

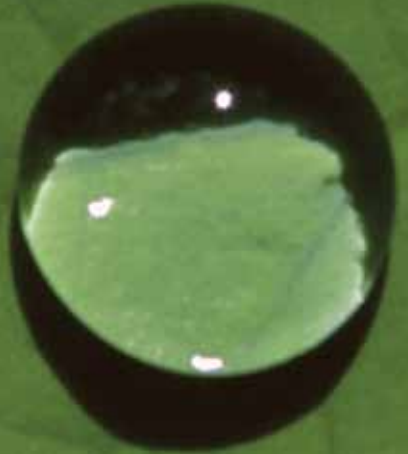
# Christianity in 7 x 2 Minutes



Thousands of thick books have been written about Christianity. This is a short and simple summary of the Christian faith. I've arranged the information in seven points, which each takes two minutes to read.

# There is a God

Christians believe in one God, who appears to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This doesn't mean that there are three gods. God's three persons can be compared to water, which can be a gas (steam), liquid (water) and solid (ice). In all these cases, water is water, although steam, water and ice are very different. Similarly, there is one God. As the Father, He is the Creator. As the Son, He is the Saviour. As the Holy Spirit, He gives life.



God has spoken to us in the Bible, which says, for example, that He is good and just. The devil, who is also described in the Bible, is on the contrary evil and unjust, and the devil is not a god. There aren't two Gods (one good and one bad). The devil is "only" an angel, who once led a rebellion against God. He therefore has no chance against God. However, as humans, we are vulnerable to the devil. Therefore it is part of the Christian faith to "forsake the devil and all his deeds and his whole being."

This means that we say "no" to all that comes from the devil, so that it doesn't destroy our lives.

We can't comprehend or understand God. After all, He is God, and we are humans. He is unlimited and perfect. We are limited and imperfect. We can't, for example, comprehend how one God relates to us as three persons. Neither can we understand how God is all powerful, when the devil also has a lot of power. But if we could understand God, He wouldn't be God!

### **THIS MEANS:**

- People are not mini-gods. This is actually a great relief.
- There is only one God for us to respond to.
- Only God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – has the power to be God in our lives.
- The devil is our opponent, but he is not God.
- We can't understand everything about God, for example, why He allows evil things in our lives.

# God is th

God created everything. This means that the stars, the earth, plants and animals were created by Him. People are the most marvellous thing God created. Of course things have changed since God created thousands of years ago. For example, new animal species have arisen and plants have been improved by people. But everything came from God, and people are not animals. We are unique.

God didn't only create once, a long time ago. He also sustains life in all of creation. He created natural laws to ensure that the seasons change and the stars hold their courses. He makes plants germinate in spring, and He created the wonderful process by which a man and a woman can have a child together.

In addition, it is God who gives us food, clothes, a house, a car, computers and so on. I know that all these things are made by people, and that we use money to buy them. But who created all the raw materials, and who gave us the ability to make all these things? God!

For that reason, we must thank God for all these gifts. Since God is the Creator, it is not strange that we are responsible to Him. As the first commandment says: "You must not have any other Gods." The purpose of our lives is primarily to relate to God. We must not place anything or anybody higher than Him.

# e Creator



## **THIS MEANS:**

- We are not accidents, because God has created you and me.
- We can thank God for our many abilities, birdsong and every sunrise.
- God sustains our lives, even right now.
- God is our Lord, to whom we are responsible.
- We must love God with all of our hearts.

# Love your neighbor

Love is central to the Christian faith. Love includes both love of God and love of other people. Real love is always reciprocal. Our love of God depends on His love to us. And we can't love others if we ourselves have not been loved, for example, by our parents.

The last part of the commandment about love says: "You must love your neighbour as yourself." Our neighbours are our fellow human beings, for example, our husband or wife, parents, children, neighbours and fellow colleagues. In other words, those with whom we live daily. But our neighbours also include street children in Rio de Janeiro and oppressed women in Somalia, whom we can help; for example, by sending relief aid.

Loving our neighbours doesn't mean that we always have to have warm feelings about them – we only sometimes have these feelings. To love my neighbours is primarily to do what is best for them: Forgive my husband or wife. Be kind to my children. Help my neighbour. Give money to those who are in need. And many other things.

The Ten Commandments tell us how to love our neighbours: honour our parents, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie, do not be jealous of others. This is how we would like to be treated, and therefore we should treat people in the same way.

## **THIS MEANS:**

- Our neighbours are fellow human beings, not enemies or competitors.
- Our neighbours are God's creation, whom we have a duty to love.
- God protects our lives, for example by telling others not to steal from us.
- Loving God and our neighbours means that we must keep the Ten Commandments.
- Not loving God and our neighbours is life's biggest problem.







