

How Does Christ Come to Live in You?

Many people are surprised to learn that God actually says Christ lives inside them! (Gal. 2:20). They are often even more surprised that Christ comes to live in them—not by their own personal decision or effort—but only through His Word. As Jesus said, “You did not choose Me but **I chose you**, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit” (Jn. 15:16). Use this chart to see what different churches say about relying either on your own human effort or on God’s Word for Christ to come and live in you.

CHURCH BODY	HOW DOES CHRIST COME INTO YOU?	WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?
LUTHERAN	Five hundred years ago, facing persecution and even death, the first Lutheran Christians confessed: “For the apostle Peter [2 Pet. 1:4] testifies clearly that even we, in whom Christ dwells only by grace, become ‘participants in the divine nature’ in Christ because of this great mystery” (<i>Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VIII:34</i>).	On the basis of the Scriptures, the first Lutheran Christians stated that Jesus Christ does not dwell in you <i>by your choice or your action of inviting Him in</i> . Rather, He dwells in you only “by grace . . . through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). In His Word, God teaches these things so that you know that Christ living in you “does not depend on the man who wills . . . but on God who has mercy” (Rom. 9:16, see also 1 Cor. 1:30). When you, by your own effort, try to have Christ live in you, you have no assurance that you have done enough. When God does everything, you can be sure that Christ lives in you. That’s the difference it makes.
BAPTIST, HOLINESS BODIES, PENTECOSTALS, AND CHARISMATICS	These groups reject the Biblical teaching that Jesus is united to the sinner by God’s miracle of Baptism (as our Lord explains in Rom. 6:3ff.). In the official document, <i>The Baptist Faith and Message</i> , they claim: “Salvation . . . is offered freely to all who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior” (Art. IV). In other words, Baptists, Pentecostals, and holiness bodies emphasize what they mistakenly believe man must do to get Jesus into his heart. These groups also use Jn. 1:12 to emphasize man’s free will to accept Jesus—ignoring verse 13—which denies man <i>any</i> role in inviting Christ to come into his heart.	If you believe Jesus comes into and remains in your heart as a result of “decisions” or “invitations” you make , then your salvation depends on you, rather than on Christ. If you believe that you are the one who invites Jesus into your heart, you can never be sure that you are united with Him.
ROMAN CATHOLIC	The Roman Church says: “We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus’ life and His mysteries and often to beg Him to perfect and realize them in us and in His whole Church . . .” (<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church, #521</i>).	According to Roman Catholicism, you must “accomplish” Christ’s life in yourself through your own efforts. Then, after you have accomplished this task, you must ask Jesus to finish and perfect the work that you started . This, according to Rome, is a life-long process . However, when St. Paul proclaims “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), he also says that “in Him you have been made complete ” (Col. 2:10). God’s promise of Christ in you is a life-long, certain promise .
ORTHODOX	The Orthodox say: “Christian spiritual life depends on the conscious choice of the ‘way of life.’ To ‘choose life’ and to walk in the ‘way of life’ is the way that man shows himself to be in the image and likeness of God” (Hopko, Thomas. <i>The Orthodox Faith</i> , vol. IV).	According to the Orthodox, you must “choose life” in order that Christ may live in you. Jesus, however, contradicts this teaching when He says, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you ” (Jn. 15:16).