

There was a university chaplain who, every year, had to talk to the new intake of students. Each new student had to spend some time with the chaplain – even though the majority of them didn't actually believe in God.

When, eventually, the subject of God came up in their meeting, the student would usually confess "Look, I don't actually believe in God." The chaplain had a surprising response. He'd ask "WHICH god don't you believe in?" The student would say "Well, you know, God". The chaplain would press them, "Describe him to me." And eventually the student would come out with some description of a Giant Ruler in the sky, all power, no personality. The chaplain would say "Wonderful, we agree. I don't believe in that god either."

And if the student was intrigued to hear more, the chaplain would say "I don't believe in some distant power, I believe in Jesus. Because the Bible says JESUS is **the SON of God (John 1:14)**. That means He's a chip off the old block. He's called **the WORD of God (John 1:1)**. That means He's the perfect expression of God. He's called **the IMAGE of God (Colossians 1:15)**. That means He's what God looks like. In JESUS we see a God who comes into our world, who stoops, who serves, who suffers, who bleeds and who dies for us. In JESUS we see a very different God." So WHICH God don't you believe in? Which God DO you believe in?

There are lots of ideas about God going around. A Christian is someone who looks at JESUS and says: YES, He's the One. He shows me the true God.

That's what we learnt with **THREE**. Jesus the SON of God, introduces me to His Father and His Spirit. In Jesus I see that **God is THREE Persons united in love**. The good news is: I'm invited.

With **TWO** we learnt that **the Story of the world is the Story of Two Men**: Adam took the world down into death and curse. Jesus enters our mess to bring us to His Family.

Now with **ONE** – we'll learn how we come in on Jesus, how we come in on His Family. In this video we'll learn how to be ONE with Jesus.

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When my wife and I were married we said these vows to each other:

"All that I am I give to you, all that I have I share with you."

At that moment there were sniggers in the congregation. Our friends were laughing because they knew we had absolutely nothing to offer each other. Essentially we were

pledging to unite our debts. “All that I am I give to you, all that I have I share with you” – that’s laughable when neither of you HAVE anything.

But think about the FAIRYTALE weddings.

Think of the children’s stories where the handsome prince marries the downtrodden pauper. What happens then? The Prince says “All that I am I give to you, all that I have I share with you.” He gives her his riches, his inheritance, he shares his throne, he brings her into the royal family. Instantly she is royalty because of the marriage.

And she says to him “All that I am I give to you, all that I have I share with you.” Whatever debts she has – they all go to her prince. He absorbs them all. Whatever disgrace is attached to her family name – he covers over her old name with his name. Whatever shame she once had as a pauper – well now she’s a princess. Instantly, irreversibly, from that moment on, she is rich, she is royal, she is respected in the highest courts in the land. All because she is ONE with her Prince.

Well the fairytales point us to a deeper truth. There is a Prince who belongs to the ultimate Royal Family. He’s the Son of God. We – on the other hand – are like the pauper. We have no right to be included in the Kingdom of Heaven. We have all sorts of debts, all sorts of sins, all sorts of shame and disgrace and spiritual poverty.

But the Prince comes into this world and offers to be ONE with us. That’s what we’re thinking about in this video: We’re all ONE with Adam. Will we be ONE with Jesus?

Jesus calls Himself “**The Bridegroom.**” (Luke 5:34-35) And the Bible commonly calls his people **the Bride** (Ephesians 5:21-33).

And Christ’s proposal is like any marriage proposal – essentially it’s “All that I am I give to you, all that I have I share with you.” What’s He offering?

All His goodness, all His love, all His riches, all His inheritance – the whole universe. All His family connections, His royal status – EVERYTHING that He IS, He gives us. EVERYTHING that He HAS He shares with us. And best of all He shares HIMSELF with us. That’s the best thing about marriage. We don’t marry someone to get STUFF. We marry them to get THEM.

