyle. It's a continual growing in grace and Christ-likeness. It's something that continues until Jesus' final kingdom."

Basically, repentance is a change of heart, mind and lifestyle. It literally means 'to have another mind'. When we repent, we make a 180° turn in the direction of our life. Previously we were walking against God and His laws and principles, and through repentance we are now walking with Him. To repent is to turn from sin, and to turn to God.

Acts 3:19 says "So turn to God! Give up your sins, and you will be forgiven."

Find it in the Bible - repent and believe

The first word of the Gospel (Good News) is 'repent', and the second is 'believe'.

What was the first thing John the Baptist preached? (**Matthew 3:2**)

"_____ for the kingdom of heaven will soon be here."

Jesus preached (**Matthew 4:17**)

“_____ for the kingdom of heaven will soon be here.”

Jesus’ followers, the disciples, preached (**Mark 6:12**)

The Apostles left and started telling everyone to _____

Paul’s message was (**Acts 20:21**)

“I told Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) _____ and have faith in our Lord Jesus”.

What does God command all people everywhere to do? (**Acts 17:30**)

What is true repentance?

True repentance is that wholehearted turning from sin and turning to God. There are some other things that, on the surface look like repentance, but are not. Make sure you are not mistaking repentance for any of these:

Repentance is not conviction of sin (our conscience pricking us).

Conviction comes before repentance; but not all who are convicted, repent.

Read Acts 24: 24-25.

Repentance is not just being ‘sorry’. Tears may or may not accompany repentance, but repentance is always a turning away from sin, to God. Often, sorrow is sorrow for being caught out and for the penalty of being caught. Repentance is not sorrow

because you got caught and now you have to face the consequences, but rather for being involved in the first place and not wanting to do it again.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Repentance is not just turning over a new leaf; is not just turning away from sin. Perhaps the most important part is where you turn to God.

A Parable

Read Luke 15: 11 – 24

Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, “Give me my share of the property.” So, the father divided his property between his two sons. Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no-one gave him a thing. Finally, he came to his senses and said, “My father’s workers have plenty to eat, and here I am starving to death! I will go to my father and say to him “Father, I’ve sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.”

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way away, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him. The son said, “Father, I’ve sinned against God in heaven and against you. I’m no longer good enough to be called your son.” But his father said to the servants, “Hurry and bring

the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it so we can eat and celebrate”.

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing, so he called one of his servants over and asked what was going on. The servant answered, “Your brother has come home safe and sound and your father ordered us to kill the best calf.” The older brother got so angry that he wouldn’t even go into the house. His father came out and begged him to go in, but he said to his father, “For years I’ve worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you’ve never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast”.

His father replied, “My son, you’re always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but now he’s alive. He was lost and has now been found”.

The mission of God

Repentance is about changing your thinking and actions. If it’s just a head thing; just knowledge that doesn’t change your actions, then the Bible calls that kind of faith “dead faith.” Check out James 2: 15-20.

Four steps to repentance

1. Decision

We read in the gospel of Luke that the prodigal son “came to himself” or “to his senses”. For most of us, this is the time in our lives we recognise that we need God. Our decision is the beginning of a lifelong walk, or journey, with God. We don’t just pray a prayer, but we turn from our sin and begin to seek God with all our mind, heart, soul and actions. We head for home just like the prodigal son.

Mark 12:30 – *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*

2. Confession

Having made a decision, we need to confess our sins to God. You might feel that God knows our sins already, and that is true, but God says we have to ask for His forgiveness.

Hebrews 4:13 – *“Nothing is hidden from God! He sees through everything, and we will have to tell him the truth.”*

In **1 John 1:9** we read *“But if we confess our sins to God, He can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away”*. Here we see the need to confess, to receive forgiveness and become clean from all unrighteousness (unrighteousness means the things that we do that are offensive to God).

In **Romans 10:10** it says, *“God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others.”*

In Luke, we saw the prodigal son first confess in his heart, and then he went to his father and confessed with his mouth. We also need to come in humility and confess to our Father in heaven, so that, we too, might be forgiven and come into His blessing.

