

# How to be a Christian

(What is a Christian and How to be One)

Acts 11:21-26 ***KJV 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 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.***

## Introduction

One of the most challenging questions people often ask is, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" The word "Christian" is one of the most misused words in the English language. A Christian and a saved person are often used interchangeably, when they shouldn't be. There is a big difference between a saved person and a Christian. God wants His people to be Christians or "Christ-like." A saved person is saved by grace. He is forgiven of sin and has everlasting life. A Christian is a saved person trying to live like the Lord. The world called the disciples "Christians" in the verses above. Technically, the definition of the word "Christian" is "follower of Christ." The disciples at Antioch had been so "sold out" for Christ that they began to be called followers of Christ. You will notice the disciples did not give themselves this name, it was given to them by the people of the world in Antioch.

One author has said, "the meaning of the word Christian has been reduced to practically nothing." What he was stating is that the word "Christian" has been devalued. The word is used often; however, the Bible records the word only three times in the New Testament.

The word "saints" is used (about sixty times), "disciples" (about thirty times), "believers" (about eighty times) and "brethren" (about 200 hundred times). Though all of these refer to Christians, the word *Christian* is used far less. Is this significant? I believe it is.

Since this is the case, we need to understand what a "Christian" is and how a Christian is different from just a saved person. Let us notice what a Christian is.

## A CHRISTIAN IS SAVED

He is redeemed.

We are redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus. (1 Peter 1:18) ***Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (KJV)***

We have redemption through Jesus. (Ephesians 1:7) *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;* (KJV)

We are delivered and bought by Jesus' life and blood.

He is returned.

The saved have had a change of mind concerning sin and God.

He has returned to God. By nature, he has strayed and wandered far from God, but in Christ has returned to God.

Like the maniac he has come to his senses.

He is reborn.

He has experienced the new or heavenly birth.

We are born again. This birth comes about by our repenting of sin and receiving Jesus as personal Saviour.

### A CHRISTIAN STANDS OUT FROM SOCIETY

(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.* (KJV)

The word Christian was coined by the heathen population of Antioch to distinguish the followers of Christ from the worshippers of Caesar. It was at first a nickname given in derision and was a name given in contempt. The contempt is still prevalent in our age but the name should be worn in honor.

The Christians of Antioch were a new sort of people who had sprung up among the inhabitants of the city. It was difficult to understand these of "The New Way." The name Christian was given them by those from without. Here was a group of people who do not come under any of their categories; therefore, a new name was needed to describe them. The world of those at Antioch had the same impression about believers which Haman had about the Jews - "Their laws are diverse from all people."

Why would the people of Antioch call those in "The New Way" Christians? It was because of their evident attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The new term "Christians" identified the believers with Christ and Him with them.

How would you describe a man from England? What about a man from Russia? And what about a man from China? A man from England would be described as an Englishman while a man from Russia would be called a Russian and a man from China would be a Chinese. Each of these men would be so called because they belong to that particular group of people. Therefore, a Christian is a man that belongs to Christ.

(2 Timothy 2:19) *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* (KJV)

Those who carry His name should be easily recognized by the holiness of their walk.

Are you recognized as a strange person? It is a poor commentary on our consistency if we can go through life unrecognized as a Christian by those that are without. The eye of an outside observer may be unable to penetrate the secret of the deep tie that unites us to Jesus, but there should be no possibility of the most superficial and hasty glance overlooking the fact that we are His. That should be plain for all to see whether we speak or be silent.

Is it true that your allegiance to Jesus and the supreme authority which He exercises upon you and upon your life cannot be hid? Are you as David said, "a wonder unto many?"

### A CHRISTIAN IS SPIRITUAL

He lets the mind of Christ dwell in him.

This involves being like Christ. (Philippians 2:5) *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:* (KJV)

He strives to allow Christ to govern and control his thoughts which become action later.

He seeks to look at things as Christ would.

He sets his affections on things above.

This is an admonition of the Lord. (Colossians 3:2) *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* (KJV)

Jesus said to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. (Matthew 6:33) *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (KJV)

We are to strive to do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31) *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* (KJV)

He is distinct from other people.

He is discussed by other people.

## A CHRISTIAN IS SERVING

He serves the Lord with his lips.

We are admonished not to let corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth. (Ephesians 4:29) *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* (KJV)

The lips and mouth can build up or tear down, slander or praise, speak the gospel or spread gossip.

A Christian seeks to use his words for the Lord. (Acts 26:28) *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* (KJV)

In Acts 26:28 the apostle Paul is making his defense before King Agrippa and Festus the governor acknowledged he was witnessing to them of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ who had so wonderfully changed and satisfied him ever since he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul observed the king's attentiveness and the anger of Festus. Festus pronounced Paul to be mad, but the king stated "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

One man triumphed by the truth, another was almost persuaded by the truth while yet another was tormented by the truth.

