

◀44▶ A Self-Test

If you are not sure about a particular question, give yourself the benefit of the doubt (check *True*).

<u>COMPARED TO 1 or 2 YEARS AGO...</u>	<u>TRUE</u>	<u>FALSE</u>
1. ... My prayer life has improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. ... I understand the Bible better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. ... I want to honor God more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. ... I see God working in my life more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. ... I love Jesus more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. ... I am listening to the Spirit's leading more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. ... I am more grieved in my heart when I sin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. ... I am more loving toward others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. ... I have improved in forgiving others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. ... I serve God with more enthusiasm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. ... I am more joyful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. ... I am more thankful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. ... I am more humble	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. ... I worry less	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. ... I am more at peace with God	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. ... I have grown in the fruit of the Spirit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. ... I endure trials with more patience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. ... I am seeing progress over longtime struggles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. ... I speak of my faith more often	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. ... I am more self-controlled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

◀45▶ What does the Bible say about true believers?

From the *New Living Translation*

Philippians 2:13

**For God is working in you,
giving you the desire and the power
to do what pleases him.**

Philippians 1:6

**And I am certain that God,
who began the good work within you,
will continue his work until it is finally finished
on the day when Christ Jesus returns.**

2 Timothy 1:7

**For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity,
but of power, love, and self-discipline.**

Romans 8:9, 14, 16

**You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.
For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.
For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.**

Galatians 5:22-23

**The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

1 John 5:13

**I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,
so that you may know you have eternal life.**

3 John 1:11

Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children.

I suspect that most of the group's scores will cluster either in the high or the low range, with few in the 5 to 15 range.

- If you are a true follower of Christ, God will be working in you, and you cannot stay stuck in a rut, especially not over a period of years.
 - Understand that I have carefully selected questions that just don't happen very often with those who are not true followers of Christ; a high score won't happen by chance.
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- **If you are doing most of these things:**

- It is not because you've turned over a new leaf, and have great personal fortitude and perseverance. Those types of new year's resolutions don't often last over a period of years.
 - It is because of the Holy Spirit's work in you.
 - Notice that you have just done Paul's instruction in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith."
AND I WOULD SAY YOU HAVE PASSED THE TEST!
So, *CONGRATULATIONS*, brother or sister.
 - Now, enjoy the assurance that God's Spirit is giving you, and thank him for so great a salvation! And never doubt your salvation again!
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- **If you are not doing many of these things:**

- It is not because you haven't tried to be a better person. It's just that, in our own strength, none of us is capable of living a truly successful life. *Every one of us* has tried to run our own lives—*none of us* can live it according to God's standards.
- You may have thought of yourself as a true Christian, but this test should reveal to you that true Christians don't stay stuck in unproductive lives, and you must be missing something.
- It may be that you are stuck in sin and missing righteousness.
- You need to know that God is angry at sinners, and without righteousness, you will never see God. You may know that the Bible says that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, and that many who think they are on the right road are headed for destruction. Does my suggestion make you mad, or sad?
- The New Testament is clear that we are to repent and trust in Christ alone. You need to find out what that really means. It's not too late; there is hope.
- I'd encourage you to promptly talk about this test with me or someone who can gently and capably help you understand what you've been missing. You can get to a point someday where you will be able to pass this same test with a high score.

Scripture teaches that God chose some people to be saved before the foundation of the world, and that those who he did *not* choose will suffer eternity in hell. Some people are children of God; the others are children of the Devil. He is sovereign (whether his actions seem fair to us or not), and his purposes will not be thwarted.

- For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." Romans 9:15.
- The Lord replied, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." Exodus 33:19.
- So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. Romans 9:18.
- [Jesus] Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God. John 8:47.
- Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! For you are the children of your father the devil. John 8:43-44
- Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us. Ephesians 1:4.
- However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. John 6:37.
- For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. John 6:44.
- He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Matthew 25:33.

Assuming the above to be true, **which of these 6 statements are true?**

1. When you talk to people about Christ you can tell if they are among the elect or not.
2. When presenting the gospel to people, it's a good idea to focus on the positive aspects of becoming a Christian because they are more likely to trust Christ.

---- **If you are talking to a person who happens to be ELECT but hasn't trusted in Christ yet ----**

3. If you really mess up in presenting the gospel to him, he may never get saved.
4. If you really mess up in presenting the gospel to him, but he is ready to trust Christ, your faulty presentation may prevent him from doing so.
5. If you don't encourage him to think through it carefully, a quick decision to trust Christ may cause trouble for him sometime in the future.

