

Getting Past the Guard

Sometimes the concept of salvation can be hard to grasp. To put this event into perspective, a fictitious story is employed featuring a famous movie director.

The Imaginary Visit

It has been a dream of mine to meet a particular famous director. He is so famous that I am unable to use his name in this story. For now, let us call his name Stephen Spellbound. I have always wanted to meet this man, and I have a dynamite screenplay that only he could do justice. Beyond that, it would be pleasant just to sit down and gab about movies and other interesting topics.

There are many problems with such a lofty dream; one would be the knowledge of there being thousands of people out there with desires just like mine. Another would be getting past the guard at the studio lot.

A Scenario

Imagine, if you will, my driving to the movie studio main gate and addressing the guard.

"Hello, I am here to see Stephen Spellbound at Amber Productions."

"Do you have an appointment?" asks the guard.

"No," I reply with mock confidence, "I do not."

"Does Mr. Spellbound know you?"

"No, but I have read every article about him and studied every interview."

"I am sorry, but you cannot enter the studio area without an appointment."

"Look, see this card? I am a member of the Spellbound fan club and..."

"Sir— please, I am going to have to ask you to turn your car around."

"Rats," I mutter, "what's the problem?"

It did not matter how good of a person or how loyal a fan I had been. Without some kind of connection, there would be no way for me to get past that guard.

The Connection

Now let us imagine that I am at a Westwood cafe having an espresso with a friend. He points to one of the booths.

"Hey, there's a good friend of mine, Joshua Spellbound."

My ears perk as I try not to look, "Any relation to...?"

"Oh yea, Stephen Spellbound is his father."

"Do you think you could... well... "

"Sure! No problem, he loves to meet people— he lives for it."

My friend introduces me to Joshua. He was right about Josh. Both he and I hit it off as if we had been friends since childhood. After a few weeks of getting to know him, I begin to feel disappointed in myself. I had, after all, only become acquainted with him hoping to meet his father. I consciously erased all ulterior motives from my mind and decided merely to enjoy a newfound friend.

We were driving around Studio City looking for a place to eat when, without warning, Josh pulls into the driveway of the movie studio.

"What are you doing?" I asked as calmly as I could.

"Oh— sorry, gotta check in with Dad and say hi."

We come to the guard at the gate. The guard recognizes Josh immediately; but hesitates at the observation of a passenger.

"Don't worry, he's with me," Josh assured the guard.

A sheepish grin comes over my face as the guard looks at me, at Josh and confidently waves us through. We did it! We got past the guard! And so easily!

The car drives up to the Amber Production offices without a single obstruction or hindrance. We walk past the front receptionist without a question or inquisition. We then marched right down the hallway to Mr. Spellbound's office with effortless stride. Josh opens the door without knocking and embraces his father who was busy reading a movie treatment.

"Hi Dad, this is my friend, Rick. We're going to get something to eat."

"Hello Rick, pleasure to meet you at last; my son has told me all about you."

"Good morning... er evening... uh, I mean afternoon. Ahem, yes, hello Mr. Spellbound," I babbled, wishing I had dressed better.

"Call me Steve."

The Surprise

Steve then decides to treat us to the highest-class dinner in the city; the kind of place where celebrities can eat in peace. Star after star is seen in the restaurant as they stop at the table and say hello. For Steve and Josh this is all the normal repartee; for me it was all new and exciting.

Now we come to an area of our little fantasy that (as screenwriters call it) exceeds the bounds of believability. While we are enjoying our dinner, Steve turns to me, smiles and says, "You know, Josh and I have been talking about this for some time, and we have decided that we want you to become a member of our family."

"What?" I asked with a strand of angel hair pasta hanging from my mouth.

"My lawyers have drawn up the necessary legal documents; all you need to do is sign them. That is if you decide that you would like to work with me and be known as Rick Spellbound; it's up to you."

Without hesitation and with the pasta still dangling from my mouth; I sign the papers. I was then given a small slip of paper; on it was written his home phone number and a message that said, "Call anytime, son."

Access Via Relationship

Days later I drive myself, to the studio main gate, and, once again, address the guard on duty.

"Hello, I am here to see Stephen Spellbound at Amber Productions."

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No," I reply with confidence, "I do not."

"Does Mr. Spellbound know you?"

I flash a glib smile and reply, "I should say so, I'm his son!"

After making a quick phone call of confirmation, I am waved through. I then drive my car up to the Amber Production offices without a single obstruction or hindrance. I walk past the front receptionist without question or inquisition and enter my father's office with effortless stride. We then spend the rest of the hour on the patio where we sit in the sun and gab about movies and other interesting topics.

This is Reality, Rick

My logical mind tells me that such an encounter is unbelievable to the point of embarrassment. Yet, it is this logical, pragmatic thinking that keeps the average person from getting in contact with God

For years I had tried to get into contact with God in my prayers. I would come to the gate and say, "Hello, I would like to speak with God." In my prayers I would explain how I had read His book and many commentaries concerning Him. This was a futile attempt on my part because we had no established relationship—*He did not know my name.*

On Thanksgiving Day of 1971, a friend told me of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. He explained how He had died on a cross so that I may gain access to the Father through Him. That night, I was introduced to Jesus. I began to get to know Him by reading the Bible and prayer. After a year, I was effortlessly introduced to the Father and have had an ever-deepening relationship since.