One mark of a true Christian is that whatever his circumstances, he is ready and glad to witness for his Lord. Every person that Jesus saves, He calls to confess Him publicly. It is in the Lord's plan and purpose for His followers to witness for Him. There is no such thing as a secret disciple. Paul said "I am ready to preach the gospel.....I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

Christians in the early church were marked with a burning zeal to make Christ known to all they came in contact with. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." It was not just the apostles but the rank and file of the church that went forth broadcasting the gospel.

Jesus said "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." If you are not fishing for men, then you are not following Him.

God's plan for world evangelization is that His own people should be witnesses to His saving grace, wherever they are and wherever they go.

He serves the Lord with his life.

He does what he can for the Lord. He is willing to work.

He honors the Lord in his family, work, and private life.

He uses time, breath, and talents for the Lord.

He serves the Lord by loyalty.

One quality the Lord appreciates and rewards is Faithfulness.

A Christian is faithful to the Lord.

He is faithful to a New Testament Church.

He is faithful to fulfill his purpose for being alive.

### A CHRISTIAN IS SEPARATED

He is separated to the work

God's work must be carried on and out by a spiritual and born-again people.

He has saved us for His work of going into all the world preaching the gospel, baptizing the saved, and teaching them the commands of the Lord.

The Lord has a job for you to do. There is a place for you in His service.

He is separated to the word.

He is to be an ambassador or messenger of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21) *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* (KJV)

Various passages teach us to grow in knowledge, study, and think on God's word. (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.* (KJV)

The Bible is a blueprint for life. We are to read and heed it. We are to live it and give it. We are to see it and sow it.

He is separated to the will of God.

If a man does what He pleases, he is seldom pleased with what he does.

The fun and sun crowd are most bored and unhappy.

Accepting and living up to responsibility is a vital part of life.

We, as Jesus did, should pray, "Not my will but thine be done."

### A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO SINGS OUT DURING SUFFERING

(1 Peter 4:12-16) *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be*

*reproached for the name of Christ, happy 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. 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. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.* (KJV)

Peter simply states that Christians must expect to suffer simply because they are a Christian. Persecution is not something alien to the Christian life. Christians are different from unbelievers and that difference will bring persecution. Religious people are sometimes persecuted but not persecuted on the same level, frequency or intensity that Christians have been and shall be again.

(Philippians 1:29) *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;* (KJV)

There are many kinds of suffering such as a common suffering, (Job 14:1) *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.* (KJV)

a carnal suffering, (Job 4:8) *Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.* (KJV)

and Christian suffering, (2 Timothy 3:12) *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* (KJV)

A godly life will always attract the devil's attention. Trusting Christ and becoming a Christian does not mean the end of battles; but it does mean the beginning of new battles. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."

The early church was threatened, maligned, despised and persecuted simply because of their love for and loyalty to Christ. See Acts 5:40-42 as it relates to punishment, praise, and proclamation. (Acts 5:40-42) *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. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* (KJV) What can be done with men who, when they have been beaten, thank God for the favor just bestowed on them?

(Acts 16:23-25) *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.* (KJV)

(Matthew 5:11-12) *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* (KJV)

Why is it that a real Christian must suffer? It is because he is different from a non-Christian. In the early church there were two kinds of people - pagans and Christians; but today the standard has been lowered. It is time that we raise the standard and dedicate our all to Christ in living a **separated** life. If we do, this will inevitably bring misunderstanding and suffering.

## A CHRISTIAN IS SENT

Sent with a message of retribution.

Paul's message to the people of Athens in Acts 17 sets forth our message.

There is a day in which all people will be judged. (Acts 17:31) *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.* (KJV)

God will punish the lost with everlasting fire. He will pour out His wrath upon Christ rejecters.

Sent with a message of resurrection.

The world teaches eat, drink, be merry for tomorrow we die.

The world says life is over and gone at the point of death.

Our message is: There is a resurrection day for the saved and the lost. All will stand and face the life lived.

Sent with a message of repentance.

The message of the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and our church is for men to repent of their Sins.

The plan of salvation involves repentance. The lost sinner must change his mind and direction toward sin and God.

For the saved to enjoy fellowship with the Lord, we must repent many times.

Sent with a message of reception.

Receive Jesus as your personal Saviour.

Receive Him into your heart and call on Him to save your soul.

Salvation has to do with receiving Jesus into your heart.

### Conclusion:

Are you recognized as a Christian? One who belongs to Christ? What manner of people ought we to be who carry the name "Christian?"

What should a Christian's character be?

What should a Christian's conduct be?

What should a Christian's conversation be?

Oh, that it might be said of me,  
Surely thy speech betrayeth thee  
As a friend of Christ of Galilee.

Now that you have seen what a Christian really is, can you honestly answer the question, “Are you a Christian?”