# God saves

There is much good and beauty in the world, but there is also much misery and evil. We see this on TV and we experience this in our lives. We are also part of the problem. We don't thank God. We hurt or slander others. We lie and steal. We call all these things "sin".

When we don't put God above all else and don't love our fellow human beings, God gets angry, because:  
We ignore God.

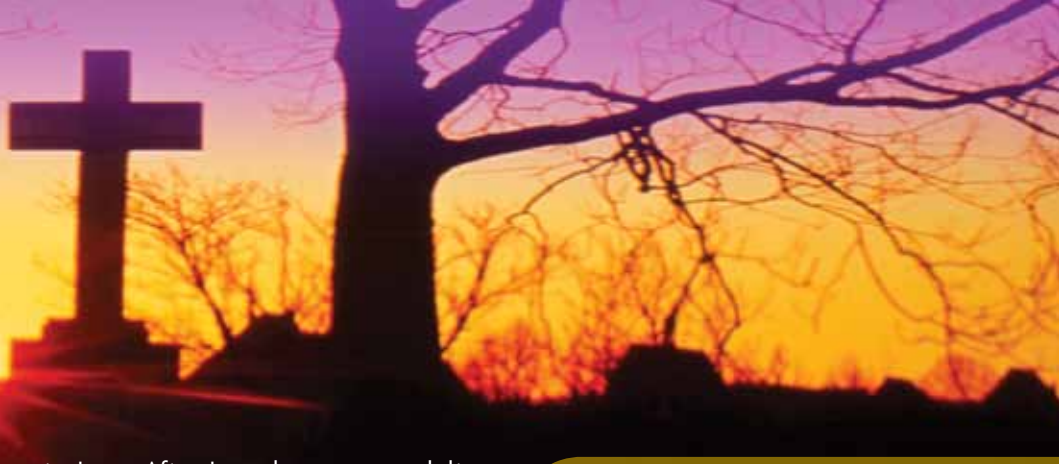
We are evil towards our fellow human beings, whom God loves.

God also loves us, and we destroy our own lives by sinning.

We don't always realize how serious sin is. Fortunately, God does, and He made a way to save us: by faith in Jesus Christ.

In order for Jesus to be the saviour, He had to be completely God and completely human. Therefore, Mary, Jesus' mother, became pregnant through the Holy Spirit – in other words, without having slept with a man. Nine months later she gave birth





to Jesus. After Jesus became an adult, He travelled around Israel. He healed the sick, drove out demons and spoke to people. He was captured, tortured and crucified. But three days later He rose from the dead. 40 days later He returned to God's home, Heaven, where He still is now.

Jesus did all this to save us. He loved God and his neighbour. He took our sins and suffered the punishment we deserved. He rose from the dead to give us eternal life.

#### **THIS MEANS:**

- God knows how serious our sins are; even though we might not think that they are that bad.
- God sent Jesus to earth as our Saviour.
- Jesus took our punishment for both the evil we have done and the good that we have failed to do.
- Because of Jesus' resurrection, we have the right to eternal life, even though we will die one day.
- We need to either accept or reject the gift of salvation.

# God gives life

God's salvation ("salvation" means God's work of saving us from our sins) was completed by Jesus. Salvation is a gift that God gives us. God can give salvation when we hear about God in a sermon, read the Bible, sing a hymn or talk to another person. We also receive Jesus in baptism and communion. The Holy Spirit uses these things to create faith within us. We have faith when we accept God's gift of salvation.

The Holy Spirit creates our life of faith. But He also creates many other forms of life. For example, the Holy Spirit creates life in a Christian congregation and in Christian fellowship. The Christian church is not primarily church buildings, but Christian people and their fellowship. This is different to a club for a hobby or a political idea. The church is

also in fellowship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also creates eternal life, which reaches beyond death. In the Apostles' Creed we say: "We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in everlasting life." This means that by faith in Jesus Christ we will rise from the dead to eternal life on the new earth, which God will create after Jesus comes visibly to earth again. Eternal life will be lived with the body, soul and spirit which we now have, but without handicaps, sickness, death and sin.

Some people do not want to believe in Jesus Christ. They reject God's salvation. They say "no" to God's gift. These people will not have eternal life, but will be lost forever.



### **THIS MEANS:**

- God's Holy Spirit can and wants to give us a life of faith, but He does not force us.
- If we accept God's gift of salvation, we become part of the fellowship of Christians.
- One day in the future, Jesus will return visibly to the earth.
- By faith in Jesus Christ we are part of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal life.
- After death, we either receive eternal life or we are lost forever.

