

What is the Bible's main objective?

The Bible is the most significant and most widely read book in the world literature.

98% of the people have a mistaken perception of what the Bible wants and what its core messages is.

*Dear Andrew,**

Interest in the Bible is growing. In the past year 561 million biblical writings were distributed worldwide. In German-speaking countries about 8 million people read often or regularly in the Bible.

Today, I am writing about the main objective of the Bible. Dr. James Kennedy estimates that 98% have a mistaken perception of the Bible's main objective. That is why I am writing to you about this in detail. Then, you can explain it more easily to others.

The Bible's main objective is to give us an answer to the question:

How can a person receive new, eternal life?

Jesus Christus said: *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10 NKJV)

Many have the desire to get something from life. However, Jesus Christ wants to not only give us something from life, but also a rich and fulfilled life. This life has to do with love, joy, freedom, security and sure hope.

This new life has positive effects on scholastics, career, friendship, marriage, family, health and our future. And this new life according to God's will be carried on in a completely new dimension for all eternity.

Buy a paperback book in a Christian bookstore with testimonials from people, who have found a new life with Christ. Personally, I am very glad that I have this new life.

* Andrew after the biblical Andrew in John 1:40-42.
The reason – Andrew led his brother Peter to Jesus.

On what basis does God give a new life?

We can find the answer in the 'gospel', which means 'good news' or 'glad tidings'. You will quickly realize why this message makes you happy. It is the best news people have ever heard.

Imagine that you would die today and you would have to give God an answer to the following question: "Why do you expect eternal life from Me?" What would you answer? Frequent answers are:

- Because I kept the commandments ...
- Because I did good ...
- Because I led a respectable life ...

Many think that if they do this or that, then they will receive eternal life in return. I recommend every person to keep God's commandments, to do good and to lead a respectable life. But the idea of receiving new life in return is totally wrong. The Bible teaches the opposite: A new life is a gift of love from God. There is no way that we can earn a new life. Not even by suffering. When I realized this, I was very happy. I will tell you why a little later – also about what importance good works have.

Some may ask: Is doing good in vain then? By no means. God values every good deed. But we can't earn eternal life with them. God gives new life to those who trust Him on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice.

A sacrificial death for someone else can only happen out of love. Love can be reciprocated, but it can't be earned.

Thankfully, we can't earn a new life.

Otherwise the rich, powerful, intelligent and healthy would be favored. Others would have a disadvantage. Furthermore, we would live in constant fear whether we had done enough or if our deeds had been solely done out of pure and good motives. Even if we were able from now on to balance the 'scale', then the question would still remain about our past.

If we had to earn eternal life and took it really seriously, then we would end up with a nervous breakdown or in despair. There was someone who took it very seriously. He broke down in the process. You know him.

It was the then Augustinian monk Martin Luther. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

How much do you have to pay for receiving a gift? Isn't it an insult to want to pay for a gift? I once asked the children in my religion class how much they had paid for the Christmas gifts they had received. One child answered: "We didn't need to pay anything, but we thanked our parents for them."

We should do the same with God's gift: Accept it and express our thanks by the way we live. Have you thought enough about God's splendid gift of love and goodness?

Why do we need a new life?

Because we lost the original life through sin. What is sin? At the deepest level it is indifference towards or rebellion against God. According to God's diagnosis, who has sinned? Everyone – including you and me:

“There is none righteous, no, not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:10,23 NKJV)

However, today many people don't consider themselves sinners.

I remember a conversation I had with a young businessman. He permitted me to ask him a few questions. Amongst other questions, I asked him if he was a sinner. He laughed out loud: “No, I take care of my family. I do my job at the company. I don't smoke or drink.”

He permitted me to ask him another question: “Have you ever committed adultery?” “Yes, I have.” He didn't consider himself a sinner. He was just deceiving himself. He was using the head-in-the-sand policy.

The secretary of a Christian director was convinced that she wasn't a sinner.

He asked her once: “Could it be that you think, say or do something wrong once a day?” The young woman answered in the affirmative after thinking for a few moments. The director continued: “Could it even be that you think, say or do something wrong two or three times a day?”

Her answer: “It definitely happens three times a day.” Her boss calculated for her: “Three sins a day makes a good 1,000 sins a year. If we don't count the first ten years of your life, then you already have 15,000 sins.” An unusual calculation.

What consequences does sin have?

The Bible says: *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God.”* (Isaiah 59:2 NKJV) And *“... the wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23 NKJV)

God's verdict for sin is the death sentence. We can even understand this. If death wasn't the consequence of sin, then sin would always continue to exist. If a world without selfishness, hate, war and misery should ever again exist, then sin has to be completely exterminated. The only way is death.