3. Renunciation (to renounce, or turn our back on sin)

2 Corinthians 4:2 - *“We don’t do shameful things that must be kept secret. And we don’t try to fool anyone or twist God’s message around. God is our witness, that we speak only the truth, so others will be sure that we can be trusted.”*

Write down the things you know God wants you to renounce (turn your back on).

In Ecclesiastes, sin is called ‘insanity’ and that is a very true description of what sin is. God is against sin because, like a cancer, if left in us to develop, it will totally destroy us. When we turn our back on sin we are closing the door on it; never to walk through that door and down that road again. If you have had involvement in the occult, witchcraft, fortune-telling, Ouija boards, séances, ESP, divining, illicit sex, rebellion towards parents, magic charms or amulets, yoga or martial arts teaching, you need to confess these things and ask God to come by His Holy Spirit and deliver you and forgive you.

4. Acceptance

John 8:31 *Jesus told the people who had faith in him, “If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”.*

John 15:3 *“You are already clean because of what I have said to you.”*

Acts 2: 38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

What an awesome promise! That God would give us His Holy Spirit to help us love Him more and follow Jesus every day.

Why is baptism so important?

The Lord Jesus Christ left only two commands for all Christians to keep – Communion and Baptism. Please read this section carefully and look up the scriptures. If you would like to honour God in baptism, let Pastor Russell know, or one of the elders, or your home group leader if you have one.

Who should be baptised?

Acts 2:41 *Those who accepted His message were baptised.*

Acts 16:14/15 *A woman... (the) Lord opened her heart ... she was baptised*

Question: What are the two important requirements Jesus expects of people before they are baptised?

Acts 20:21 _____

Acts 2:38 _____

Because baptism is part of the salvation process, children who believe should be baptised when they are old enough to confess their faith.

When should a person be baptised?

Acts 8:36 *“Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptised?”*

Acts 16:33 *“Then immediately he ... (was) baptised”*

Question: Do you think there should be much of a delay after receiving Christ as Saviour and Lord, before obeying Him in water baptism?

Acts 16:31-33 _____

Baptism should be our first act of faith. In the New Testament Church there was no such thing as an un-baptised (by immersion) believer. The word ‘to baptise’ comes from the core word “baptiso’ which means to plunge, dunk, or immerse.

How should a person be baptised?

Acts 8: 38 *“Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water.”*

Matthew 3:16 *“As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water.”*

Question: Would infant sprinkling (baptism) be a valid form of baptism, and if not, what would be the reason?

Luke 2:22-23 _____

Luke 3: 21-22 _____

Christening is not biblical baptism, however prayers given at this time are very effective.

Baptism – A death

One of the most powerful facts about water baptism is that it establishes a definite point, at which we “close the door” on the old way of life we led, before we became a Christian.

What are you closing the door on?

Baptism – A resurrection

Coming out of the water symbolises a heart commitment to lead a new life in Christ, of righteousness and victory, made possible only by the presence and through the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

What are you looking forward to in your life with God?

What happens at your Baptism?

When you are baptised you will be asked simple questions like:

Have you chosen to leave your old way of life, where you did what you wanted?

Do you want Jesus to be your leader for the rest of your life?

You will answer 'yes' and maybe give a short testimony.

If you have a favourite song which you would like us to sing, please let us know.

The Holy Spirit and the Christian

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). He is not some vague, impersonal force. He is equal in every way with the Father and with the Son. All of the divine attributes ascribed to the Father and the Son, are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Bible uses different concepts to describe the Holy Spirit.

Read the following texts and write out the concepts given.

1 Corinthians 3:16 _____

Romans 8: 9 _____

Ephesians 1: 13 _____

John 14: 16-17 - "Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true. The people of this world cannot accept the Spirit, because they don't see or know him. But you know the Spirit, who is with you and will keep on living in you."

What is the main reason the Holy Spirit came?

Read the following concepts and find out the role of the Holy Spirit:

John 16: 7-11 _____

John 16: 12-15 _____

John 14: 26 _____

Acts 1: 18 _____

Romans 8:26 _____

The baptism of the Holy Spirit

Baptise is a Greek word meaning to immerse (in this instance to immerse in the Holy Spirit). When a person comes to put their faith in Christ, God promises to give His Holy Spirit to him/her. The term 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' is used in scripture to describe the first experience a new believer has of being immersed, or filled, with the Holy Spirit.