# God is father

We may call God "Father" because He is our creator, saviour and life-giver. Jesus also called God "Father". Through faith and baptism in Jesus we become God's children. A Christian's relationship with God is therefore characterised by the same warmth, trust and respect that children have with their earthly father.

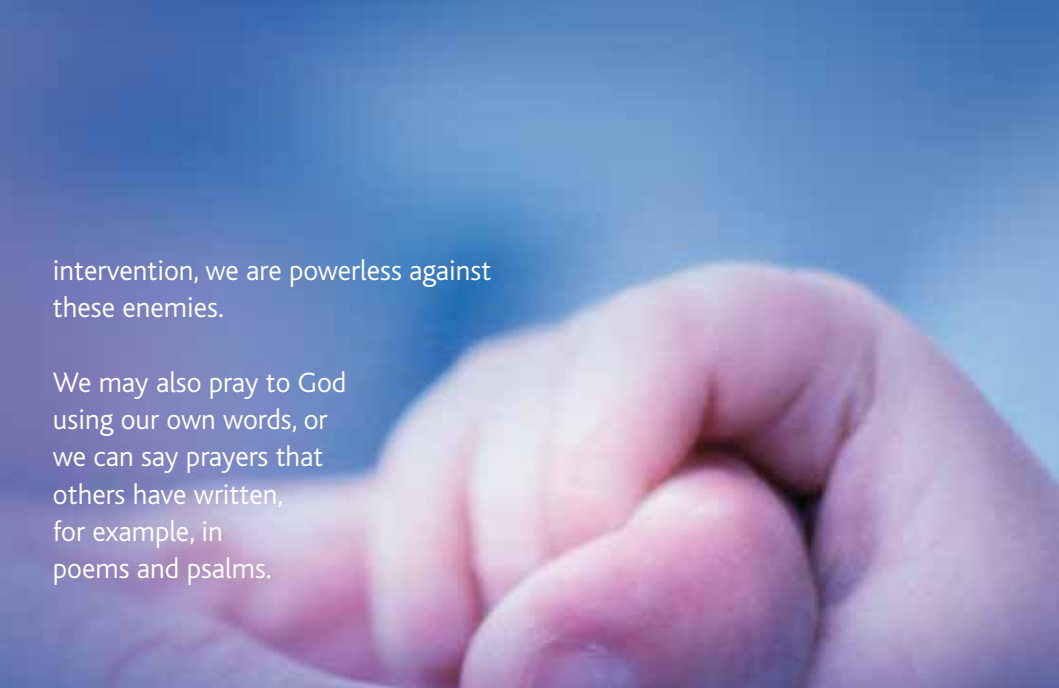
The most important prayer that Jesus taught his "siblings" is the Lord's Prayer. It is comforting that we may pray to our Heavenly Father. He both can and will help his children.

The first three prayers in the Lord's Prayer are: "Hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done." In these three prayers we thank

God for all that has already happened, in and through Jesus. But we also pray that God may be made known, loved and believed here and now as well as for eternity.

In the fourth prayer: "Give us today our daily bread" we pray for all, which we need. Not just food, but also clothes, a home, good friends, work and good weather. We may pray to our Heavenly Father about everything, but we must also remember that good fathers don't always give their children everything they ask for.

In the last three prayers in the Lord's Prayer we ask for God's help with our struggle against guilt, temptation and all types of evil. Without God's



intervention, we are powerless against these enemies.

We may also pray to God using our own words, or we can say prayers that others have written, for example, in poems and psalms.

**THIS MEANS:**

- We may call God “Father”, because He created us, saved us and gave us life.
- Jesus taught us the Lord’s Prayer, which contains all the most important things we need to pray about.
- We may also pray to God using our own words.
- Prayers to God may be thanks, praise, complaints, intercession or requests.
- Unlike human fathers, who are imperfect, our Heavenly Father is perfect.

