

Christians Part One

The word Christian gets thrown around a lot. Often this term lumps all religious people that profess to believe in Jesus under one big umbrella. Regardless of what religious body they belong to, or even if they don't belong to one. As long as there is some general belief in Jesus people are generally considered to be Christians by the world at large. In this lesson by exploring what the Bible teaches we can hopefully gain a better understanding of what the word Christian actually means. Because there is so much information to cover on this topic it will be broken down into two parts.

The word Christian is found in the Bible

Acts 11:26 “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Way back in the time that the Apostles started to spread the teachings of Jesus, which was right after Christ had risen and sent out all His disciples to spread His word in the first century A.D., this is what the followers of Christ were being called. So, in the New Testament scriptures we have recorded for us what the follower of Christ was called from the beginning of Christianity.

Acts 26:28 “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Agrippa knew what Paul was and what Paul was trying to convert him into becoming. Sadly, at least at this time, Agrippa made the choice to reject Christ and we have no record of him ever changing his mind. It was known by others what Paul and those like him were, Christians.

I Peter 4:16 “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” The Apostle Peter called the followers of Jesus Christians in the New Testament. So, we know that the faithful followers of Christ have been called Christians from the very beginning.

What is a Christian?

John 3:3-5 “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 into the kingdom of God.” From the very words of Jesus, we can see that a Christian must be born of water, or a baptized believer, to enter into His kingdom, which is His church.

John 14:1-3 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” A faithful Christian has a home in Heaven waiting for them. Despite all the difficulties this world will throw at all people that walk the earth, a faithful Christian knows that this life, if led pleasing to God, will lead to an eternal reward. This is simply not promised to anyone that is not a Christian. Non-Christians do not have a Heavenly home to look forward to.

John 15:5 “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” As a follower of Christ, a Christian, is expected to be living according to His teachings and trying to teach others about Him. A Christian should be growing not being stagnant and try to bring others to Christ as well.

1 Corinthians 12:20 “But now are they many members, yet but one body.” A Christian is a part of the one body of Christ. There is only one body not thousands. Any thing not of the one body is something separate and not a part of the one body. Clearly Christ does not teach us of hundreds of different kinds of religious organizations but of one Church only. Remember the Bible also calls His body the church **Ephesians 1:19-23** “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Galatians 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” A Christian has been baptized into Christ. Figuratively they have died to this world to live as a follower of Jesus and follow His teachings in the Bible. Also, this means that others outside of the body of Christ should be able to see in a Christians life that they are trying to follow Christ. If being a Christian can not be seen in your life than you are not a Christian.

Colossians 1:13-14 “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” Through Christ’s blood sacrifice upon the cross Christians can have forgiveness of their sins and enter His kingdom. (Possibly it would be helpful to make note that the words kingdom, body, and church are often, but not always, used interchangeably to reference the one church that Jesus bought with His sacrifice.)

Colossians 3:1-9 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” In the life of a Christian it should be very clear that they are now living a life for Christ. Old poor habits will be dropped, sinful ways and sinful friendships left behind. A Christian is by no means perfect but when you see one and study them, you should be able to say that they trying to live according to

the Bible. If you meet someone and get to know them and can not tell if they are a Christian then they are not.

Hebrews 4:15 “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Christians have a leader, that while He lived a sinless life, did walk in our shoes and does understand the struggles we go through.

1 John 1:3-7 “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” A Christian has fellowship with our Lord and Savior when we follow His will set out for us in the Bible. However, when falling away from living according to God’s will and instead living like people that are not Christians, we then walk in darkness and are no longer truly a Christian until we repent and again follow God’s will.

A Christian is not

Acts 11:14 “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” One can live a relatively good moral life but not be a Christian. Being a good moral person is very important and a fine starting place but it is not enough to get to Heaven. A Christian will be a baptized believer in Christ that is trying to live according to the Bible as well as spreading the God’s word when they have opportunity.

Acts 17:22-31 “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Paul through inspiration is teaching us that just being a religious person alone does not make someone a Christian. One can only be a Christian when they become obedient to and follow Christ’s Word.

Colossians 2: 12-14 “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” A Christian is not a follower of the Old Testament Law. The Old Law was nailed to the cross and now Christ has brought about the New Testament which we all live under today. A Christian will be obedient to the New Testament. The Old Law should certainly still be studied for it helps us better understand the purpose of the New Testament. However, we are not required today to make animal sacrifices, follow the ten commandments, or follow the rest of the Old Testament Law. A Christian is a follower of the New Testament that we live under today.

What are some characteristic of a Christian?

This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list of the traits of a Christian but they should all be present in the life of a follower of Christ.

1) A Christian will study, respect, and know God’s word.

Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” A Christian will certainly be ready and willing to hear teaching from the Bible but they will not just listen and accept everything they hear. A Christian will study the scriptures to see if what they are being taught is the truth or not.

2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” A Christian will study God’s word to know it better and be sure they are living the way God wants them to live.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The word of God is a precious gift He has given us so that we can know what His will is. A Christian is doing the best they can to grow in the knowledge of the Bible and live by it. After all, through inspiration God gave us a book why would we not want to know what is in it?

James 1:22-25 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” A Christian must hear the Word but also obey what it says. Hearing the Word is only the first step toward salvation. We are not Christians if we do not obey the Word of God. Study and learn God’s word but also obey what it says.

2) A Christian obeys God’s word.

Matthew 7:21 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Sadly, many good people probably believe in God and might even read the Bible from time to time but they don’t obey it. The Bible tells us to be acceptable to God we must obey His will. After all, how much do I really believe what the Bible says if I do not obey God’s will?

John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Jesus expects us to show that we love Him by keeping His New Testament Law. How much do we really love Jesus if we do not keep His commandments?

Hebrews 5:8-9 “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” Jesus paid the ultimate price with His suffering and death on the cross because He loves us all. However, only the obedient will be saved. A Christian is obedient.

3) A Christian sees worshiping God as both necessary and important.

Psalm 122:1 “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” We should be happy that it is time for worship services and not be trying to get out of going to them.

Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Christ is present with Christians when they gather together to worship Him as long as it is done according to His Word. That is kind of mind blowing when you really think about it. Worship services are definitely not play time or entertainment of me time. It is time to praise God and worship Him according to His will.

Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 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.” A Christian is at worship service every time they can be. (Yes, sometimes we can be sick or have a true reason we can not make it. God knows and understands those things.) However, if we look for reasons to not go to worship services or dread when it is time to go, we have a heart problem and our priorities are not right with God.

4) A Christian prays.

John 9:31 “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.” God will not listen to prayers of the unfaithful but He does hear a Christian’s prayers.

Colossians 4:2 “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” Christians should have a regular prayer life. Christians should be praying for themselves and others on a regular basis.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Christians should be giving thanks to God for all that He has done for us as well as for strength in difficult times. We should not only pray when times are bad. Pray in good times and in bad.

1 Peter 3:12 “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” God hears the prayers of His faithful servants but those that are not will not be heard.

1 John 3:22 “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” God will respond to the prayers of His faithful servants.

1 John 5:14-15 “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” A Christian should pray according to God’s will and understand that He will hear us. God is not guaranteeing a Christian to be able to get anything they ask for but that our prayers should be in accordance with His will.

Due to the length of information on this topic the lesson Christians Part One will conclude at this point. The next lesson Christians Part Two will continue and conclude this lesson topic.