---- **If you are talking to a person who happens to be NON-ELECT and has no faith in Christ ----**

6. If you present the gospel to her flawlessly, she may get saved.

John 6:63 says, "The Spirit alone gives eternal life." And John 3:5-6 says, "Jesus replied, "I assure you; no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life." So, **God chose his elect; Christ died for them; and the Spirit gives them new life. Your best efforts at evangelism will not cause this to happen and your worst efforts will not hinder God's will.**

In Luke 18 a rich, young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. What an opportunity to explain how to get saved! But Jesus, who knew what was in a man's heart (John 2:25) gave him a surprising answer—an answer so tough—that the man walked away very sad. And Jesus let him walk away.

While there are numerous ideas of precisely what election means regarding salvation, the fact that believers are elect is indisputable (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4). Simply put, the doctrine of election is that God chooses/determines/elects/predestines who will be saved. It is not within the scope of this article to determine how election works. Rather, the question is “How can I know if I am one of the elect?” The answer is exceedingly simple: believe!

The Bible nowhere instructs us to be concerned regarding our status of elect vs. non-elect. Rather, God calls us to believe, to receive Jesus Christ as Savior, by grace through faith (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). If a person truly trusts in Jesus alone for salvation, that person is one of the elect. Whether belief secures election, or election causes belief – that is another debate. But what is sure is that belief is evidence of election. No one can receive Jesus as Savior unless God draws him or her (John 6:44). God calls/draws those whom He has predestined/elected (Romans 8:29-30). Saving faith is not possible without divine election. Therefore, saving faith is evidence of election.

The idea of a person wanting to be saved but being unable to, due to not being one of the elect, is absolutely foreign to the Bible. No one seeks after God’s plan of salvation on his own accord (Romans 3:10-18). Those without Christ are blind to their need for salvation (2 Corinthians 4:4). This only changes when God begins drawing a person to Himself. It is God who opens eyes and enlightens minds to the need for Jesus Christ as Savior. A person cannot repent (change the mind about sin and the need for salvation) unless God grants repentance (Acts 11:18). Therefore, if you understand God’s plan of salvation, recognize your need for it, and feel compelled to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, then believe, and you are saved.

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, trusting Him alone for salvation, believing that His sacrifice is the full payment for your sins – congratulations, you are one of the elect.

“We must school and train ourselves to deal personally with the unconverted. We must not excuse ourselves, but force ourselves to the irksome task until it becomes easy.” —Charles Spurgeon

“... easy and fun.” —Mark

There is a great cosmic battle going on in the spiritual realm between God and Satan. You are on God’s side and with him you will win. But for now, the battle rages. When you share your faith, you are putting yourself on the front lines. It may be fearful and hard, but you must do your duty, and you need your spiritual armor.

Ephesians 6:10-17

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

◀50▶ Maximum Effectiveness in Explaining Your Faith

Effectiveness in any endeavor involves:

- Accurate foundational **Data**
 - Solid **Philosophy** and logic
 - Good **Attitudes**
 - A Modicum of Applicable **Knowledge**
 - Situational **Awareness**, and
 - Honed, Practiced **Skills**
-

Applied to explaining your faith, maximum effectiveness includes:

► Accurate Data

- Basing our arguments on Scripture Alone gives us confidence to give advice to others.

► Solid Philosophy

- Interpreting the Scriptures in their normal meaning prevents us from 'allegorizing' them, in essence making them say whatever we want them to say. Letting Scripture interpret Scripture, and not building major doctrines on single verses keeps us safe.
- Accepting any church's interpretation as the final authority makes us susceptible to human errors by men who put themselves above Scripture and apart from any corrective devices. (Paul praises the Bereans who checked their teachers against Scripture.)

► Attitudes before God

- Humility; Willingness; Availability; Obedience.
- We may not feel adequate, but we are *qualified* and *enabled* by God (2 Cor 3:5-6).
- We are *commissioned* by God (Matt 28: 18-20) and can have *confidence* in Him (2 Cor 3:4).
- "I'd rather do evangelism—however poorly I do it—than no evangelism at all—like I used to."
- Preparing:
 - Praying for opportunities, for receptive hearts, and for the words to speak.
 - Having a Bible that's easy to understand (e.g. the *NLT - New Living Translation*) or perhaps even a modern Catholic Bible. Maybe even having the *Catholic Catechism* handy.
 - Either having Post-It's in your Bible or bringing pre-written notes, but not written in Bibles.
 - Perhaps bringing the cards from the *Pocket Evangelism Kit* (you may need to borrow a kit).

