Dear Dr. Van Dusen:

Cordial greetings from sunny California! Thank you for your recent kindnesses. The warm expression of your desire to know more about Jesus Christ, the Lord, encourages me to explain briefly the basic facts concerning the Christian life.

First, I would like to have you think of the Christian life as a great adventure, for Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Second, I want you to know that God loves us and has a wonderful, exciting plan for every life. We are not creatures of chance, brought into the world for a meaningless, miserable existence; but rather, we are creatures of destiny, created for lives of purpose and joyful service. Any student knows that there are definite laws in the physical realm that are inviolate; just so, there are definite spiritual laws that govern our spiritual lives.

Since man is the highest known form of life, and since there is a purpose for everything else, does it not make sense that there is a plan for us? If God created us for a purpose, does it not logically follow that that purpose somehow, somewhere, has been revealed? Would this One who created us then leave us to shift for ourselves? All evidence would demonstrate the contrary. How, then, can man know God’s plan?
There are 11 living religions, and most of them have their "sacred writings." Yet, when these are studied in an objective manner, it soon becomes very evident that the Old and New Testaments of the Bible differ vastly from the others. Though there is much good in the writings of these various religions, it soon becomes obvious that they in no way compare with the sacred Scriptures upon which Christianity is based.

While studying for three years in two of our country's leading seminaries under some of the world's greatest scholars, it was proven conclusively to me that, in a unique and special way, God has spoken to men through the writings of the Bible.

Every man is seeking happiness, but the Bible says that true happiness can be found only through God's way. Let me explain simply what this way is. The Bible says that God is holy and that man is sinful. There is a great chasm between them. Man is continually trying to find God (see Diagram 1). From the most ignorant savage to the most brilliant professor on the university campus, man is trying to find God and the abundant life through his own efforts. Through the various philosophies and religions of history, man has tried to cross this chasm to find God and a life of purpose and happiness. Man can no more bridge this chasm than he can jump across the Grand Canyon flatfooted, or climb to heaven on a six-foot ladder. The Bible explains that this is impossible because God is holy and righteous, and man is sinful. Man was created to have fellowship with God, but because of his own stubborn self-will and disobedience, man chose to go his own independent way and fellowship was broken. This is what the Bible calls sin.

Pull the plug of a floor lamp out of its wall socket; contact with the electrical current is broken and the light goes out. This is comparable to what happens to man when fellowship with God is broken. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23); "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

You will observe that I am not saying that sin is a matter of getting drunk, committing murder, being immoral, etc. These are only the results of sin. You say, "What are the symptoms of a life separated from God?" In addition to some of the grosser sins, there are worry, irritability, lack of purpose in life, no goal, no power, no real interest in living, utter boredom, inferiority complex, frustration, desire to escape reality, and fear of death. These and many others are evidence that man is cut off from the only One who can give him the power to live the abundant life.

St. Augustine, one of the greatest philosophers of all time, said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

Pascal, the great physicist and philosopher, more recently said, as he described the longing in the human heart, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man, which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Now, if God has a plan for us, a plan which includes a full and abundant life, and all of man's efforts to find God are futile, we must turn to the Bible to see God's way.

The Bible tells us that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). In other words, this great chasm between God and man cannot be bridged by man's effort, but only by God's effort through His Son, Jesus Christ. Let me call your
attention to the fact that we cannot know God through good works. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Good works will follow an acceptance of God’s gift, as an expression of our gratitude.

Religion and philosophy have been defined as man’s best attempts to find God. Christianity has been defined as God’s best effort to find man.

Now, who is this person, Jesus Christ, that He, more than anyone who has ever lived, has the power to bridge this chasm between a Holy God and sinful man? (See Diagram 2.) By way of review, Jesus of Nazareth was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary almost 2,000 years ago. Hundreds of years before, great prophets of Israel foretold His coming. The Old Testament, which was written by many individuals over a period of 1,500 years, contains over 300 references to His coming. At the age of 30, He began His public ministry. Space will not allow for details except to say that, in the three years following, He gave man the formula for a full and abundant life, and for a life to come.

The life Jesus led, the miracles He performed, the words He spoke, His death on the cross, His resurrection, His ascent to heaven, all point to the fact that He was not mere man, but more than man. He Himself claimed, “I and My Father are One” (John 10:30); and “he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Arnold Toynbee, eminent historian of our day, has given more space to consider the greatest teacher, the greatest example, the greatest leader the world has ever known) would be, as He Himself claimed to be, and as the Bible tells us that He is, the one person who could bridge the chasm between God and man?

You will remember Romans 6:23, to which I referred, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” As you study the religions and philosophies of the world, you will find no provision for man’s sin, apart from the cross of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission or forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22). In Acts 4:12, we are told, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). Let me
quote to you what Jesus said to a man who came to Him for counsel. They talked, even as we have talked. Turn to the third chapter of John’s Gospel and read the first eight verses. First, notice who Nicodemus was.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, one of the great religious leaders of his day. We find that, so far as the law was concerned, he was above reproach. He was moral and ethical. He was so eager to please God that he prayed seven times a day. He went to the synagogue to worship God three times a day. Yet he saw in the life of Jesus something which he had never experienced himself; there was a different quality of life altogether. You will note that Nicodemus approached Jesus by saying, ‘Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him.’ Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus saith unto Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” (John 3:2-6).