The same is true with Jesus. He offers HIMSELF to us. We don’t receive Him in order to GET a pile of stuff – forgiveness, eternal life, groovy feelings. No, we receive Him in order to have HIM.

And that’s what a Christian is. A Christian is simply someone who has received Jesus. We have understood who we are – spiritual paupers, we are Enslaved, Selfish

Stuff-ups, we're disconnected from God, we're headed for the Outer Darkness, and maybe we feel it. But more than this, We have seen Jesus for who He is – the Prince. We have understood His offer and we have said Yes to Jesus.

John's Gospel puts it like this:

To all who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

To believe in Jesus is to receive Him – like the way a married couple receive each other on their wedding day. If we receive Jesus we are – from that moment on – UNITED to Jesus.

And right now, if we are ONE with the Son of God, we have become CHILDREN of the same Heavenly Father.

We have Christ's Spirit as our Spirit and His Father as our Father. Through this marriage-like union, we're adopted into the Family, both now and forever.

The most famous verse of the Bible says: **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

Eternal life is not so much about a time and a place – later on, over there. Eternal life is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. To be ONE with Jesus... KNOWING God as our FATHER – that's the life. That's eternal life. It begins now and stretches on forever.

Some picture Christianity in medieval terms. Some imagine it like a snooty Lord on a throne, throwing a pouch of silver to a servant girl because she's bowed and scraped enough. No. God doesn't reward slaves from a distance. Christianity is about a loving Lord who sets his love on the servant girl and gives HIMSELF to her in marriage. Now EVERYTHING he has is hers and she's brought into the family forever.

In all of this I hope you see something crucial about Christ's offer – it's completely FREE. We can't earn it, we can't pay for it, we don't deserve it. We bring NOTHING to the marriage, except our debts. But He offers Himself FREELY. His love is UNCONDITIONAL.

Sometimes people worry about that. They wonder: If Jesus loves His people unconditionally, won't they run off and abuse that love? If people know they can do

ANYTHING and Jesus will be ONE with them anyway– won't that encourage people to sin?

No. When a spouse KNOWS the undying, committed love of their partner – are they more likely to cheat or less? Less likely of course! Committed love wins our hearts. It means we don't WANT to cheat.

On the other hand if someone's love is conditional, the relationship grows cold, we're more likely to wander. No it's the UNCONDITIONAL love of Jesus that changes us.

But let me ask a question: What if you actually received Jesus for yourself, what would that look like? Let me paint a picture for you. Let me show you what life is like if you're ONE with Jesus.

Here are three things that all flow out of 321:

First there's **new life** in the midst of the old.

The minute the pauper marries the prince she's royalty. The minute you trust Jesus, you HAVE eternal life. Jesus said:

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)

Notice that eternal life is a present reality. Living in relationship with God through Jesus – that IS eternal life. It starts now and lasts forever – but you have it now.

It won't always feel like you have new life but that's because it's new life IN THE MIDST OF THE OLD. I still have my old human nature. I still have the family likeness of Adam. I still struggle with slaveries, with selfishness, with stuff ups. Adam's way clings to me like flesh to my bones.

To keep the Prince and pauper analogy going, I might be Royal by status, but in a thousand ways I'm still a pauper at heart. I might have eternal life, I might belong unshakeably to the Family of God. But I still have a sinful nature, and it will cling to me until I see Jesus face to face. On that day the struggle is over. But for now, being ONE with Jesus means NEW LIFE in the midst of the old.

Second. Being ONE with Jesus means **a new family**. Right now the Christian belongs to Jesus, we have Christ's Father as our Father, His Spirit as our Spirit, but also we have Christ's brothers and sisters as our brothers and sisters. We have a new family. If

we're ONE with Jesus, then we're also ONE with all the people Jesus is ONE with – and that means church.

I don't know how you think of church. I'm not talking about buildings or institutions, I'm talking about a Family. In the bible, church is known as the bride of Christ, the people of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus. And a relationship with church is indispensable to a relationship with Jesus. The bible says Jesus and church are as close as a head is to a body (**Ephesians 5:21-33**).