► Attitudes before Others

- Genuine Love and Concern; Humility; A Caring Listener; Probing to Understand; Courage.
 - Listening patiently to their 'spiritual journey' before asking if you can share yours.
 - Boldly speaking the truth in love.
 - Being ready to learn and admit errors. Listening actively before speaking.
 - "An arrogant representative of the meek and lowly Jesus just doesn't wash."
 - Asking permission first before probing with deeper or personal questions.
 - Asking if you can pray for them when no other approach seems to get through.
- Being Understanding, Empathetic, and Gentle.
 - When a baptized Catholic begins to understand the true gospel, the implications of it can be devastating ("Are you saying that my grandma was wrong and is in hell?").
- Modeling.
 - Being circumspect in all your dealings; being a living example of true Christian love.
 - "People need to know how much you care before they care how much you know."
 - Trusting the Spirit to convict in His time. Treating others as you would wish to be treated.
 - Being persuasive without being pushy (*unless the conviction is obvious!*).

► Knowledge

- Studying the Bible, especially the parts that explain how to get right with God.
- Taking advantage of ongoing training as available.
- “You cannot influence the world around you without taking the time to understand it.”
- Everything you know about Catholicism should be considered **back pocket material**, brought out only when needed.

► Awareness

- Jesus knew what was in men, and he tailored his approach according to each person’s situation.
- We don’t know what is in people, so we need to ask good/probing questions and listen carefully.
- Then we need to adjust the message. Ray Comfort says “law to the proud; grace to the humble,” meaning we tailor the message to where the person is at. Proud, resistant people need to know they are lawbreakers before God; broken people who already know this but need a solution simply need God’s grace, his free gift of salvation.
- Roman Catholics often are not very biblically literate. So:
 - When using the Bible, show any key verses in context.
 - Communicate the ultimate authority of the Scripture.
 - Show how the Bible impacts one’s daily life, and how it might apply to one’s family, work, church, or society. How the Bible makes a difference in your life may be amazing to them.
 - If possible, quote a church father or creed (as the Reformers did), which can create a bridge and lend credibility to your message (maybe useful for educated Catholics only).
- A suggestion is not to ask Catholics to repeat a prayer for salvation. This is important for two reasons: 1) Catholics have been taught to repeat prayers as part of their indoctrination, and 2) the practice is not biblical and often produces a false hope of salvation when there is no conviction by the Holy Spirit (from reachingcatholics.org/joywitness.html).

► Skills

- Relying on the Holy Spirit.
 - Focusing on the key issue of their salvation; letting God deal with other issues later.
 - “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory is of the Lord.” (Prov 21:31)
- Practicing.
 - Asking God to bring people to you and start witnessing; learning by doing.
 - If using the *Pocket Evangelism Kit*, reading it carefully and practicing with a Christian friend.

Remember

Lost people are not our enemies.
They are victims of our enemy.
Victims need sympathetic caregivers.

And

If they are among the elect,
they are future family members who just haven’t been adopted quite yet.

Therefore

Since we don’t know if they are elect,
we’ll be wise to treat everyone as potential brothers and sisters.

Preparation

Know your role

- Study to show yourself an approved workman.
- Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within you.
- Be an ambassador. Be a contagious Christian. Be genuine & sincere. Share with a heart of love for the lost—not out of obligation or to “carve another notch on your spiritual belt.”
- As a good fisherman, use the right “lure.” Get to know the person, meet them where they are at, and tap into their real needs.
- Entice. For a “party-line” Catholic, lure them with the things they do not have. This would include total forgiveness, direct access to God, certainty of salvation, freedom from the obligations of the law, a love of God’s church and God’s Word. For example, let them wonder why you enjoy going to your church or reading the Bible so much. (See also section 53—*Preparing Your Testimony*.)
- Recent studies show that, on average, a person gets to know 5-10 true Christians before they become one. So, inviting them to social functions where they can meet other believers may be a strategic move.
- Be polite. Before you ask personal, or probing questions, ask permission.
- Be humble. Arrogance or over-confidence will be off-putting.
- Be direct. Don’t accept glib answers or religious wording. Find out what people really mean and believe. Precision is critical because, in this game, close doesn’t count.
- Be patient. Don’t feel obliged to “unload the whole truck” at the first opportunity.
- Know when to back off.
- Do the work of an evangelist. Be ready “in season and out.”
- Be in God’s will.
- Pray without ceasing. Have the attitude of the person who said, “When I work, I work. When I pray, God works.”
- Pray for co-laborers in the fields that are “ripe unto harvest.”
- Pray for opportunities. “Here I am Lord, send me.”
- Pray for specific individuals. Be patient and faithful.
- Pray for the words to speak.
- Don’t cast your pearls before swine. Some folks simply are not ready to hear the message. With some folks you may have to “shake the dust off your feet,” though you can always keep praying.
- Trust God for the results. You may plant a seed, or you may water it, but only God gives the increase.