In my parallel, I could not enter the gate of the movie studio because I did not have a relationship with the one I wished to meet. The same thinking must be applied to the omnipotent God. It does not matter what good works I do, how much I read the Bible or what church I belonged to. Jesus said concerning the Day of Judgment:

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'" And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Matthew 7:22-23

It is not that I knew Stephen Spellbound that got me past the gate; *everyone knows him.* It is the fact that *he knew me* that got me past the guard.

A criminal, who hung next to Jesus, saw this connection. Realizing that he was guilty of sin and about ready to die; he petitioned Jesus:

"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." John 17:20,21,25 & 26

It was not the criminal's knowledge of Jesus that would get him into the kingdom; but that Jesus would remember him. By this simple act of faith the criminal was asking Jesus to allow him to be a part of the coming kingdom. Jesus assured him of getting past the guard.

In my analogy, I illustrated my gaining a relationship with Stephen Spellbound's son. Through his son, I was able to gain audience and eventual relationship with this inaccessible man. In this way, Jesus provides us access to the Father through a personal relationship with Himself. Before His death on the cross, Jesus prayed to God on our behalf saying,

"I do not pray for [my disciples] alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me... I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

"O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:20,21,25 & 26

The apostle Peter also spoke of this access to God by way of the Son.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit."

I Peter 3:18

The point where this relationship approaches disbelief is when a paper is drawn up for my signature that designates me as an adopted son.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6

With the adoption papers legally signed, I now have the joy of calling this inapproachable mogul— my dad.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:14-17

With this new relationship, I have been given a home phone number by which I can call and talk with God at anytime.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

My new relationship also allows me an effortless access to God's throne. Here I can come and talk about whatever is on my mind.

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."
Hebrews 10:19-22

The How-to

During the reading of this study, you may have felt a tug of desire to come in contact with God. The process is as simple as being introduced to a good friend. However, there are barriers that may make it difficult. Pride and stubborn resolve to keep ones life in a self-destruct mode is the prime barrier to a new beginning. Another is thinking that you already have a relationship with God, but in reality you do not. This is the most difficult to overcome, because you see no need. All I can say is "if you are not sure, you are not ready."

The following are four steps to bring you into contact with God and will lay the groundwork to obtain the above precious promises.

Step #1—Recognize the Sin

When sin entered the world, the ability to have a relationship with God was broken. Like the alcoholic, you must first recognize that you are a sinner. It does not matter whether you are a good person or not. It has to do with whether you are as perfect *as God* or not. The Bible says that not one of us has proven to be that perfect.

But the Scripture has condemned all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe...
... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
Galatians 3:22 and Romans 3:23

The first step would be to confess to God that the Bible is true and that you are indeed a sinner. And as a sinner, you are in need of a savior.

Step #2—Penalty Paid

The Bible says that sin ultimately leads to death. Not death of this temporary body; but death to your immortal soul

... when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. James 1:15 and Romans 6:23

The good news is that God has provided a loophole to by-pass this law of sin and death. That loophole comes through Jesus Christ who took, unto Himself, the penalty of sin by paying for it with His own blood.

... without shedding of blood there is no remission.
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Hebrews 9:22b & Romans 8:2

The second step in your confession to God would be the recognition of Jesus as being the only One who paid for your sin.

Step #3—Receiving the Pardon

After recognizing that we are sinners under a death sentence and that Jesus had paid the price, the third step would be to confess your sins to Jesus and ask for His forgiveness.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness. I John 1:8-9

Notice the "all" in the scripture above. If you think that your sins are too great to be forgiven, then this scripture is a lie. Since the Bible is true and you *do* have forgiveness for all your sins, then confess these sins and accept the gift of salvation by asking Jesus into your heart as Lord and Savior.

... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, *you will be saved*.
Romans 10:9

Prayer is just talking to God. Confession is telling Him something about yourself that He already knows. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and it is your desire to do so; then this prayer will guarantee to get you "past the guard".

Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and am under the penalty of death. I also understand that you took the penalty of death on the cross. Please forgive me and wash my sins away through your blood. Not just the sins I have committed up until today; but all of my sins. Come into my heart and be Lord of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and your light so I can understand the Bible and gain a walking talking relationship with God the Father. Thank you Lord Jesus, for coming into my heart and life. Thank you for dying on the cross, washing away all my sins and bringing me into a relationship with my Creator. In your name I pray— Amen.

Step #4—Maintain a Relationship

Now that you have access to the throne, start getting to know Jesus. You do this by praying and asking Him to reveal Himself through His Word. Make it a habit to read the Bible every day and talk with others who love Him. A good book to start reading is the Gospel of John.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. I Cor. 15:1-4

In Conclusion

As a final note, I would like to leave you with this last scripture reference:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end— Amen.

Ephesians 3:14–21