

FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS
(What Non-Christians Need to Know)
Romans 10:14

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We have been talking about evangelism the last couple of weeks. In preparation for this service I began thinking about how I could teach a simple presentation of the gospel that would be easy to communicate and would give the essential information a person might need in order to make a decision to receive the Lord. After working with it for a while I came up with the following four things people need to be told and understand.

- (1) God loves you.
- (2) You have a problem.
- (3) God has the solution for your problem.
- (4) You must accept His solution.

As I worked with this, I realized the outline was, in essence, the Four Spiritual Laws that I used decades ago. This structure was probably in the back of my mind because of reading a tract written by Bill Bright, the founder of Crusade for Christ. It is the most widely distributed religious booklet in history! Over 2.5 billion copies have been distributed.¹ So instead of using my outline, I decided to simply teach from this tract. It's entitled "Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?" That's why you have a copy of that as your outline.²

My purpose is to equip you for evangelism. For some of you this will simply be a reminder of the basics people need to know. For some it will give a structure to work with. I never evangelize by just walking through a tract with a person. When I was doing a lot of street evangelism, I would give people a tract so that they could use it as a follow up on our conversation. There are various other evangelistic tools like the Roman Road, Steps to Peace with God from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and others that are also good.

Before we walk through this, I want to share a couple of cautions.

(1) Anyone who is truly saved got led to Christ by the Holy Spirit! We can share the word in various ways. And they must hear the message in order to be saved. Rom 10:14 asks these rhetorical questions, "*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*"³ God has called every one of us to be proclaimers or preachers of the good news. People cannot put their faith in Christ if they have not heard the message of Christ. So that is an important element. On the other hand, just mechanically giving the message does not necessarily bring people to the Lord. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in all of this. So why am I teaching these four principles? They provide a framework for communicating the message.

¹ Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ Founder, Dead at 81. Retrieved 12-10-16 at <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/bill-bright-campus-crusade-for-christ-founder-dead-at-81-1210561.html>. This message draws heavily on Bill Bright's booklet entitled "Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws."

² A copy of Bill Bright's tract, "Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?" was distributed to everyone in the congregation.

³ All Scripture quotes are from the New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

(2) There is nothing magical about this tract or any tract. They are just tools we can use. It is the truth revealed to us in the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to transform a life. There is and always has been the danger that people would substitute a ritual for a living relationship with God. Water baptism as a ritual does not save you. Yet it is a powerful means of declaring our faith in Christ and making public commitment to Christ. Joining a church does not save you.⁴ Saying the sinner's prayer does not save you. This tract leads to a suggested prayer which we often refer to as the sinner's prayer. It is simply words that help the person ask for salvation. It is a good tool to help people know what to say to God when asking for His salvation. But there is nothing magical about the words themselves. There must be a transaction with God from the heart

There is a very delicate balance here when you're leading people to the Lord. We really have to have the Holy Spirit's help in the process. On the one hand, simply going through a ritual does not save a person. On the other hand, people usually need help with how to come to the Lord and some of these tools are useful.

Faith is the key ingredient. And faith is not always easy to identify. If I lead a person through the sinner's prayer, how do I know that person was genuinely saved? I will have to watch the fruit that it produces over time. To be saved a person has to simply take God at His word, ask for the gift of eternal life, and receive it by faith. There may or may not be any emotion at that time. We love it when there is emotion; but emotion is the human response to the event. Some will have emotions; some will not. The real question is not "What did you feel at an emotional level." The real question is "Did you receive His forgiveness and commit your life to Him?" After leading a person through the sinner's prayer, I usually ask the question, "Did you receive the Lord?" They are the ones that need to answer that question, not me. When I started out, I would conclude by telling them they had received the Lord. But that's me putting my words in their mouth. I want them to confess the Lord.