Consider, for example, a caterpillar crawling in the dust—an ugly, hairy worm. One day this worm weaves about its body a cocoon. From this cocoon there emerges a beautiful butterfly. We do not understand fully what has taken place. We realize only that where once a worm crawled in the dust, now a butterfly soars in the heavens. So it is in the lives of Christians. Where once we lived on the lowest level as sinful, egocentric individuals, we now dwell on the highest plane, experiencing full and abundant lives as children of God. An individual becomes a Christian through a spiritual birth. In other words, God is Spirit and we cannot communicate with Him until we become spiritual creatures. (This is what takes place when Jesus comes to live in our lives.) Without His indwelling presence, we cannot communicate with God; we know nothing of His plan for our lives; the Word of God is a dull, uninteresting book. However, when Jesus comes into our lives, we become Spirit-controlled; we love to be with Christians, we love to read the Word of God and we want our lives to count for Him. Just suppose, for the sake of illustration, that we are sitting in a room and we know that there are a number of television programs available to us. We are looking and listening, yet we cannot see the images or hear the voices. What is needed? An instrument—a television set. The moment that we move the television set into the room and turn the dial, we can hear a voice and see an image. So it is when Christ comes into our lives. He is our divine instrument, tuning us in to God, making known God’s will and love for our lives.

Basically, the only thing that separates an individual from God—and thus from His love and forgiveness—is his own self-will. (Please do not think me presumptuous. I do not wish to embarrass you by encouraging you to do anything that you are reluctant to do. However, because you expressed such genuine interest in knowing more about these matters when we talked face to face, I am taking the liberty, as one who sincerely cares, by encouraging you to enter into this relationship with Christ today—now!)

Well do I remember that night several years ago when, alone in my room, I knelt to surrender my will for the will of Christ. While in prayer, I invited Him to enter the “door” of my life, forgive my sin and take His rightful place on the throne. I must confess that there was no great emotional response, as some have—actually none at all—but, true to His promise, Christ came in; and gradually, like the blooming of a lovely rose, the beauty and fragrance of His
presence became real to me. Though I had been perfectly happy and challenged with life, He gave me a new quality of life altogether—a promise of abundant life fulfilled in ways too numerous to mention.

God loves you so much that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross for your sins; and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved you enough to die on the cross for you. Here He is, the greatest leader, the greatest teacher, the greatest example the world has ever known. But more than this, He is the Son of God, your Savior. Can you think of anyone whom you would rather follow?

Perhaps you are asking, “Suppose I invite Christ into my life and nothing happens? Maybe the Lord will not hear me.” May I assure you that you can trust Christ. He promised to come in. He does not lie. A chemist going into a laboratory to work an experiment knows that, by following the Table of Chemical Valence, he will get the desired results. The mathematician knows that the multiplication table is tried and dependable, and that the law of gravity is inviolate. Just so, the laws of the spiritual realm are definite and true, and when God, who created all things and established the laws that govern all things, says that He will enter and change your life, you may accept this promise without question.

However, a word of caution is in order. Do not put undue emphasis on feelings. There must be a balanced emphasis on fact (intellect), faith (trust, involving the will), and feeling (involving the emotions). Meditate on the following verses:

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20). “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). He has come to forgive your sins. He has come to bring peace and purpose to life.

Our lives are filled with many activities, such as business, travel, finances, social life and home life, with no real purpose or meaning. Jesus knocks at the heart’s door, seeking entrance. He will not force Himself. Jesus wants to come into your life and make harmony out of discord—to create meaning and purpose where now there is something lacking. He wants to forgive your sin and bridge the gulf between you and God. He does not want to enter your life as a guest, but He wants to control your life as Lord and Master.

There is a throne in each heart. All of these years, your ego has been on the throne. Now Christ waits for you to invite Him to be on the throne. You must step down and relinquish the authority of your life to Him.

You can see from this simple diagram how, when Christ becomes Lord of your life, He becomes Lord of every activity, which, as you can see, makes for a harmonious life. Is it not better to be controlled by the infinite, loving God who created you and suffered for you than to continue under the control of finite self?
The great difference Christ makes may be seen in the realm of marriage. Notice that, according to Harvard University’s famous sociologist, Dr. Pitirim Sorokin, two of every five marriages in recent years in the United States ended in divorce. However, in Christian marriages, where the family practice of Bible study and prayer is observed daily, there is only one divorce in every 1,015 marriages. Why the difference? This is simple. The ego of the husband reacts against the ego of the wife, or vice versa. Friction and discord result. Yet when Christ is on the throne of each life, there can be no discord, only harmony, as He does not war against Himself.

In John 1:12, we are told, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:11,12). (Speaking of life, few people give serious thought to the fact that we must one day die. The Scripture reminds us that “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment”[Hebrews 9:27]. Christ prepares men for death as well as for life, and a man is not ready to live until he is ready to die.)

