

# I'm a Christian because...

## Of relationship

I'm a Christian because of a Relationship that affects all of my relationships.

The historical survival and internal agreement of the Bible, the beauty and intricacy of the world around us, and the natural law arguments for a Law-giver all surely help explain why I believe in the Christian God. But, none of these are enough to sustain my faith in an Unseen Being without the ongoing experience of Relationship with God.

I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior because I have experienced the wonderful freedom and joy that comes when I exchange my brokenness, my sin, and my weakness for Him. When I pour out my heart and my struggles to Him, He provides peace and forgiveness that is indescribable. Amazing grace. I can walk through life with Him. I can commune with Him throughout my day, whether I'm sitting in a classroom in Princeton, a beach in Cape Town, or the plane that I'm currently writing this on. The fact that I don't commune with God at times, and still rely on myself, and my own priorities, only reinforces my proclivity for sin and self-reliance, and my need for deeper relationship with God.

Jesus didn't come into this world to enforce good behavior, offer moral teaching that would make us more attractive to God, get us into an eternal by-and-by or a religious organization, or star on Urban Outfitters t-shirts; He came to pay the price for sin that separates man from God. He came to enable relationship through His surrender.

Our Relationship with God will never reach the full potential of what it can be unless it also is marked by surrender. Mine began in earnest the summer before I came to Princeton. I grew up with religion, with all of its trappings of guilt and behavioral commands. I approached God thinking that I just needed to be good, and that I would be okay if I allowed Him to control or influence certain parts of my life (but not everything). Even though there were echoes of the peace and freedom found in relationship with God in this halfway place, I found myself questioning and unsatisfied. I thought that the answer was to jettison faith, and so I did. Why would I need or even want God when I was going to Princeton in the fall, cruising around the Mediterranean with my best friend for half the summer, and experiencing the party lifestyle in full? Yet I still woke up miserable and depressed, longing for something more. Weeks before I came to Princeton, I finally realized that the only taste of anything remotely close to the purpose and peace that I was so hungry for had been in moments of relating to God in prayer and worship. And so, at a church service a month before I came to Princeton, I finally voiced my surrender in areas that I had previously refused to allow God access to. Not only did God's peace and love fill my heart that day, but the process of hearing God's voice, and communing with Him, began.

Relationship with God is not a one-way street. As much as I can pour out the innermost thoughts and cries of my heart, God always has more that He wants to say: guidance sometimes, but often just encouragement and reinforcement of who He sees me as: His child. Forgiven. Righteous. Not because I have earned or deserved these things through anything I have done, but purely because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to pay the price for our sins. God doesn't relate to us through our wholeness and righteousness, but in our brokenness, and our realization of our need for a Savior.

If you see me around campus, you can probably tell the days where I've found that relationship with God through surrender, and days where I haven't, because it spills over into all of my relationships. My relationship with God is the only source I've found for selfless love in my life. It provides the stability and foundation from which I can love and serve others in my community and enter into meaningful friendships and relationships. When I fail to maintain that relationship with God, there is an unpleasant change in me as a person which reminds me both of my natural selfishness and of the incredible transformation that God is continuing to work in me. 1 John 4:19 says "We love because He first loved us." Everything else from which I might draw joy, or the ability to empathize or care for others, whether from my own efforts, successes, or duty, or the circumstances of life, is unable to produce in me the type of supernatural love that relationship with God enables. Experiencing the love of God fills my heart with love for Him in response, but also enables me to love people and offer grace and forgiveness to those around me.

People often question the existence of an unseen and often times intangible Redeemer in Jesus, and find those who claim personal relationship with Him or God supremely ego-centric or delusional. But I would dare you to give Him a try. To take Him on His Words, and His terms. To acknowledge your brokenness, and to look honestly into your life and see whether or how He might be pursuing you. It doesn't matter what you've done, who you are, or where you've been; all it takes is acknowledgement of our complete need for God.

Christian theologian Alister McGrath sums up the importance of relationship well: "For the Christian, 'truth' is not primarily about logical propositions or statements, but about an encounter with the living God himself, and the consequent struggle to try and put into words that greater reality." For me, logical propositions and philosophical arguments still carry weight, but their importance is far outweighed by the invigorating and refreshing relationship I have with Jesus Christ. I hope that my struggle to translate this 'greater reality' into words may inspire you to seek a relationship with God through Jesus.

## Chris Lumry '10