Rom 10:9-10 is authoritative on this issue. *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* Two essentials have to happen here. (1) The person has to believe in his heart. I can't do that for him. I can't even know at that moment whether he did it. But he has to take the Lord at His word and receive from the heart. (2) The person has to confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one that does that; not me.

So you ask the person, did you receive the Lord as your Savior. What do you do if he says, "I don't know"? Then you take him back to God's promises. The one we just read is one. *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* Ask him, "Did you do that?" Yes. "Do you believe God is good for His side of it?" Usually the answer will be yes. Then receive His gift and trust Him for it. The person does not have to depend on a feeling. The person has to take God's promise and believe it. Here are a few other verses that are helpful in this. John 1:11-12 *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."* Acts 2:21 is another verse that promises salvation to those who call on the Lord. *"And it shall come to pass That*

⁴ We are commanded to be baptized and baptize converts (Matt. 28:19). I am not diminishing the importance of obeying this command. I am simply saying our actions must be mixed with faith. Joining a church is a positive step and we are commanded to submit to one another and regularly gather together (Heb. 10:25; Heb. 13:17).

whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.” We encourage the person to take the Lord at His word.

How does a person know he has genuinely been born again?

(1) Rom 8:16 makes this promise. *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”* That’s not emotion; that is deeper than emotion. It’s God’s Spirit to my spirit. In my innermost being comes an assurance from God. It often comes immediately when the person prays the sinner’s prayer. In some cases it comes later as the person continues to take God at His word. That assurance will come as faith is exercised. It doesn’t come from other people. It comes directly from the Holy Spirit.

(2) The second way we know a person has been born again is the change that comes in their life over time. 1 John 3:7 *“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”* If a person says the sinner’s prayer or does any other external ritual, but there is no change in the way that person lives, something is wrong. The new nature produces fruit. Fruit takes some time to grow. But fruit is something you can observe. I wonder how many people sit in church today thinking they are going to heaven because they went through a religious ritual; but, in reality, they have never been born again. They practice the same ungodliness the unbelievers practice; and they continue relatively unbothered. This is not consistent with being a genuine child of God. A true believer is uncomfortable in sin; and God chastens all those who are truly His. Sanctification is a process, and we are all work-in-process. We struggle at times. But we no longer follow our old lifestyle of habitual sin.

So I come back to this delicate matter of faith. The individual has to receive the gift of eternal life by faith. God will confirm the validity of what happened in two ways. (1) His Spirit will bear witness with that person that the transaction has occurred. (2) Over time the person’s life will reflect the change.

Now let’s look at these four spiritual laws. These are things people need to know as we approach them about God.

Law 1: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

People do need to understand God’s benevolence toward them. The Devil has a fairly effective campaign of painting a false picture of who God is. He did that with Eve as he lured her into rebellion against God’s instruction.⁵ He does it today by convincing people that God is a mean dictator trying to take all the fun out of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is trying to give people abundant life. In John 10:10 Jesus contrasted his intentions toward people with those of the deceiver whom He referred to as *“the thief.”* TLB says it well. *“The thief’s purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”* This is a distinction that people need to understand. The grief they are experiencing in their lives is not God’s ultimate intention for them. The devil is trying to destroy them through drugs, warped relationships, disease, etc. God is calling them out of all that destruction into eternal life. There is a process involved. But God’s intentions toward people are good, not evil.

2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is *“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* That is His attitude toward every living soul. No matter how deep that person may be entrapped in sin, God wants to deliver that person from evil and give him or her a good

⁵ Gen. 3:4-5. The serpent implied to her that God was keeping something good from her, thereby, questioning God’s benevolence toward her.

life. The avenue for that to happen is repentance.⁶ But God is not out to get anyone. He wants everyone to be saved.

Out of a heart of love, God created man. He created him in His own image. He created him to enjoy life with Him forever. And when man rebelled His love continued. John 3:16-17 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* Notice again God’s intentions in verse 17. He *“did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world.”*

Condemnation is something people bring upon themselves by their own actions. God sent His Son *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

So people need to know first of all that God’s desire for them is good, not evil.