Know God’s role

- It is the Spirit who convicts of sin, righteousness & judgment. Yet faith comes by hearing, and God may choose to honor us to lead another person to him.
- It is the Spirit who quickens and gives life. Whenever God has used you to share his word, it is never a failure, no matter the results seem like. He promises that his word will not return void.
- Salvation is by faith alone. It is not by a process, be it the four spiritual laws, the sinner’s prayer, a “sincere” repentance, etc.
- God is sovereign. You may sometimes feel like you’ve said the wrong thing or really messed up. But God is in control. He will use what you said or did anyway and bless you for obeying him.

Witnessing

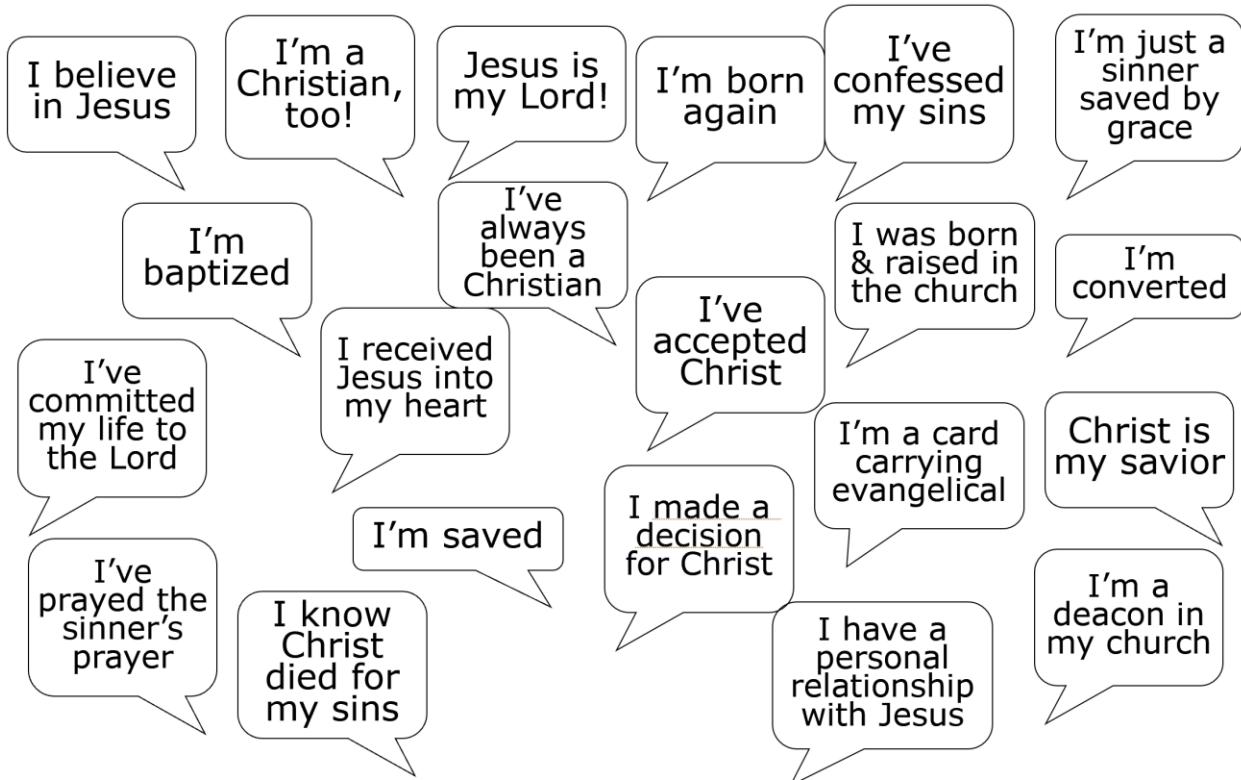
Stay on message

- Preach “Christ crucified.” You are not trying to prove the error of anyone’s religion. If you lead a Catholic to repentance and faith in Christ, as they grow in their faith, the Spirit will likely lead them to change churches in his own timing. The saying is *gardens grow at their own rate*.
- Preach the good news—the gospel—“the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes.” Preach why we need good news, that is, preach the bad news first...we are sinners, lawbreakers of God’s commands, and “condemned already.”

