

What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

The name “**CHRISTIAN**” is a much used word. Often it is used to describe a person who:

- is a church member
- has been baptized or confirmed
- is very moral
- is extremely religious

However, these things don’t reflect what it really means to be a Christian.

In order to find the right answer to this question we must examine what the Bible, God’s revelation to man, says about the subject.

Would you mind if we looked together at **FIVE PRINCIPLES** drawn from the Scriptures that help to explain what it means to be a Christian?

Principle #1: *Every Person Has Broken God’s Law*

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

God is a holy God, and He demands that we, as His creations, live up to certain moral standards. These standards are set forth in the Ten Commandments:

- Do not have any other Gods
- Do not worship idols
- Do not take the name of the Lord in vain
- Keep the Sabbath day holy
- Honor your father and mother
- Do not commit adultery
- Do not steal
- Do not lie
- Do not covet
- Do not commit murder

Any time that we fail to live up to God’s perfect standards for our lives, we are sinning against Him. Whether it is in thought, motive, desire, or outward deed, each of us is guilty of breaking God’s law.

Jesus said that the greatest commandments were that we should love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and that we should love our neighbor as ourself. All of us have to admit that we have failed to live up to this high standard:

“There is none righteous; no, not one.” (Romans 3:10) What is God’s attitude toward sin?

Principle #2: *God must punish sin*

The Bible tells us about the character of God. Having created the heavens and the earth, He is a God of power. Being fully aware of all things, He is a God who knows all. Being kindly disposed toward His creation, He is a God of goodness and benevolence and love.

The Bible also teaches that God is holy. He is morally perfect, loving what is good and righteous, and hating what is evil and unrighteous. Because He is holy, He must punish sin.

“For the wages (punishment) of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a)

God’s punishment for our sin is death; not only physical death but also eternal death. To suffer the punishment of eternal death is to spend eternity separated from God and all good things.

This is the judgment that all of us deserve for our sins; eternal death. Is there any hope?

Principle #3: *Christ Died For Sinners*

Yes, there **is** hope! Through His Son, Jesus Christ, God demonstrated the greatest aspect of His character, His love:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

Jesus Christ, as God in the flesh, lived a sinless life, perfectly fulfilling God’s standard of holiness. Then, though He didn’t deserve to die, He was crucified on a cross.

On that cross Jesus suffered for the sins of others. He became their substitute and suffered in their place.

“Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God.” (I Peter 3:18)

Jesus suffered the anger of God as He accepted in full the penalty for our sin. After He died...

“He was buried, and was raised on the third day.” (I Corinthians 15:4)

So what must we do in order to receive the *benefits* of Christ’s death and resurrection?

Principle #4: *We Must Repent and Believe On Christ*

We are commanded in the Bible to repent and believe on Jesus Christ:

“Repent and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

What does it mean to “*repent*” and to “*believe*”?

Repent - Repentance is a change of mind and heart which results in a change of life. You must change your mind about:

Yourself: You must realize that you are guilty before God because of your sin.

Christ: You must recognize Him as your Lord (Master), and surrender your life to Him.

Believe - To believe on Christ means to trust Him and to rely on Him for your eternal salvation. Faith is more than intellectual agreement with the facts about Jesus. To believe means to accept the forgiveness He offers, to trust that what He says is true and that it applies to you.

Unless we meet these conditions, our sins will not be forgiven, and Jesus' death and resurrection will not benefit us.

“Unless you repent, you will likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3)

The *moment* that we repent of our sins and believe on Christ, we are put in right standing (justified) with God:

“Having been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

Does this mean that I am earning my salvation by repenting and believing?
Absolutely not, because ...

Principle #5: Salvation Is By Grace

We can't earn or deserve salvation. Even the ability to repent and trust in Christ must be given to us by God:

“For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God; not of works, that no man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The fact that salvation is by grace means:

1. Salvation cannot be earned or deserved. It is a gift to be received through repentance and faith: “The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23b)

Our good works (baptism, church membership, being morally good, etc.) Can't earn God's forgiveness. We must accept it as a free gift.

2. Only God can create in our hearts the willingness to surrender our lives to Jesus as Lord, and only He can give us the ability to trust Him:

“No man can come unto me, unless it has been given him of my Father.” (John 6:65)

So here is the important question for you:

Have you ever repented and believed on Christ?

If your answer is “**Yes**,” then you know the joy of being a Christian!

But if your answer is “**No**,” then consider this question:

Would you be willing right now to surrender your life totally and completely to Jesus Christ, depending on Him for the forgiveness of your sins, and trusting in Him to give you eternal life?

If there is in your heart a willingness to repent and believe on Christ, then this indicates that the Holy Spirit of God is calling you to faith in Jesus Christ. Why not pray a prayer something like this:
“Lord, I have sinned against you. I admit my guilt. I believe with all my heart that Jesus died for my sins and that He rose from the dead. Right now I surrender my life totally and completely to Him as Lord. I do trust in Jesus to forgive my sins and to give me eternal life. Thank you for making me a Christian. Amen.”

If that prayer truly expressed the desire of your heart, then you can be sure that you are now a Christian!

Now that you *are* a Christian, there are several things you should do:

1. Tell someone about your new faith.
2. Begin attending a good Bible-teaching church.
3. Be baptized by immersion as a public declaration of your new faith.

A word from our pastor:

If you have read this booklet and have questions or have come to repentance and trusted Christ, I invite you to contact me personally. I am willing to discuss with you how you may know Christ and have the gift of eternal life that is given by His grace. It is too wonderful a gift not to embrace.