**If you do not have a relationship with God,** but you desire the assurance of being "right with God" - and the peace of knowing there is life after death and peace during difficult times, please read the following:

God is love.   God is holy.    These two qualities of God are at the center of the discussion about a relationship with God.

First, God created us and loves us with an unimaginable and undeserved love.

God wants the best life for us that is possible - a life of meaning and purpose.

And God wants to be everything to us! Best friends forever!

How beautiful!

You may ask, “If this is true, why doesn’t everyone have a happy and meaningful life?”

Well, the simple cold inconvenient truth is that human beings interrupted God's plan. We all have a broken relationship with God and this brings disorder to our lives. We interrupt God’s plan by trying to go it alone, by trying to be our own boss.  We end up unhappy with ourselves, others, and the world around us.  Our nature and behavior have separated us from God and each other.

How can a holy God be friends with us?

He can't.

God cannot stand the ugliness of our hurtful and harmful thoughts and behaviors.

God even puts a list in Proverbs 6: 17-19 of the things he hates!

Pride, lies, those who murder the innocent, a heart that devises wicked imaginations and feet that run to mischief, one who perverts justice, and one who purposely spreads discord among others.

And then there are the "Big Ten:" have no other gods but God, don't allow anything material to steal your affection and attention from God, hold God's name in high esteem, rest at least once a week, honor your mother and father, do not commit murder or adultery, or steal, or lie in court, or envy anything about your neighbor's life.

 And in Matthew 25, God states what we should be doing: feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, taking in the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and the imprisoned.

The sad truth of the human condition is that all of us have failed to live up to these high standards.  We are about as far from holy as one gets. (You are not alone in this.)

The Apostle Paul says it in his letter to the church at Rome:  "For ALL have sinned and come short of   the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

So, how do we become holy and acceptable to God?

This is where God's love comes to the rescue!

He offered himself - God goes to unbelievable lengths to personally get involved in making things right for us - because he loves us so much.

We cannot become holy - so he does it for us!  How?

God left the splendor of heaven and came to earth to live as a man - but perfectly.

Jesus was able to live a sinless life.  He did it!

But then he was punished - not for his own sins, but for ours!

In C.S. Lewis' book The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe - Aslan the Lion illustrates what Jesus did for us - Aslan agrees to be killed to save Edmond (who deserved to die as a traitor) and because of a deeper truth, through his innocent self-sacrifice, Aslan dies, but rises from the dead and rescues all of Narnia - ending the tyranny of evil once and for all.

Jesus did that for all of humanity.  He was tortured and then hung on and died on a cross he did not deserve.  We deserved to die, but now because of Jesus' willing self-sacrifice, our "crimes" are paid for - we are free - we have access to a relationship with God and eternal life with Him!  John 3: 16 & 17 states this so well:  "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

You will find joy and meaning in life if you receive and confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and begin a life of discipleship now.

When you are ready to make these truths real in your life, simply open your heart in prayer. You may use this prayer:

*“God, I realize I have not followed your plan.  Forgive me.  I deserve to be unhappy and alone, but thank you for sending Jesus to take my punishment for me so the relationship between you and me - and others - can be healed.  I receive Jesus now as my Savior and Lord.  You want me to follow the example of your son Jesus, but I can’t seem to be like Him by myself.  Help me become your disciple by making your forgiveness and your presence real to me.  Help me Holy Spirit to understand God and the plan for the rest of my life and I will try to follow it in my new relationship with you.  Amen.”*

Expect changes and great things to take place in your life.

For help in understanding your new life:

Be assured daily of God’s love for you.  Remind yourself God loves and saved you.

Become a part of his family by going to a local church.

Seek out other Christians for a community of encouragement and support.

Read a Bible often, especially the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Claim - Accept that God’s promises apply to your life - in these Gospels and in the whole Bible.

Pray often to God.  (Just talk to God like you would a good friend.)

Ask others to pray for you.

Tell others what is happening in your life.

Let Jesus use you to love and serve others.

Celebrate the joy of your new knowledge and relationship with God.

We just have to believe that this is so!  And then live like it is so!

A.W. Tozer says that we are saved by accepting Christ as our Savior; we are made holy   
by accepting Christ as our Lord . . . and we rejoice in the free gift of salvation by grace through faith.  But this great minister also says. "Remind me that we are saved to serve."  The truth is - salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the sacred Scriptures.  Once we believe that Jesus did the work of making us holy before God, then we need to do the work of serving God and others as a lifelong "Thank you" to Jesus!

Welcome to the family!