Recognize the realities

- Honor God’s truth. There is no other way to the Father but by Christ; there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. Do not vacillate on this.
- Recognize the “offense of the cross.” Some will stumble on the harsh reality of their sinfulness or God’s anger and judgment. But don’t deny it or whitewash it. Meet resistance by asking God to soften hearts.
- For the typical “party-line” Catholic to trust Christ alone, understand the turmoil and emotions they may likely go through. If what you are telling the person is true, it has a lot of implications for him, some truly terrifying. For example:
 - My parents, who raised me Catholic, and were well intended, must have misled me.
 - They couldn’t have made such a mistake; they were so sincere and devoted.
 - My parents, themselves, then, must not be true Christians.
 - If I converted away from Catholicism, it would kill my mother.
 - My extremely holy grandmother, God rest her soul, wouldn’t be in heaven today.
 - All of my ancestors, then, must be in hell.
 - Would this mean that the dear nuns who taught me in school aren’t saved?
 - What about my own children? I’ve baptized them in the Catholic Church. Did I raise them with the wrong faith? Will they go to hell because of me?
 - What will my spouse think?
 - What about my promise to raise my children as Catholics?
 - Would I have to quit my church? It’s all I’ve ever known.
 - My whole identity has always been Catholic. My whole community is Catholic. I can’t leave my culture.
- Given the above, be very gentle and be empathetic. Appreciate the raw emotions that a Catholic may go through processing this new data.
 - Someone has said it will be like you are performing open-heart surgery on the person, without the use of an anesthetic.
- Depending on the circumstances, explain the pro’s and con’s of the gospel. It is not *fire insurance*. It’s not self-help or turning over a new leaf. Although it is a free gift, it will change one’s life. Being united with Christ and his family is wonderful, both now and after we die. Yet Christ cautions us to count the cost, that we will be hated by those who hate him. His followers are told to deny themselves, take up their cross, and don’t look back. So, do not push for a quick decision based on insufficient data or an inadequate understanding of the gospel.
- When you feel led by God’s Spirit, press for a decision. When one clearly is under conviction, and understands God’s provision, ask them directly to “choose you this day whom you will serve.”

Can you tell just by their words by listening who is a genuine believer? Which of the following people would you categorize as a brother or sister in Christ?



You need to ask probing questions to dig below the surface and listen carefully.

- The gospel is simple, yet it can be hard to tell if someone else is truly saved.
- Don't read too much into "catch-phrases."
 - A Catholic has "received Christ" (at the last Eucharist)
 - 20% of Mormons claim to be "born again"
 - Most "Christians" believe "Christ died for their sins"
 - Many "Christians" are "saved" because they're baptized
 - Many wolves in sheep's clothing claim to "love Jesus" or are a Christ follower
- Be careful when anyone states that something they "did" (or do) is the reason why they are a Christian (prayed a prayer; walked the aisle; made a decision; was baptized; always attend church; etc.)
 - Childhood conversions are often made in response to an over-simplified gospel presentation—did they really know what they were doing?
 - Have they ever counted the cost of being a Christian (Luke 14:25-33)?
- Don't assume another's salvation based on 1 statement
 - Get them to explain their terms
 - Ask them how and when they became a Christian
 - Whenever they use a key term, ask them what they mean by it
- Listen for the Reformation "Solas", especially trusting in Christ alone

Here are some sample points you might make in your personal testimony that may make your friend really wish they had what you have.

I came to discover that:

- Although God does have enemies whom he will severely judge, he wanted to be a loving father to me.
- Like the father of the prodigal son, he will run to me when I turn to him.
- He greatly desires for me to come to him, and spend time pouring out my heart to him, and reading what he has written to me.