So what should I expect from a church? Fundamentally it's a family of believers and we carry each other through the struggles I've just mentioned. If I'm alone, I suppose I can tell MYSELF "Glen, Jesus loves you, keep going" but it doesn't have anything like the same power as when YOU tell me: "Glen: Jesus loves you, you can keep going." Church family is crucial to your Christian life.

What happens in church family? Let me highlight a couple of things. First, at some point you're going to want to get BAPTISED – (if you haven't been baptised already). Baptism is like the wedding ring – it proclaims your union to Jesus and your union to His people. Think about it this way: When Jesus got baptised it was saying "Jesus is ONE with us." When we get baptised it's saying "We're ONE with Jesus."

Another church practice is called the Lord's Supper or Communion or the Eucharist. It's where Christians eat bread and drink wine together. It's about centring ourselves and our churches on the cross of Jesus. Jesus' body was torn apart like bread, His blood was poured out like wine, to give us life. And Communion powerfully proclaims those truths to us.

Crucially, churches also gather around God's word, the bible. We listen in order to hear of Jesus and what He's done for us. We are reminded of His unconditional love.

If you're going to be ONE with Jesus, find a church that loves Jesus, loves His word the bible, and loves one another. You'll need it. The Christian life is not a solo adventure. You'll need your new family.

Thirdly: there's a **new conversation**. Any relationship needs conversation. We need to listen and we need to talk. Listening is all about the Bible. This book is the Father's biography of the Son. The Holy Spirit inspired 40 different authors to write these 66 books – but all of them are about the Son of God and His gift to the world. Christians read and listen to and meditate on the Bible. Because this is God talking to us – telling us of Jesus.

But Christians don't only listen, they talk. Prayer is US talking back to God. Generally Christians pray TO "Our Father" and we usually end our prayers by saying "In the name of Jesus, Amen." We don't say those things because they're magic words, they're not. But they describe the reality of prayer. I come TO the Father, IN the Name of Jesus. Because I'm ONE with the Son of God, I have access to God as FATHER. So we come to our Father and we say Thank You for things, and we say Sorry for things, and we say Please for things. Because this is part of the new conversation we're a part of.

So that's the Christian life. It's very ordinary really. It's about a new life in the midst of the old. It about a new family – the church. It's about a new conversation – listening to God in the bible, talking to God in prayer.

And it just leaves me to ask – do you want in on this? Do you want IN on Jesus? He is offered to you.

I hope you can see, being a Christian isn't a part-time hobby. It's not even a full-time job. It's an all-of-life ONENESS – like marriage. The day I married my wife, SINGLE-GLEN died. But I found a new life IN the relationship. It's the same with Jesus. You come in on a new life, a new family, a new conversation. In one sense, everything stays the same. You go back to your old job (unless you're a bank robber or something), you go back to your studies, you still have your friends. But in another sense, it's all different, because you're different and you see the rest of life differently.

Maybe you're not ready to receive Jesus. I fully understand. You need to be sure that He is who He says He is. Keep meeting with His people, keep opening up the Bible – let me recommend John's Gospel to you – and why not start to pray. You've got nothing to lose, if He's not there He won't hear. But if He is there, then ask Him to show you Jesus. As you look into these things, don't stop short of anything less than a PERSONAL ONENESS with Jesus. That's what's on offer.

Finally, maybe you do recognize Jesus for who He is. And maybe you want to receive Him. He IS yours if you'll have Him. Call on Him in prayer – say "Lord Jesus I receive you now, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death when we meet." Don't let the day end before you've called out to Jesus. And tell a Christian friend about it. They'll help you get started on your new life, your new church family, your new conversation.

So that's it: our whistle-stop tour of the Christian faith is over. That was **321: the Story of God, the world and you. The THREE invite you in. The TWO determine the world. BE ONE with the Son of God.**