However, there may be some very bad things going on in their lives. Why is that?

Law 2: Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for his life.⁷

God said to Israel in Isa 59:1-2 *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”*

The destructive force is sin. The problem that is separating us from God is our own rebellion against the Creator. It began with Adam and has been passed down to us. The Psalmist (51:5) acknowledged *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me”* (NIV). We all inherited a bend toward independence and sin from our forefathers. But we can’t blame it all on that, because we ourselves made choices on our own to do wrong—to follow our own lusts and selfish desires rather than do right. Rom 3:23 says *“for all [no exceptions] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

How glorious is the glory of God? It is perfect. How good is heaven? It is perfect. God designed us to live in the perfect environment of His love. The problem is not with God. The problem is not with the heaven He wants to bring us into. The problem is with us. We come short of the qualification for heaven. What is the qualification for heaven? Perfection! It’s not a matter of being a better person than your neighbor; both are flawed; both come short. Sin has disqualified us for entry. If we could enter as we are, we ourselves would defile the place. Revelation 21 describes the beauty of heaven. The last verse in that chapter (vs 27) says *“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”* God will keep heaven pure, Otherwise it would not be heaven. The joy and happiness of heaven depends on the righteousness of its inhabitants.

⁶ And no person can enter into the wonderful provision God has for him/her without repentance, simply because the person is going the wrong direction for that entry. There must be a turning from the path of destruction to the path of life.

⁷ A fear of offending the person must not keep us from sharing this second law. A potential convert needs to have some understanding of who God is and who he is. He is a sinner in need of God’s mercy (Luke 18:9-14). God is his Creator who loves him enough to provide a rescue from his self-destruction. One hindrance we face in today’s culture is the entitlement mentality that people develop when Mommy and Daddy tell them they are the center of it all. The self-exaltation and self-justification must be shattered in preparation for surrendering to the lordship of Christ.

Disobedience to God separates us from God. Rom 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Death means separation. In physical death, the soul is separated from the body. In spiritual death, the soul is separated from God. Here is a contrast. The wages of sin is death. But there is hope; the gift of God is eternal life in Christ.

On page 5 of our tract there is an explanation of this separation or gulf between sinful man and the holy God. When sinful man tries to reach up to God he is inadequate and always fails—always comes short. Remember the standard is perfection. Suppose this group is at the Grand Canyon and need to cross a ravine that is 30 feet wide. One person tries to jump the ravine and only jumps 5 feet. He obviously plunges to his death. No human can jump 30 feet. The next person is very athletic. He is good. He jumps with all his might and makes it 15 feet. He really outdid the other person. But he came short, plunged to his death, and is just as dead as the other guy. Isa 64:6 *“But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”* Nobody can bridge the gap by pure human effort.

The 3rd law explains the only way to bridge the gulf.

Law 3: Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for man’s sin. Through Him you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life.

“God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” There is no Plan B. This is God’s way of rescuing fallen humanity.

He sent His Son to die in our place.

Rom 5:8 *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* The death I deserve, Jesus endured for me. He laid down His life for me on the cross. He bore my punishment and offers me forgiveness of sin. God’s solution for my problem was to bear the punishment for me. So that He could justly forgive me and give me eternal life.

We cannot appreciate the magnitude of this unless we get some sense of what it cost God to provide this way of salvation. It is offered to us free. But it is anything but cheap. God sent His holy Son to suffer in our place so that we could be rescued. To reject that is an insult to God. To reject His way of salvation is to reject the only way of salvation. Jesus paid the price. He offers forgiveness and salvation. To benefit from the offer, we must receive it.

Law 4: We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives.

To do nothing is to stay under condemnation and judgment.

John 3:18 *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*

Sin has already brought the condemnation.

“...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27 KJV).

But God offers an alternative.

John 1:12 *“As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name”* (NIV).

