

I love Pizza.

I've made somewhere around 600 plus pizzas in the last 9 years. It's rare that we don't finish the whole pie and sit back and say; "That was one of the best pizza's yet." Everyone is different, from standard pizzas, to folded over like a Calzone, to deep dish in a cast iron skillet on the grill, etc.

When I was about 10 my mom gave me an Italian cook book so I could learn how to make pizza.

I'm picky about the toppings and don't stray to far from traditional except for once in a while. I do play with the dough constantly trying different things.

Pizza is a religion in the truest sense. I do certain things and expect a response that will make me happy.

I can explain the science behind the rising of the dough, I make my own sauce from plum tomatoes and would make my own cheese if I could get good milk. Don't even get me started on the terrible state of milk!

People ask me for the recipe, but I don't have one except for a starting point – a specific amount of water.

I love Pizza.

And there is nothing you can do to convince me that it's bad for me. If I could have pizza everyday I would.

What in the world does this have to do with God?

- Let's pray and ask God to open our minds and find out.

From the time we are born our nature tells us the universe should revolve around us and our needs.

- We love ourselves.

It affects every area of our life and even if someone else has deeply affected us to believe we are worthless we are still striving to love ourselves and get our needs met.

It's our nature to love ourselves and no one can fully convince us that we are worthless.

Because of this it's our nature **to not** be interested in a relationship with God because he asks us to give up our natural thinking, give up our identity, and take on the identity of Christ.

- I love Pizza, this is who I am and if you try to convince me to change my thinking I'm going to rebel because I love Pizza.
- I love myself; this is who I am and if you try to convince me to change my thinking I'm going to rebel because I love myself.

I choose to go my own way and fail to live up to God standards.

This is called sin.

- This is the reality.

NO one can ever naturally seek God, turn to God, or strive to find him. Your natural bent is to love yourself so you will never be interested in God and you will constantly be living in a state of rebellion.

John 3:19-20

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, **but people loved darkness** instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.*

On our own it is impossible to be saved. You don't just wake up one day and say: "*I think I'm going to find God today.*" That would be the furthest thing from our thought.

Two passages that describe this are Romans 8:28 and Ephesians 1:3-4. **Read both.** Both these passages tell me something about myself and God.

In order for me to know God I have to be called. These passages tell me two things:

1. I'm running away from God. Paul expresses this best in Eph. 2:1 "before God's call I was dead in my transgressions and sin" – a dead person can only be one thing and that is dead.
2. Only when God changes my state of existence I can truly know Him. Making me alive again calling out of a state of deadness.

Scripture tells us there are a couple of types of calls.

1. **General call or universal call.** Romans 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

- a. Solomon expresses God as wisdom calling out to people. **Proverbs 2:8** "*To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind.*"
- b. Paul states in Romans 2:14 that the requirement of the law (how we should view God and treat mankind) are written on everyone's heart.
- c. Everyone receives the universal call of God, yet no one responds to that call. If we could there would be no need for Christ.

2. Therefore, **God use special tactics and a Specific call** to bring His children out of this world.

- a. Paul instructs Timothy (2 Timothy 2:25) that those in opposition are to be "*gently instructed, in hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth, and they will come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*"
- b. Peter uses a specific Greek word to describe God's calling you in 2 Peter 1:3. You are being drawn to God rather than just invited. God slowly and patiently attracts you to a relationship with him.
- c. And those who God calls end up mouthing the words of Peter to Jesus in John chapter 6 "*Where would we go, you have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*"

This idea of a specific call to individuals that God knew before the creation of the universe is all throughout scripture. We have brought this up before – I would say that for most, if not all, called believers: they have had a sense of God existence from the time they were little. In comparison to those that are not interested in God and have never sensed God in their life.

God calls his children out of the world and into a relationship with Jesus Christ and you will not want to be anywhere else. God injects himself into your life to bring you out because otherwise you would not want to leave what is “comfortable” and “what you know” in order to live a life honoring to God.

He changes your love for yourself into a deep love for him.

God promises to keep those who love Him!

So, look at it this way.

- God looked into the future and saw you and for reasons known only to himself said that one in mine.
- From the moment your life was conceived God had his hand on you, gently drawing you to Himself and into Jesus.
- He gave you the freedom to explore life, make mistakes, have failures and victories, but all the time he was gently nudging and guiding you into a position where you realized that it was only through a relationship with Jesus that life had meaning.
- You came to a point that you realized that you had wasted years in rebellion against His definition of good and evil all the while trying to find peace yourself.
 - A good example of this is when your children come back to you as adults and say: “*You were right, I should have listened to the things you*

were trying to tell me and I would have save myself years of grief.”

- This is called repentance. We turn to God and say you were right, I’m sad about how I acted, and I want to listen to you and trust you completely now.
- Jesus, in Matthew 18 placed a child in their midst and said that unless you become like this little child you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. I.e. complete trust in the father and what he tells us.
- Even though we are not perfect or sinless throughout the rest of our life we know where we need and want to be. That is in a deep relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
- So then, as Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12
“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”
- It’s God who is working in you to desire to be obedient to Him, not you.
- God does the saving – we need to be cautious (with fear and trembling) to be obedient to him because we sense that God is working in us.

How do you know you are called?

You've sensed it all your life and you can't imagine being anywhere else than in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then you are called. And when the relationship is not going well you know the solution is to stop doing what you're doing and get close to Him again.

That call never ends – Jesus is always calling you into a deeper relationship.

A person who is not called really won't care.

Look to Jesus as your Lord and live for the hope and life that you will have in Him.

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[1] have been called according to his purpose.

Ephesians 1:3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he^[b] predestined us for adoption to sonship^[c] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.