Find it in the Bible – Baptism of the Holy Spirit

John 1: 29-34 *"The next day, John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I told you about, when I said "someone else will come. He is greater than I am, because He was alive before I was born". I didn't know who He was. But I came to baptise you with water, so that everyone in Israel would see Him. I was there and saw the Spirit come down on Him like a dove from heaven. And the Spirit stayed on Him. Before this I didn't know who He was. But the one who sent me to baptise you with water had told me, "You will see the Spirit come down and stay on someone. Then you will know that He is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit". I saw this happen, and I tell you that He is the Son of God".*

Who is the one who baptises a person with the Spirit? _____

Acts 2: 38-39: *Peter said, "Turn back to God! Be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live".*

Who did Peter say the promise of the Holy Spirit was for? _____

Does this include you? _____

What are the two conditions Peter said were necessary, in order for

someone to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

1. _____

2. _____

(Note that 'baptism' here, refers to water baptism and was the normal response made in faith by those who believed.)

In the New Testament we see that God offers the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who meet these two conditions.

Acts 8: 14-17 *“The apostles in Jerusalem heard that some people in Samaria had accepted God’s message, and they sent Peter and John. When the two apostles arrived, they prayed that the people would be given the Holy Spirit. Before this, the Holy Spirit had not been given to anyone in Samaria, though some of them had been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

How did Peter and John pray for these Christians? _____

In the early church, the apostles would check to see if the new believers were baptised in the Spirit. Has this happened to you? The Bible makes it clear that we will know if we have been baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Read the following verses and list the ways we can know:

John 7: 37-39 _____

Acts 10: 44-46 _____

Galatians 5:22 – 23 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

Acts 4: 31 _____

What good gift will God the Father give to all His children who ask Him for it?

Luke 11:13 _____

The fullness of the Spirit

Make a list of the 9 primary Spiritual gifts found in **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

If you have never demonstrated a spiritual gift, you can eagerly ask God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then ask your care group, or the prayer team after the service, to lay hands on you, so you can receive the Holy Spirit in power and become a normal Christian.

Ephesians 5: 18 *“Don’t destroy yourself by getting drunk, but let the Spirit fill your life”.*

What are we commanded to do? _____

We need to consider what the term ‘being filled with the Spirit’ means.

In the Greek version, it is written in the ‘present continuous’ tense – i.e. it is meant to be a continuous, ongoing experience.

Ephesians 5:18 uses the illustration of drunkenness. A drunkard is controlled by alcohol, and a Christian, who is filled with the Spirit, is one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit. A drunkard has to top-up his/her intake of alcohol and likewise, a Christian has to continually be filled with the Holy Spirit.

There is one baptism of the Spirit but many fillings.

A self-directed life has self in the driver’s seat with the Spirit in the passenger seat.

A Spirit-directed life has the Spirit in the driver’s seat, and self in the passenger seat.

Think carefully about your life. Are you living a Spirit-filled life? Remember that the Spirit-filled life can only be lived when the Holy Spirit is in control. It is foolish to think we can do it by our own efforts. There will be many times in your Christian life, when you become aware that you are not living a Spirit-filled life. How can you renew that experience?

As you ask God to fill you, and as people pray for you

Most commonly, you will feel a word or two forming in your mouth (a new prayer language). Make the decision to speak it out by faith and then see what follows.

Jesus said (*Mark 16:16*) that all Christians would be able to pray in a new prayer language (praying is God's will for you and your family. God will be helping you pray with His wisdom and insight). This gift opens the door to trusting God to use other gifts as well. Your prayer language can be used any time (usually in a private prayer), and praying in your prayer language will tune you into His presence. This gift is not to be used in a corporate setting. There is another gift of tongues that is used 'in church' and will always be interpreted (*1 Corinthians 14*).

If you are ready to Connect with God and join His family, take time to ask God to forgive you of every sin that He brings to mind, say sorry and ask for His help to turn in the opposite direction. Keep asking Him to forgive you until no other sins come to mind. Ask someone in the church to baptise you immediately (any day and any time). Then ask them to pray that you will receive the Holy Spirit. Do it now. The sooner you learn to obey God the more normal hearing from God and obeying Him will become a part of your lifestyle.