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

Will you not sincerely invite the Lord Jesus into your heart, and surrender your will completely to Him, right now? We can talk with God through prayer. Why not find a quiet place where you can kneel or bow reverently in God’s presence and ask Christ to come into your heart. In your prayer, you can say something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I invite You to come into my life, forgive my sins and become my Lord and Master.” Pray in your own words. God knows your heart and is not concerned with your words, but rather with the attitude of your heart.

To invite Christ into your life is absolutely the most important decision that you will ever make; and when you do so, several wonderful things will happen:
1. Christ will actually come to live in your heart.
2. Your sins will be forgiven.
3. You will truly become a child of God.
4. You are assured of heaven.
5. Your life becomes a great adventure, as God reveals His plan and purpose.

Did you ask Christ into your heart? Were you sincere? Where is He right now? In the event that you are disappointed because there may have been no great emotional experience—though some may indeed know this immediate joy—I want to remind you again that a Christian must place his faith in the Word of God, not in feelings; for emotions come and go, but the Word of God is trustworthy and true. Christ promised to enter when you opened the door. He does not lie. Meditate again on the truth of Revelation 3:20; John 1:12; I John 5:11-13; II Corinthians 5:17. Take time right now to thank God for what has happened to you as you have prayed.

Since you have never been satisfied with mediocrity in your business, you will certainly not want to be an ordinary Christian. It costs us nothing to become Christians, although it cost God His own dear Son to give us this privilege. But it will cost us both time and effort to be the kind of Christian which God would have us be. For obvious reasons, a Christian should be a better businessman, father, husband, mother, student, or whatever.

Here is a suggestion that will enable you to grow quickly in the Christian
life, illustrated by a simple little word... GROW:

G Go to God in prayer daily.
R Read God's Word daily—begin with the Gospel of John.
O Obey God, moment by moment.
W Witness for Christ by your life and words.

In Hebrews 10:25, we are admonished to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together...." Several logs burn brightly together; put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with you and your relationship to other Christians. If you do not belong to a church, do not wait to be invited. Take the initiative; call the pastor of a nearby church where Christ is honored and the Bible is preached. Make plans to start next Sunday and to attend each week.

Be assured of my love and prayers as you make this all important decision. We shall be looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Bill Bright
William R. Bright
President

WRB:br

If, after reading this letter you have prayed to invite Christ to come into your life, a special series of informative and practical letters to assist you in your Christian growth and to aid you in your study of the Bible is available simply by asking that your name be added to the Bible study correspondence course. You may also request information regarding the Transferable Concepts, a series of booklets designed for individual or group study.

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HAVE YOU HEARD
OF THE
FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS?

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so are there spiritual laws which govern your relationship with God.

LAW ONE
GOD LOVES YOU, AND HAS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE.

GOD'S LOVE
"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

GOD'S PLAN
(Christ speaking) "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (that it might be full and meaningful) (John 10:10).

Why is it that most people are not experiencing the abundant life?

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Because

LAW TWO
MAN IS SINFUL AND SEPARATED FROM GOD, THUS HE CANNOT KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE AND PLAN FOR HIS LIFE.

MAN IS SINFUL
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Man was created to have fellowship with God; but, because of his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

MAN IS SEPARATED
"For the wages of sin is death" (spiritual separation from God) (Romans 6:23).

God is holy and man is sinful. A great chasm separates the two. Men are continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through their own efforts: good life, ethics, philosophy, etc.

LAW THREE
JESUS CHRIST IS GOD’S ONLY PROVISION FOR MAN’S SIN. THROUGH HIM YOU CAN KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE AND PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE.

HE DIED IN OUR PLACE
“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD
“Christ died for our sins . . . He was buried . . . He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . . He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

HE IS THE ONLY WAY
“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’” (John 14:6).

God has bridged the chasm which separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives:

SELF-CONTROLLED LIFE
- Egocentric life, with the throne
  - Christ outside the life
  - Interests controlled by self, resulting in discord and frustration
  CHRIST-CONTROLLED LIFE
- Christ on the throne of the life
  - Interests under control of infinite God, resulting in harmony and purpose
  E-Gego-Self dethroned

Which circle represents your life?
Which circle would you like to have represent your life?
The following explains how you can receive Christ:

YOU CAN RECEIVE CHRIST RIGHT NOW THROUGH PRAYER
(Prayer is talking with God)

God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I need You. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.”

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart?

If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

A HOLY GOD

SINFUL MAN

The Third Law gives us the only answer to this dilemma . . .

WE MUST INDIVIDUALLY RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD; THEN WE CAN KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE AND PLAN FOR OUR LIVES.

WE MUST RECEIVE CHRIST
“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

WE RECEIVE CHRIST THROUGH FAITH
“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

WE RECEIVE CHRIST BY PERSONAL INVITATION
“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him” (Revelation 3:20).

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self, trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and make us what He wants us to be. It is not enough to give intellectual assent to His claims or to have an emotional experience.