I learned that:

- God doesn't constantly watch his child for disobedience for the purpose of checking to see if I measure up to his standards, at any moment eager to punish me.
- The goodness that God demands is not something I have to manufacture; God accepts the righteousness that Christ lived and applied it to me.

Once I learned this:

- I experienced what complete forgiveness was all about.
- I saw God as my loving father and was at total peace with him.
- I knew I was his child permanently; that he promised to never disown me.
- I understood why the gospel is called GOOD News;
 - I don't have to earn my salvation.
 - Salvation is a free gift of God.
 - My mistakes won't cause me to lose my salvation.
 - I can know for certain that heaven is my guaranteed destiny.
 - I know that the moment I die Christ will welcome me in his arms.
 - I can face death with great confidence and even cheerfulness.

I eventually learned that:

- I can love reading God's written Word. It can really draw me close to God and meet my every need.
- In response to the love of God, I am coming to love him more and more.
- I am growing closer to God, so that now I actually want to do many of the things he wants me to do. It's becoming a joy to love others including the unlovely. It's even becoming a joy to give money to God.
- Jesus was right when he said that because we have freely received, we freely give.
- A church where the free gospel of grace is taught has a lot of people who truly understand God's love, and going to church can be as enjoyable as a family reunion. Man, there are times now when I worship God with brothers and sisters, and there is no greater experience for me.

I have come to know God personally in a way I never knew before:

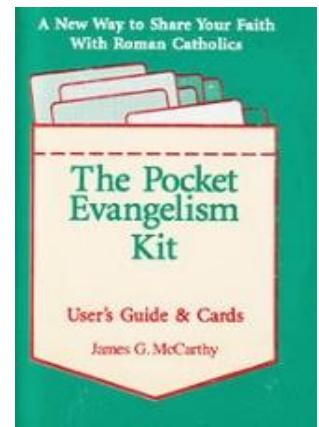
- I know Christ now as one who *does* stick closer than a brother.
- I know why Christ called his followers *friends*.
- I now what the Psalms mean that my soul pants for God.
- I know what it means to love God—really love God—with my whole heart.

(Mark's Note: I think this is a wonderful tool, but I think it's out of print, sadly. I do have a few copies of it, and if you beg me, I may loan you one of them! Bribes work too!)

What exactly does the Roman Catholic Church teach is the way of salvation? A popular post-Vatican II catechism provides the following summary of the Church's teaching.

Question. What is necessary to be saved?

Answer. You have to be brought into spiritual contact with that saving death of Jesus by faith and Baptism and loyal membership in His Church, by love of God and neighbor proved by obedience to His commandments, by the other Sacraments especially Holy Communion, by prayer and good works and by final perseverance, that is, preserving God's friendship and grace until death.



Note the lack of emphasis on Jesus in this answer. The only mention of Him is with reference to being “brought into spiritual contact with that saving death of Jesus.” What the catechism means by this is that the person must have sanctifying grace in his soul. This, says the Church, unites a person to Jesus and gives him a participation in the divine life of God. According to the catechism, to obtain sanctifying grace and preserve it in one's soul, a Catholic must accomplish a list of ten requirements:

- believing
- being baptized
- being a loyal member of the Church
- loving God
- loving his neighbor
- keeping the Ten Commandments
- receiving the sacraments, especially Holy Communion
- praying
- doing good works
- dying in a state of grace

Based on this list, I [James McCarthy] have developed a technique for sharing the gospel with Catholics called the *Pocket Evangelism Kit*. It is made up of a number of illustrated cards, each representing one aspect of the Catholic plan of salvation. The cards are placed before the Catholic with a brief explanation of what each represents. The person is then asked to pick up those cards that he or she considers necessary for salvation. The purpose is to help the person see what he is really trusting in for his salvation.

Catholics typically pick up several cards. A well-taught Catholic will take most, if not all of them, as the catechism answer above instructs. Most Catholics make their selection with an attitude of the more the better!

Once the person has made his selection, he is asked several questions to help him rethink his selection. For example, should the person select the card titled “Keeping the Ten Commandments,” he is asked: “Are you able to keep the Ten Commandments to God's standard?” If he picks the card titled “Loving Your Neighbor,” he is asked: “Do you love your neighbor with the kind of love that God requires?” If he selects the “Doing Good Works” card, the question is: “How many good works do you have to do to get into heaven?” It is surprising how readily most Catholics admit that they can't do the things that they have selected as being necessary for salvation.