We are guilty and therefore condemned men. We can't save ourselves. However, if we look to God, then we have a justified hope.

What does the Bible say about God's character?

“God is love” and *“God is righteous”*. (1 John 4:8; Daniel 9:14 NKJV) Righteousness is a result of love. If God were to encourage wrong, then He would be neither loving nor righteous. In the human way of looking at things this leads to a problem. It is often difficult for us to reconcile love and righteousness. Was this possibly also a problem for God?

“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.” (John 3:16 NKJV)

In His great love God solved the problem with the sacrificial death of His Son for you and me. Due to His righteousness God has to condemn us, but due to His love He personally assumes the penalty for every person, who trusts Him.

Who is Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us?

The Bible shows us that Jesus Christ is God. The Son of God became a human in order to save us.

If Jesus had only been a human or an angel, then He couldn't have saved us. Only God could carry the sum of all the guilt.

Assuming that God had created an angel to die for us – provided that the problem could have been solved this way – wouldn't that somehow be cheap? Nothing less than the infinitely great sacrifice of the Son of God was able to express God's love to us humans.

Jesus Christ is the creator of the world (John 1:1-3,14; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). Only the creator has the power to redeem us. Without creative power there is no resurrection to eternal life.

Jesus Christ is also the divine law-giver (1 Cor. 10:4; James 4:12 + John 5:22). Only the law-giver could make a change by taking the punishment we deserved on Himself.

When we realize that God was ready to sacrifice Himself for us humans, then we begin to understand His great love. Christ became a mediator through whom God proved His infinite love for a sinful fallen world.

There was only one possibility: Either Christ sacrificed Himself for us or we would all be eternally lost. The Bible clearly states: Jesus carried our sins (1 Peter 2:22,24; Isaiah 53:46).

Why can Jesus Christ be my substitute?

It was also difficult for me to understand how someone else could carry my debt. However, there are a number of cases in history, where a substitute died for someone or took their punishment.

Reporters discovered before a trial that the judge and the defendant had been college friends. Hence, the courtroom was full of curious people. What would the judge do? The trial proceeded entirely correctly. The verdict was a large money fine. Since they knew ahead of time that the convicted man couldn't pay – it had to do with embezzlement – the court officer was waiting to lead him away.

After the judge laid aside his robe, he stood in front of his friend and said: "Do you still believe that I am your friend?" An angry glare was his answer. The judge continued: "I was your judge. As a judge I couldn't do otherwise. As a judge I have to give a fair verdict. But now I want to show you that I am your friend."

Before the eyes of his friend he wrote a check for the high amount to which he had just sentenced him. It was a great financial sacrifice for the judge. He held the check out to the condemned man. Shamefacedly, he hesitated to accept it. But finally, he gratefully and trustingly took the check from his friend, the judge. He was able to leave the courtroom as a free man together with his friend. The sentence wasn't enforced. The penalty had been paid by someone else. When a debt has been paid, then there is nothing left to pay.

According to John 5:22 Jesus Christ is our judge. The judge of the earth will judge fairly. He loves you and wants to be your friend (Romans 5:10; John 15:14). Due to His love, He is willing to pay for you. He is able to do this because of His sacrifice. When you seek His friendship and thankfully and trustingly accept His offer, then He will also pay your debt and the sentence won't be enforced. (John 5:24)

Then you can "go home" together with your friend as a free man (John 14:13).

How can Jesus become my friend?

By trusting Him, by **believing** Him.

What has to be done in order to receive new life?

A prison warden wanted to know:
"What must I do to be saved."

The answer was:
"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and you will be saved...."
(Acts 16:30-31 NKJV)

*The important thing is to believe
in Jesus Christ.*

What does 'belief' actually mean?

Unfortunately, the meaning of 'belief' is watered down today. The English word 'belief' comes from West Germanic 'ga-laubon', meaning: 'to hold dear, esteem, trust'. Because this is so important, I want to explain it further.

"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (James 2:19 NKJV) Let's simply call this '**intellectual-belief**'.

Some people pray before an operation or in an emergency. Let's call this '**emergency-belief**'. Intellectual-belief is good. Emergency-belief, which can help us have experiences with God's love, is also good. Both are part of saving belief. But intellectual-belief and emergency-belief are still not saving belief.

Complete or saving belief, according to the biblical understanding, has to do with **me completely entrusting myself** to Jesus Christ.

Here is an illustration of true belief:

A doctor loves a young woman. He would like to marry her. The young lady is convinced that this man is a good person and an outstanding physician. (This is intellectual-belief.) She needs an appendix operation. In her time of need, she asks the doctor for help. (This is emergency-belief.)

