



**HOW TO
BE A CHRISTIAN
WITHOUT BEING
ANNOYING**

BETTE DOWDELL

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Bette Dowdell



How To Be A Christian Without Being Annoying

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. The Daddy You Always Deserved	3
2. A Child of God	5
3. What's So Original About Sin?	7
4. What Is This Thing Called Peace?	9
5. You Guilty Sinner You	11
6. Who Qualifies?	13
7. The Big Choice.	15
8. A Brand New You	17
9. What Makes the Difference?	19
10. First You Walk	23
11. Celebrating What Is.	25
12. Moving Past the Rule Pile	27
13. Obviously, Rules Are Not Enough	29
14. Hearing God's Voice	31
15. Ungames	35
16. Learning to Hear	37
17. Growing Up Is Good To Do	39
18. Working the Plan	41
19. Does Morality Count?	43
20. Walking Talks More Than Talking Walks	45
21. Where's the Power?	47
22. The Hold of Habits	51
23. How Far Do You Want To Go?	53
24. A Modern Day Tale	55
25. Strong Fingernails	57

26.	Who Leads and Who Follows	59
27.	No Fence to Sit On	61
28.	Why Bother?	63
29.	Big Ideas, Weak Knees.	67
30.	Jesus - An Introduction	69
31.	Trying To Put Jesus In a Box.	71
32.	Always a Two-Way Street	73
33.	Who's In Control Here?.	75
34.	On Being Unique.	77
35.	Looking In the Wrong Direction	70
36.	Maximum Defeat	83
37.	Grave Clothes.	85
38.	Dead, Absolutely Dead	87
39.	One Sunday Morning	89
40.	A Credible Witness	91
41.	Why?.	93
42.	Castles In the Air	95
43.	Comparative Confidence	99
44.	A Good Foundation Is a Solid Foundation	101
45.	Don't Believe Everything You Hear About God.	103
46.	Don't Travel Alone.	105
47.	God Is Not Running for Sheriff	107
48.	Everybody Believes In Something	109
49.	Throw Away the Scale	111
50.	Who Is Your Audience?	115
51.	Status and Power.	117
52.	About This Forgiving Thing	119
53.	Designer Gods.	121
54.	Shifting Sands	123
55.	You Can Count On Consequences	125
56.	Moving On Up	127
57.	Parlor Tricks.	131
58.	One Way	133
59.	Ignorance Is Not Bliss	135

60.	Beyond Physics	137
61.	Don't Give Up and Don't Settle	139
62.	It's All About the Finish Line	141
63.	Crashing Through Life	143
64.	The Liar's Liar	147
65.	Both A Giver and a Taker Be	149
66.	Being Clear On What Is Essential.	151
67.	Knowing Who We Are and What To Do	153
68.	The Bible - Section #1.	155
69.	The Bible - Section #2.	157
70.	Accurate But Impossible	159
71.	Same Words, New Tune	163
72.	Real Christians Get Directions	165
73.	Finding a Home	167
74.	Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner.	169
75.	How To Get the Job Done	171
	Index of Articles.	173
	Index of Scripture References	176

INTRODUCTION

Defining “Christian” might seem like describing a snowflake. There appear to be as many definitions as there are Christians. You probably know Christians who have something wonderful going on in their lives, while others lack the peace they should have and compensate by bugging the tar out of you. What makes the difference? How can you tell what’s real?

Well, those questions are exactly why I wrote this book.

Christians, being people, are different from one another, but they have a common foundation, which the Bible describes in detail. Not everybody, though, understands all that’s in the Bible. Some make it up as they go. But when people attempt to be Christian by willpower alone, they find it doesn’t work—no matter how hard they try.

How To Be A Christian Without Being Annoying explains God’s sure foundation. It shows the way to latch onto something authentic and powerful. People might still be annoyed because we’re too tall, too short, too rich, too poor, whatever, but they’ll know we’re real.

This book has seventy-five, one-page “articles.” Each will give you something to ponder, as will the brief excerpt from the Bible that accompanies it. The excerpts are a Bible sampler and give you an idea of the sort of information you’ll find there. They come from different versions of the Bible to help you decide which version fits your style, and they let you know I didn’t make up the stuff in the articles.

Read the book in any order. Start at the beginning and read to the end or “dip in” here and there to read about particular topics. Either way, enjoy your trip through these pages.

Please send your comments and questions to me at bette@confidentfaith.com.

Bette Dowdell,
Phoenix, 2006

THE DADDY YOU ALWAYS DESERVED



Anyone who believes and says that Jesus is the Son of God has God living in him, and he is living with God. We know how much God loves us because we have felt his love and because we believe him when he tells us that he loves us dearly. God is love, and anyone who lives in love is living with God and God is living in him. And as we live with Christ, our love grows more perfect and complete...We need have no fear of someone who loves us perfectly; his perfect love for us eliminates all dread of what he might do to us.

- ☞ John's first letter, chapter 4, verses 15 through 18 (I Jn. 4:15-18)
- ☞ The Living Bible (TLB)
- ☞ Written in his later years by John, Jesus' youngest disciple. This letter was written shortly before he was exiled to the island of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea just west of what is now Turkey, where he lived out the rest of his life.

THE DADDY YOU ALWAYS DESERVED

God describes himself as our father. Unfortunately, this loving description may create an obstacle for anybody who had a hurtful earthly father.

For whatever reason, some fathers don't do the parenting job well, so their children grow up never knowing a father's love. As a consequence, they believe they have little or no value. If they had value, they reason, Daddy would have loved them.