# Living in the world

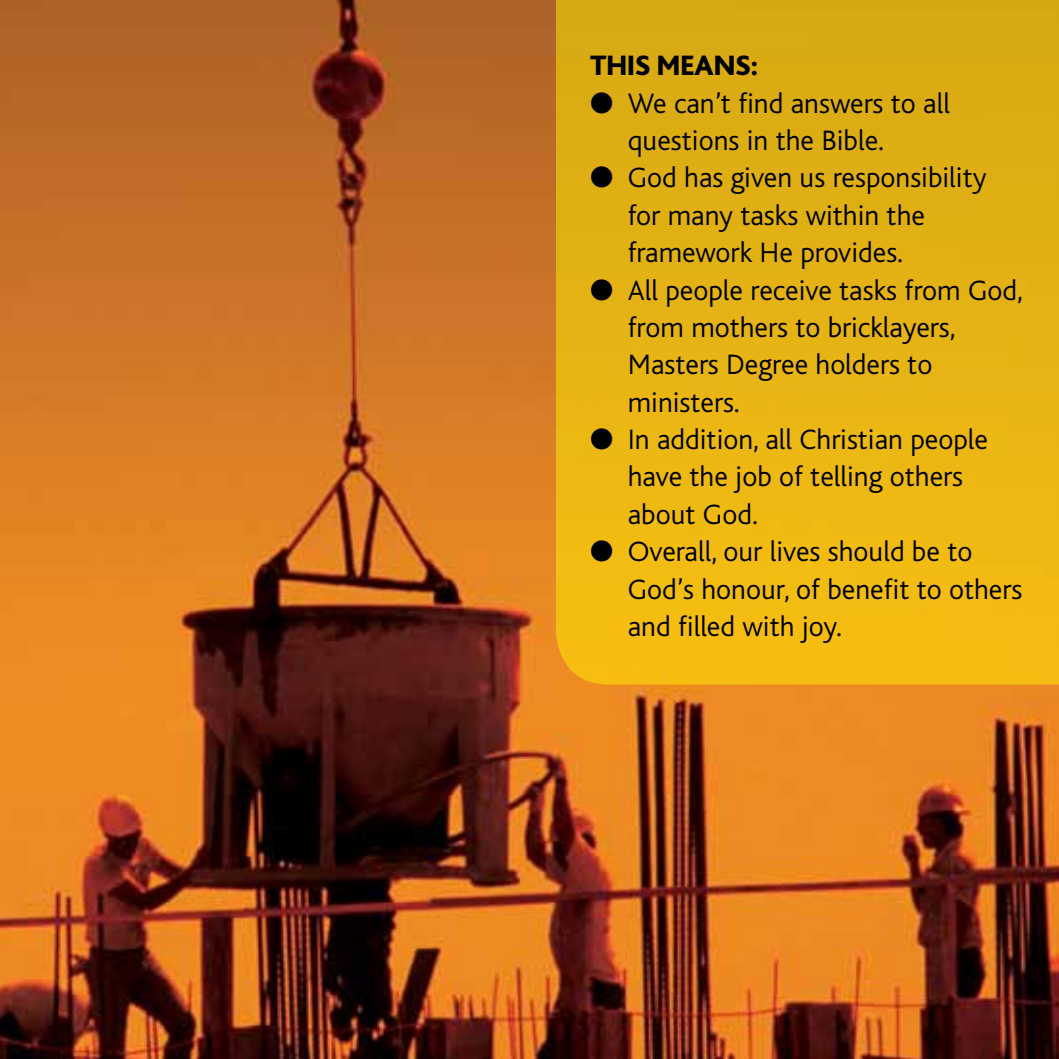
The Bible is not a recipe for what we should think about everything, or how we should do everything. For example, the Bible doesn't tell us what to think about hospital policies or how to calculate using fractions.

In contrast, the Bible says a lot about God and people and the relationship between the two. The Bible also tells us how to live, although not in minute detail. Within the framework that the Bible provides, God gives us responsibility for many things. We call this the cultural mandate, and it includes all types of work, raising children, research, politics, art, sports, media and much, much more.

We each have different abilities and opportunities, but everyone has one or

more tasks given by God. God gives us the common sense, emotions, creativity and much more, which are required for these tasks, so that we are able to complete them. And of course we are responsible to God for how we do this.

However, more is needed when it comes to living with God here and now and in eternity, and how we shall live as Christians. Here common sense, emotions and creativity are not enough. We are only able to have a right relationship with God by Jesus' salvation. By believing in Jesus, Christians receive a job in addition to the cultural mandate, and that is missions activities. Missions activities consist of telling people the good news of Jesus and helping other people.



## **THIS MEANS:**

- We can't find answers to all questions in the Bible.
- God has given us responsibility for many tasks within the framework He provides.
- All people receive tasks from God, from mothers to bricklayers, Masters Degree holders to ministers.
- In addition, all Christian people have the job of telling others about God.
- Overall, our lives should be to God's honour, of benefit to others and filled with joy.





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- Text:** Carsten Hjorth Pedersen, teacher and associate professor.
- Layout:** Carsten Hestbech, illustrator and graphic designer.
- Publisher:** The Lutheran Mission (LM) bases its work on the Bible as God's trustworthy Word and the evangelical Lutheran confession. We want people to believe in Jesus and become part of a Christian fellowship. We are open to all people.
- Contact:** If you want to know more, or have a chat with someone from LM, you can call LM's office on telephone number 48207660 or send an email to [dlm@dml.dk](mailto:dlm@dml.dk). You can also read more about LM at [www.dlm.dk](http://www.dlm.dk)
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