

What Actually Is A Christian?

- There are many good intentioned people who consider a person a Christian who is a good, moral, upstanding citizen who pays their taxes and other bills on time, are quiet as neighbors that would never speak publically against a fellow citizen, who volunteer for charities and who have good work ethics. Although these are traits that all Christians **should** have, for the most part, they are not what determines the Bible's definition of a Christian.

A Christian is a disciple.

2Ch 7:14 If My people, which are **called by My name**, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

- Of course God here was speaking of His people Israel, the physical Jew, who were under the Old Covenant with the understanding that one day they would usher in the Messiah under the New.

Act 11:26 ... And the disciples (*Gk.3101- a learner, that is, a pupil*) were called Christians (*Gk.5546-follower of Christ*) first in Antioch.

- This was not a derogatory title given to the disciples by those who were persecuting them at that time. It was prophesied that those under the New Covenant with God, the spiritual Jew (*Rom 2:28-29*), would receive a new identifying name. To be called a Christian, then, meant that the bearer of said title belonged to Christ.

Isa 62:2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a **new name**, which **the mouth of the LORD shall name**.

- Thus the name “Christian” is a God inspired title given to those of Christ’s followers. All Christians are (*should be*) disciples but not all disciples are (*can be*) Christians. It all depends on who their master (*i.e., teacher or instructor*) is. And there are only two masters to choose from. Either Christ or Satan. Our behavior confirms who we serve.

Luk 6:40 The disciple is not above his master (*Gk.1320- an instructor: -teacher*): but every one that is perfect (*Gk.2675- to complete: prepare*) shall be as (*Gk.5613- in that manner: -like*) his master. (*As disciples of Christ, we are to prepare and strive to be like Him in all holiness and manner of life.*)

2Co 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness (*Gk.3436- a stain, that is, immorality*) of the flesh (*Gk.4561- human nature*) and spirit (*Gk.4151- mental disposition: -mind*) [*We need to rid ourselves of any thoughts that are contrary to purity*], perfecting (*Gk.2005- to fulfill further [or completely]*, that is, execute, undergo: *-accomplish, finish, perform*) **holiness** in the fear (*Gk.5401- Thayer: reverence, respect*) of God.

2Ti 2:15 Study (*Gk.4704- to make effort*) to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (*Gk.3718- dissect [expound] correctly [the divine message]*) the word of truth.

- Part of being a disciple has to do with how we see the word of God in every aspect of our lives. As we begin to master its meanings we ready ourselves for whatever false doctrines, trials and temptations that might come our way. Any congregation that is not doing this is destined to fall into apostasy.

Rev 3:7 And to the angel (*Gk.32- a messenger*) of the church in Philadelphia write; ...

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast **kept the word of my patience**, I also will keep thee from the **hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to **try them** that dwell upon the earth.

- The church at Philadelphia kept (*Gk.5083- guard [from loss or injury]*) Christ's word of His endurance and by it were able to test whatever teaching that came their way.

2Ti 3:10 But thou hast **fully known** my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, **11** Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. **12** Yea, and **all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**

A Christian suffers for his faith.

2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with *Him*: if we deny *Him*, He also will deny us:

Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried (*Gk.1384- properly acceptable, that is, approved*), he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

- Christians are those whose behavior has been analyzed through trials, which demonstrate their love for the Lord, before being approved for eternal life with Him in glory.

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: **13** But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings (*"if we have been planted in the likeness of His death"- Rom 6:5*); that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. **14** If (*Gk.1487- whether*) [*CEV-* "when you suffer"] ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy (*Gk.3107- supremely blest*) are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. **15** But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or *as* a busybody in other men's matters. **16** Yet if *any man suffer as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. **17** For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

"God will save those who walk uprightly from the great trial to come, but it will be with great difficulty. If God would take great difficulty to save the righteous from the impending trial the ungodly would put them through, imagine the terrible punishment God would send the ungodly to in the end of time." (Gary Hampton)

- It is through trials that God is able to weed out those who are not ready or willing to be His disciples.

“During this persecution (161-180 AD) informers began to accuse Christians in order to obtain their property.” (F. W. Mattox – The Eternal Kingdom, pg. 95)

“As people called Christians were in danger of death all who were insincere were deterred from becoming Christians. The church was able to remain comparatively pure and the courage with which the truly converted confessed their faith in time of trial made a profound effect upon the non-Christian.” (F. W. Mattox – The Eternal Kingdom, pg. 98)

Mat 5:10 **Blessed are** they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 **Blessed are** ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. 12 **Rejoice**, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

A Christian is not ashamed of his Lord.

1Co 4:10 We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honourable, but we *are* despised. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 13 Being defamed (*insulted*), we entreat (*plead*): we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day.

- There are those who suffered for the faith in the past so that we, in the present, are able to live in relative peace. Even when the majority of the population around us promotes sins the **Bible** speaks against, we are not to be dismayed but are to continue striving to stand for what is right! Even when we are called “*bigots*” for speaking out against those sins that have become accepted by many who state they were made that way and thus their practicing such is accepted by **God**. (*If that was the case we would be bigoted to condemn those practices. But we know otherwise.*) Certain sins are promoted as being accepted by the majority, according to the mainstream press which “makes” the news instead of just reporting it. But even if that were the case, **Christians** should never accept it knowing that **God** is against such sins and will punish those who perpetuate such lies. Sticks and stones may break our bones and verbal persecution should never cause us to back down.