They may experience what passes for a father's love as a control device to make them jump higher, try harder. And high is never high enough. Hard is never hard enough. Daddy means being not quite good enough.

Or it may be that nothing from their father remotely resembles love because he was abusive—physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally. Here, daddy means pain.

If you grew up with a daddy who loved you for sure, you have a tiny little idea of what God is like. If you grew up without such a daddy, you need to put away your idea of what daddy means and get it behind you.

God is the daddy you always deserved.

You were always worth loving. You're worth loving now. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, you'll still be worth loving. Until the end of eternity.

That's not to say God loves everything you do. The way you live your life may break his heart.

But God loves you.



A CHILD OF GOD



See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children—think of it—and we really *are!* But since most people don't know God, naturally they don't understand that we are his children. Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, right now, and we can't even imagine what it is going to be like later on. But we do know this, that when he comes we will be like him, as a result of seeing him as he really is.

- ☞ John's first letter to the church at large, chapter 3, verses 1 through 2 (I Jn. 3:1-2)
- ☞ The Living Bible (TLB)
- ☞ John and his brother, James, both disciples of Jesus, came from a well-to-do fishing family. At the start of their time together, Jesus called them "sons of thunder" because of their explosive tempers.

A CHILD OF GOD

Not everybody is a child of God.

Many assume being God's child is somehow an automatic part of our genetic code. If we are all created equal, we must all be God's children. Right?

According to the Bible, no. Being a child of God is not automatic—for a very positive reason. God gives us freedom to live life as we choose. We are not obligated to a relationship with him. We have the option of living life with or without God.

The downside of this freedom, of course, is making the lesser choice. Lesser because we can discover all that our life was intended to be only when we live as God's child.

The good news is, anybody can become God's child. There's no magic or hocus-pocus to it. No barriers. No "earning your stripes." No secret password. Just a simple decision that's what you want to be.

It's very easy. In fact, amazingly easy. The actual decision takes an instant. You can do it anywhere, any time, in any circumstances.

But it changes everything.

This decision is the first step in a journey that will last a lifetime. And then some.

It starts you on your daily walk with God. It makes God your father, and allows him to lead you on your path to godliness. Your path to life as God intended it to be.



WHAT'S SO ORIGINAL ABOUT SIN?



God makes people right with himself through their faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for all who believe in Christ, because all people are the same: All have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory, and all need to be made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift.

- ✓ Romans, chapter 3, verses 22 through 24 (Rom. 3:22-24)
- ✓ New Century Version (NCV)
- ✓ Paul's letter to the church at Rome. Written in preparation for his first trip to Rome, this letter is an organized presentation of Paul's theology. In his letters, Paul uses the circuitous Greek logic of the day, which takes some understanding now.

WHAT'S SO ORIGINAL ABOUT SIN?

The Bible says we are all sinners. Everybody is a sinner. No exceptions.

Of course, we want exceptions. More specifically, we want to be the exception. And we think God's pretty uncaring to lay a guilt trip like sin on us.

But it's not about guilt; it's about love. Love willing to point out the barrier that keeps us from the best possible life.

Theologians describe it as "original sin," which means we are born that way. Sin is part of the human condition. We did nothing to cause the condition, and we cannot fix it.

But our sinful nature separates us from God. So God made a way. Since we cannot solve our sin problem, God created a solution for us.

Jesus' death on that terrible cross paid the price for sin. Your sin. My sin. The sins of the world. Although he was as human as we are, he was perfect. Fathered by God's Spirit, he didn't carry our burden of original sin. He was the perfect sacrifice that sin required, and his perfection pays for our imperfection, allowing God's Spirit to start changing our too human nature.

When we choose to make God the Lord of our life (that is, our boss), our sins are charged to Jesus' account and marked "paid in full." And God chooses to forget them. Our slate is wiped clean. Sin's separation is gone.

We have come home.



WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED PEACE?



As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature.

- ☞ Peter's second letter, chapter 1, verses 3 through 4 (II Pet.1:3-4)
- ☞ New Living Translation (NLT)
- ☞ Written by Peter, the leader of Jesus' "inner circle," to the churches across Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey. The areas mentioned cover about two thousand square miles. The churches circulated all the letters now recorded in the New Testament, reading them aloud many times in front of each group so the contents could be memorized, a practice of the day.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED PEACE?

Charles Wesley lived in the sixteenth century, and during his life, wrote more than 6500 hymns. With all that song-writing, it is a wonder he had time to eat. A greater wonder, though, is the timelessness of his words. A verse in one of his hymns states:

“He breaks the power of canceled sin.

He sets the prisoner free.

His blood can make the foulest clean.

His blood availed for me.”

The blood this verse refers to is the blood Jesus shed dying for our sins, the sacrifice that created the way we can become whole. He made the gift of real life, salvation, available.

We accept this wonderful gift when we become a child of God. And not only does God’s grace cancel our sin, it also breaks sin’s power to hold us prisoners. Change is possible.

Anything God calls sin, he gives us the power to conquer. We are not helpless. God offers us enough power to overcome anything that keeps us from his best for us.

Is it magic? No. Is it automatic, without effort? Rarely. There’s work to do, decisions to make, difficulties to overcome. It can be tough. But with God’s power in us, joining ours, we can be free.

God’s power is available to all his children. As much as we can handle. The amount of power we receive from God is roughly equal to our commitment to God.

And, as Wesley wrote, *“Tis life, and health, and peace.”*