After you are Baptized, please pick up a copy of "Foundations for New Christians" from the resources table.

Being drunk

Being sexually unfaithful

Feeling incomplete and frustrated

Being selfish

Having wild and wasteful parties

Making Trouble

Worshipping gods

Not being pure

**Evidence of the
Flesh Controlled Person**

Hating

Being Angry

Being jealous

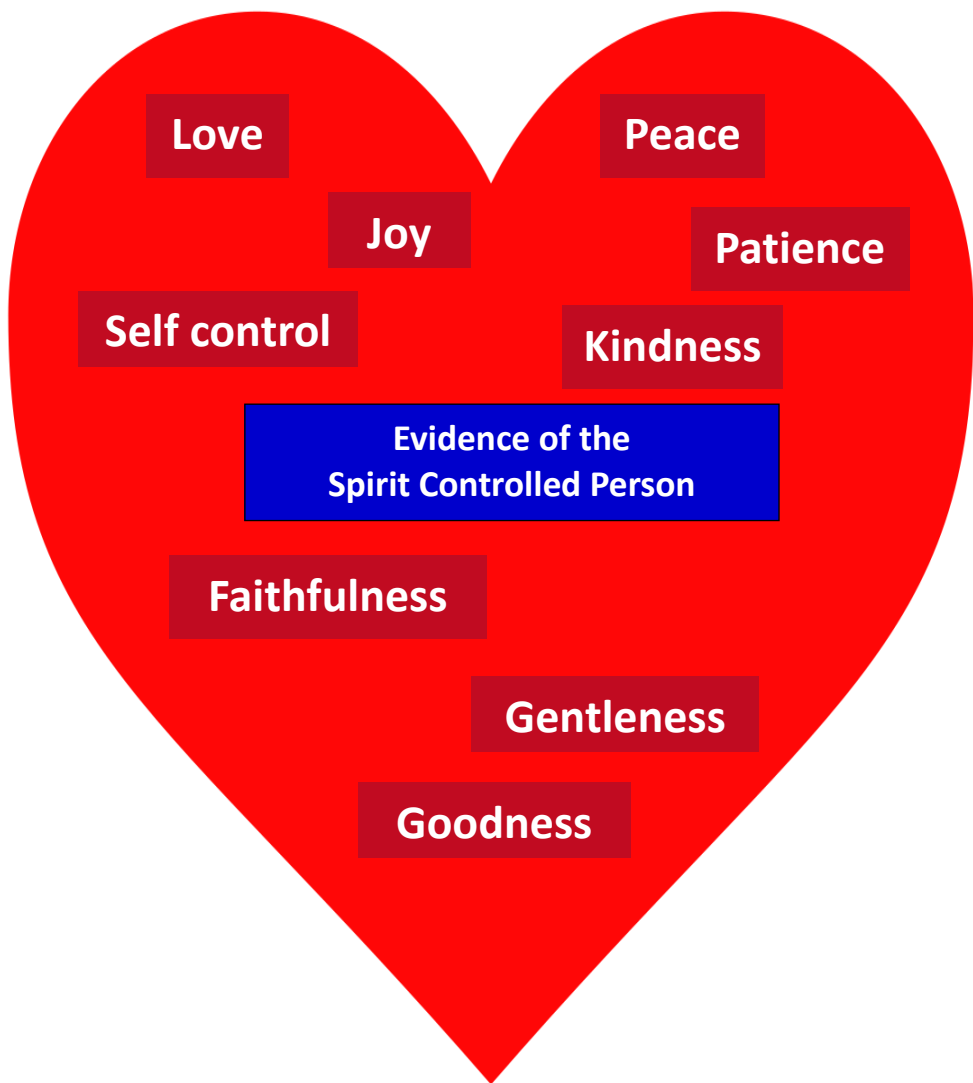
Taking part in sexual sins

Practising witchcraft

Causing divisions among people

Making people angry with each other

...and doing other things like these...



Love

Peace

Joy

Patience

Self control

Kindness

**Evidence of the
Spirit Controlled Person**

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Goodness

**Some links to get you started:
(more info pages 6 -7)**



all together_{nz}

How to Connect
with God - a
video by Pastor
Russell Watts



n u d
A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON FAITH

Ask *a Question*