The doctor is certainly glad about her good opinion of him. He will also gladly perform the surgery. Now, the young woman is his patient. But if that was all, then it would definitely not be enough for him. He loves her and wants to marry her. When she responds to his affections, then there is a preliminary 'yes' in their engagement, which is then followed by the ultimate 'I do' during the wedding vows. At the moment she says 'I do' to a life together, she has entrusted herself to him. (This is saving belief.)

A covenant with the living God

This is an illustration of our relationship with Jesus Christ. We hear about Him or read about Him and eventually we ask Him for help. Many stop here and remain patients of Jesus, instead of entering the best covenant there is: a personal love-relationship. His love, which we

get to know through the Bible or experiences with Him, leads us to trust Him more and more. We turn to Him in a personal prayer (this is the engagement). When we have gotten to know Him better and trust Him more, then we surrender our lives to Him. We are saying YES to the wedding (the wedding is equivalent to the biblical baptism).

The Bible compares the relationship to Christ with a marriage

At the moment the young woman said out of love and trust 'I do' for life, she became his wife. Thus, we become close friends with Jesus or children of God at the moment we give Him a complete, committed 'I do' for our life.

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12 NKJV)

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God ..." (John 1:12 NKJV)

From this moment on we have new life. When we remain in this relationship with God, then we will be resurrected at Jesus' second coming to eternal life.

A marriage is a very good comparison for our relationship with God. The Bible uses this illustration, for example, in Ephesians 5:22-33.

The 'I do' at the wedding changes a lot of things. Usually, the woman takes on the name of her husband. Both of them leave their parents' home, move into a home together and then lead a life together. It is the same with Jesus Christ. When we say 'I do' to Him, then we want to live with Him. We enjoy reading His love letter – the Bible –, we like to talk with Him – prayer –, we are glad that He has time for us every day – worship or quiet time –, and that He wants to spend a whole day with us every week – Sabbath and at church. We delight in shaping our lives with Him – mission or church work. And one day, we will be able to accept the greatest inheritance there is: eternal life in God's kingdom.

What is with good works?

Now for a few words about good works. The fundamental error of 98% of the people is that they think the Bible teaches that we have to earn eternal life.

What importance do good works have?

Let's read Ephesians 2:8-9 again and also verse 10 (NKJV): *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves (i.e. not through your merits); it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand (for which God prepared us beforehand) that we should walk in them.”*

We are not saved by good works, but by God's grace – without any merits from us. From the moment we are saved through our trust in Je-

sus Christ, we have a new relationship to Him. He has given us a new and changed life. He has prepared good works for us in this new life, so that we can perform them.

Now, we want to gladden Jesus by demonstrating our love and thankfulness. And He gives us strength for this new life. May I say it like this: **The good works aren't a condition for our salvation, rather the fruit of our salvation.**

Let's return to the example of a marriage.

A young lady won't marry a young man just because he brings her flowers. But if they love each other, the flowers can be a sign of their love.

When a couple is married, then the husband gives his wife housekeeping money. Is this a good deed? The wife cooks for her husband and keeps his suits in good order. Are those good deeds?

No one would consider these good deeds, with which they are earning their marriage. They are already married. It is the natural result of their love relationship.

Let me summarize: **We receive new life when we enter a close trust-relationship with Jesus Christ.**

My own Experience

For years I believed in God and Jesus Christ. I believed everything the Bible taught. I acknowledged it all with my mind. I also prayed and frequently had answered prayers. Then

the day came, when I discovered that I hadn't committed myself to Jesus Christ yet.

This insight caused me to have an inner struggle all week. I feared a loss if I would commit my life to Jesus. Until I realized that Jesus Christ loves me with a divine love and that He had proven that by dying for me. Then I realized that complete surrender to Him isn't a risk, but rather a great benefit.

That same day I said 'I do' to Him and consecrated my life to Him in a simple prayer. This changed my life in a positive way. I am enthusiastic about my God. Looking back, I only regret one thing: That I hadn't realized this earlier and done it earlier.

I am now happy when I can help someone find this new life through Jesus Christ.

An Important Step in a Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ

The following prayer is an opportunity to express your trust in God. It isn't a matter of using exactly this wording, rather that we honestly mean and want what we say to God.

"Father in heaven, I have come to realize that I have tried to control my own life and have separated myself from You. Forgive me my sin. Thank you that you have forgiven my sin because Christ died for me and has become my Redeemer. Lord Jesus, please take over the lordship of my life and change me, like You want me to be."

Prayer

Such a prayer of surrender to Jesus Christ can be compared with an engagement. After the engagement, the couple get to know each other better and better and learn to appreciate each other more.

Then the marriage follows. In this comparison the marriage is equivalent to biblical baptism.

With warm greetings,

Helmut

Helpfully was „New Testament Witnessing“ by Elden K. Walter.



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