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“HERE’S HOW...”

A leaflet making the rounds purports to instruct us on the way to have “an eternal relationship with God.” The suggested four-point plan is as follows:

1. **Admit Your Sin**—“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).
2. **Put Your Trust in Jesus Christ**—“God loves us so much that He gave us His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not die, but will have everlasting life” (John 3:16).
3. **Make Your Decision**—“If you confess with your mouth that ‘Jesus is Lord!’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9)
4. **Now Turn Away from Your Sin**—“Repent, then turn to God so that your sins will be forgiven” (Acts 3:19)

The four points were concluded with a suggested prayer: “I now believe that Christ died for me so God could forgive my sin. I have now received the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and with His strength I will turn from my sin.—Amen.”

Bible believers can applaud the zeal and sincerity of the leaflet’s distributors. However, their suggested way to Heaven gives false hope in this life and will leave one sorely disappointed at The Judgment. Let us examine the leaflet’s plan:

1. If one does not admit he is a sinner, in need of God’s grace, he will never approach Him for salvation. So far, so good.
2. If one doesn’t believe in/trust Jesus as the Savior—the only One—he cannot be saved. Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). OK, so far.
3. One must confess with the mouth the faith that is in the heart. OK, but actually the point of “decision” is repentance.
4. One must also repent of his sins and turn to God to be saved. Here the leaflet comes up short, making no distinction between *repent* and *turn* and leaving the impression that forgiveness of sins is granted at the point of repentance.

Note the following:

Repent and *turn* in Acts 3:19 are different words with different meanings (unless the instructions are merely to repent and repent or turn and turn. *Repent* means to change one’s mind. *Turn* is a separate action meaning to change one’s life.

This change must have a beginning point, which is the act of baptism (Rom. 6:4—“newness of life”). The same Peter who directed believers to “repent and be baptized” on Pentecost told them here to “repent and turn.” Did he preach different plans to different hearers? Absolutely not! Jesus has one plan of salvation for all, beginning in belief and concluding in (and not before) baptism (Mark 16:15–16).

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