Isa 5:20 Woe unto **them that call evil good, and good evil**; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe unto *them that are wise in their own eyes*, and prudent (*Heb.995- understanding*) in their own sight! 22 Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: (*Pro 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*) 23 Which **justify the wicked for reward**, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! (“*they do not decide the cause in favor of those who have just claims, but are determined by a bribe*” –Albert Barnes) 24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, *so* their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

- Even when the courts decide that certain iniquities are acceptable and thus lawful in *their eyes* (*free speech that permits blasphemy, un-scriptural divorce, abortion, gambling, alcohol consumption, etc.*) **Christians** are not to participate in such behavior but could fall victim to crimes committed against them because of such unjust judgments

handed down by unbelieving judges. Notice what Peter and the apostles did when persecuted for their behavior that was unacceptable to those in authority back then.

Act 5:26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. **27** And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, **28** Saying, Did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.* **29** Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men.**

***Mat 27:20** *But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.*

Mat 27:25 *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.*

- We have to stop backing down from the unbelievers who try to shame us into silence! When we throw the truth in their faces they'll stutter. But we first have to know and be acquainted with the truth.

Act 5:34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; **35** And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

Act 5:40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **41** And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were **counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.** **42** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they **ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.**

- Is the name of Jesus always on our minds and are we ever speaking of Him to others?

Rom 1:16 For I am **not ashamed of the gospel** of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

A Christian is one who is known as such by his neighbors.

Act 17:2 And Paul, **as his manner was** (*Sharing the gospel with others was second nature to Paul*), went in unto them, and three sabbath days **reasoned with them out of the scriptures,** **3** Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, Whom I preach unto you (*Luke speaking to Theophilus- Act 1:1*), is Christ. **4** And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. **5** But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort (*Gk.6o- vulgar*), and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. **6** And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, **These that have turned the world upside down** are come hither also (*Oh that we were known to do such!*); **7** Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *One* Jesus. (*Our representatives need to know Who we serve ahead of anyone else!*) **8** And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

A Christian is one who has been (*and continues to be*) obedient to Christ.
In conversion.

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

In Bible study and application.

Joh 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye **continue** in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; **32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

In worship.

Heb 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **25** Not forsaking **the assembling of ourselves together**, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Act 20:7 And upon the **first day of the week**, when **the disciples came together to break bread**, **Paul preached unto them**, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

1Co 11:24 And when He had given thanks, He brake *it*, and said, **Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.** **25** After the same manner also *He took* the cup, when He had supped, saying, **This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.** **26** For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.

1Co 16:1 Now concerning the **collection for the saints**, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **2** Upon the **first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, **as God hath prospered him** (*no mention of O.T. system of tithing*), that there be no gatherings when I come.

Php 4:4 **Rejoice in the Lord** alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice. **5** Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. **6** Be careful for nothing; but in everything by **prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.**

- God already knows what we need. **He wants us to understand that everything we need comes from Him!** We also need to thank Him for daily supplying those necessities.

1Co 14:15 What is it then? I will **pray with the spirit** (*Gk.4151- mental disposition*), and I will pray with the understanding also: I will **sing with the spirit** (*Gk.4151*), and I will sing with the understanding also.

Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit:** and they that worship Him **must worship Him in spirit** (*Gk.4151*) **and in truth.** (*Christians have their minds focused when coming together to worship God.*)

Jas 5:16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and **pray one for another**, that ye may be healed. The **effectual fervent** (*Gk.1754- be mighty in*) **prayer** of a righteous man availeth much.

A Christian is one who was once lost.

Rom 6:20 For when ye **were** the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. **21** What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are **now ashamed?** for the end of those things *is* death. **22** **But now** being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Eph 4:24 (*Christians have...*) ... **put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Ultimately

- There is more to being a **Christian** than what the world would like for us to be. There are those who would like for us to remain silent on issues that would bring shame on and affect their views on certain things the Bible calls sin. Thus, they feel by calling us names such as "*hatemongers, bigots, un-Christian*" and a slew of other degrading accusatory titles, they feel that eventually they will silence us into oblivion. In many cases they have been successful by using the mainstream press as their mouthpiece and by publicly shaming businesses and organizations in ways to cut their funding thus bringing them into line with their way of thinking. It should only strengthen our resolve!

1Co 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you **seemeth to be wise in this world**, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. **19** For **the wisdom of this world** is **foolishness with God**. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. **20** And again, The Lord knoweth **the thoughts of the wise**, that **they are vain**.

"If any man has the reputation of wisdom among the people of this generation, and prides himself on it..." "Let all his earthly wisdom be esteemed in his own eyes as valueless and as folly in the great matters of salvation." "That true wisdom is found only in that science which teaches people to live unto God, and to be prepared for death and for heaven - and that science is found only in the gospel." (Albert Barnes)

Jas 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

To be a Christian then, one must heed the preaching of the gospel's message...

Hear: **Romans 10:14** ..."how shall they believe in **Him Whom** they have not heard?"

Believe: **Heb 11:6** ..."for he that commeth to **God** must believe that **He** is and that **He** is the rewarder of them that diligently seek **Him**."

Repent: **Act 3:19** ..."Repent ... be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

Confess: **Mat 10:32** "**Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Who is in Heaven.**"

Be baptized: **1 Pet 3:21** "...baptism doth also (*not the only thing but is necessary to*) now save us..."

Remain faithful: **1 Cor 6:20** ..."For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify **God** in your body, and in your spirit, which are **God's**."

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