Receiving is an act of your will. It is something you must choose to do. No one else can do it for you. God offers salvation as a gift on His terms. Eph. 2:8-9 *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so*

that no one can boast” (NIV). When we receive the gift of eternal life from God we are born again. The Holy Spirit is joined to our spirit and we become a child of God.

Biblical faith is more than intellectual assent. We’re not just agreeing with all of this intellectually. We are making a personal commitment to God. We are turning from our own selfish ways and submitting ourselves to the lordship of Christ.⁸ We are choosing to follow Him in whatever He tells us to do. We relinquish control of our life and entrust it to Him!⁹ Turning our lives over to God, committing to obey Him and turn from our sin is called repentance. To believe in Jesus is to place all our trust and reliance in Him—to follow His leading and trust Him to get us where we need to be, rather than trust ourselves.

The one thing God does not do for us and the one thing nobody else can do for us, is to make the conscious decision to open our hearts to Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior. In Rev. 3:20 Jesus said, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him....”* He is knocking at your heart’s door right now. Will you open your heart and receive Him?

This is always a delicate moment in the process, because the person has to be making that choice. Don’t rush the moment. Ask again if necessary. Press the decision because people have a tendency to avoid deciding—the devil is telling them to put it off. Press for the decision NOW!

Offer to lead them in a prayer that helps them know what to say. Explain the importance of what is going on in the heart. The words are just a way to express the desire of your heart. Do you want to ask Christ into your heart as Lord and Savior?

Then ask the person to repeat after you out loud and mean it from the heart. You say a phrase and wait for him to repeat. You have on page 10 the prayer Bill Bright suggests.

I usually go at it a little different in that I want the following elements in the prayer.

- (1) An acknowledgement of sin. The awareness of sin is an important factor in true repentance.
- (2) A straight-forward request for forgiveness of sin.
- (3) Gratitude for the sacrifice of Calvary as the basis for that forgiveness and salvation.
- (4) Surrender to changes God wants to make in the person and a commitment to follow the Lord.
- (5) A straight-forward invitation for Christ to come into the person’s heart.
- (6) A declaration of receiving the Lord right NOW. Faith happens in the now. Now!
- (7) A thank you to the Lord for coming into the heart. This reinforces the act of faith.

So my prayer goes something like this.

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for dying on the cross for me.

I know I have sinned and broken your commandments.

I ask you to forgive me of my sins and give me eternal life.

Change me from the inside out; and take over my life.

I open my heart to you and ask you to come into my heart and cleanse me of unrighteousness.

I receive you as my Lord and Savior.

Jesus, come into my heart right now. (pause)

⁸ Matt. 16:24-25; John 10:27-28.

⁹ When faith is real, the person acts in accordance with what he purports to believe (James 2:17-20). If I really trust Jesus, then I do what He tells me to do.

Thank you for forgiving me of my sins. Thank you for coming into my heart and making me a child of God. Amen.

Then I gently wait on the Holy Spirit. I am careful not to rush the moment. Often at this moment God's Spirit bears witness with that person's spirit that the spiritual transaction has taken place. I often experience the witness in my own spirit—but not always. I simply trust God with the results.

Look at the top of page 11. This is the right question to ask at this time. Did you receive Christ into your life? I've already explained how to respond if they answer with uncertainty. If the person says yes, I lead them in a prayer thanking the Lord again for doing that. You want to strengthen their faith in the decision that has been made.

The instruction Bright gives on pages 11-15 should be shared with the convert either then or at a follow-up time.

As a practical matter, you adjust your message to what the person needs and what the Holy Spirit is directing for the specific occasion. For one person you may have to emphasize the fact that all have sinned, that being a better person than your neighbor is not adequate. For another person that conversation is not necessary. The person knows he is a sinner and he knows his own works are not going to gain him a home in heaven. These 4 spiritual laws are simply a template to work from; every person is different, every circumstance is different.

Questions & comments
(Invitation to receive Christ)