Should the Catholic pick up the card titled “Believing in God”—and most do—the person is asked, “What must you believe in order to go to heaven?” Here one would hope to hear something about the Lord Jesus and His saving work on the cross. More often than not, however, Catholics say nothing about Him. Instead they speak of the necessity of believing that God exists, that He is loving and merciful, or that He will forgive those who are truly sorry for their sins.

It is interesting to see the reaction of Catholics who fail to make any mention of Jesus when the omission is pointed out to them. Linda was such a person. I showed her the cards and asked her to pick up the ones that she thought were necessary for salvation. Linda chose most of them. When I asked her to explain her selection, she mentioned neither Jesus nor the cross. When I brought this omission to her attention, she became defensive.

"Your question was unfair!" Linda protested. "You asked what I had to do to be saved. If you had asked me about Jesus, I would have—" Linda suddenly paused and became reflective. She then continued in a quieter voice. "No, I have no excuse. I should have mentioned Jesus. I think I have just learned something very important."

I hoped that Linda had learned that no true Christian could forget to mention Jesus when asked how to get to heaven. I hoped that she realized that she needed to place her trust in Christ for salvation. But despite her admission, Linda continues to cling to the Roman Catholic Church and the false gospel that it teaches.

Knowing Where You're Going

When we asked Pat, a Catholic woman from Ohio whom we interviewed outside of Saint Patrick Cathedral in New York how she hoped to get to heaven, she answered, "Catholicism isn't any different than any other religion. You obey the Ten Commandments, and I think you've got a pretty good chance. You can't go wrong with the Ten Commandments."

At least with regard to her first remark, Pat is correct. Catholicism isn't any different from most other religions. Whether it is Islam, Hinduism, a mixture of Chinese religions, or one of the Christian sects such as Mormonism or the Jehovah Witnesses, most religions are basically the same. Like Roman Catholicism, they all teach: Live a good life here on earth and you have a pretty good chance of enjoying blessing in the next life.

Biblical Christianity stands apart. It teaches that "no one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18), that "all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isaiah 64:6). True Christianity teaches that sinners can be accepted by God through the righteous work of another (Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21). It proclaims a Savior who paid our penalty for us with His own life (Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 2:24). It tells of God's offer of eternal life to anyone who repents and believes (Mark 1:15; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). Those who accept this free gift of God can know that they are going to heaven, because their acceptance before God is in Christ, not themselves. The Lord assured His disciples, saying, "rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Luke 10:29). He said, "I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). The Holy Spirit also participates in guaranteeing the future of the redeemed. At the moment of salvation the Spirit comes to dwell in each believer "as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:14).

The *sin of rash presumption* is what Rome calls this. And right it would be if salvation were dependent, even in part, upon our own righteous deeds. Believing the promises of Scripture, however, is not presumption but faith in God.

Adapted from *Conversations with Catholics* by James G. McCarthy (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, 1997)

Mark's Note: My wife, Cathy, and I have used this tool with a number of friends, and it has helped tremendously in getting others to see tangibly what they are really counting on to get right with God. In one instance, a husband and wife attended a Sunday morning class where I explained the gospel as simply as I could. That evening, before we went over the cards with them, we thought that they might remember the gospel lesson and not choose any of the cards. But both of them picked up 5-7 cards. Doing that exercise drove home the point for them, in a way that they didn't get from the class lesson. They both trusted Christ that evening.

The author of the book, *Questioning Evangelism*, Randy Newman, summarizes his book's major points in this 1-hour video, tinyurl.com/eyf-randy. This video can help you learn to be a better listener which, in turn, will help you be a better communicator of the message.

Examples: After the *getting-to-know-you* questions, Randy suggests tactfully asking questions like:

- “Do you ever think much about spiritual stuff?”
- “Has faith ever been a part of your life?”
- “What do mean by _____?”
- “What do you mean by that word, *spiritual*?”
- “Are you saying...?”
- “Do you really think so?”
- “Can you explain that to me?”
- “It sounds to me like you’re ready to become a Christian, are you?”

Randy suggests avoiding “Why” questions, which can sound aggressive. Instead use a question like “How did you come to that?” He suggests having all your questions thought out ahead of time.

He has also authored another book, *Bringing the Gospel Home: Witnessing to Family Members, Close Friends, and Others Who Know You Well*, which looks like it may be useful.

There are a number of websites that provide excellent—and free—resources around evangelizing and apologetics. You can see my favorites at this landing page: tinyurl.com/eyf-res.