

The Gospel & What It Means to be a Christian

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What It Means to Be a Christian

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. Consider the following truths found in the Bible.

God Is Sovereign Creator

Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

God Is Holy

God is absolutely and perfectly holy (Isaiah 6:3); therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13). God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, You shall be holy, for I am holy.

Mankind Is Sinful

According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: There is no man who does not sin (1 Kings 8:46). That doesn't mean we're incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own (Romans 3:10-12).

Sin Demands a Penalty

God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death (Ezekiel 18:4). That's why simply changing our patterns of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

Jesus Is Lord and Savior

Romans 10:9 says, If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners (1 Peter 3:18). Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's justice, and Christ's perfect life satisfied the demands of God's holiness (2 Corinthians 5:21), thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26).

The Character of Saving Faith

True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (Luke 13:3, 5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9), pursue Christ (Matthew 11: 28-30; John 17:3), and obey Him (1 John 2:3). It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don't love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10).

The Character of
GENUINE SAVING FAITH*

2 Corinthians 13:5

I. EVIDENCES THAT NEITHER PROVE NOR DISPROVE ONE'S FAITH:

- A. Visible Morality: Matt. 19:16-21; 23:27
- B. Intellectual Knowledge: Rom. 1:21; 217ff
- C. Religious Involvement: Matt. 25:1-10
- D. Active Ministry: Matt. 7:21-24
- E. Conviction of Sin: Acts 24:25
- F. Assurance: Matt. 23
- G. Time of Decision: Luke 8:13-14

II. THE FRUIT / PROOFS OF AUTHENTIC/TRUE CHRISTIANITY:

- A. Love for God: Ps. 42:1ff; 73:25; Luke 10:27; Rom. 8:7
- B. Repentance from Sin: Ps. 32:5; Prov. 28:13; Rom. 7:14ff; 2 Cor. 7:10; 1 Jn 1:8-10
- C. Genuine Humility: Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:1-12; James 4:6, 9ff.
- D. Devotion to God's Glory: Ps. 105:3; 115:1; Isa. 43:7; 48:10ff; Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 10:31
- E. Continual Prayer: Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:18ff; Phil. 4:6ff; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Jams 5:16-18
- F. Selfless Love: 1 John 2:9ff; 3:14; 4:7ff.
- G. Separation from the World: 1 Cor. 2:12; James 4:4ff; 1 Jn 2:15-17;5:5
- H. Spiritual Growth: Luke 8:15; Jn 15:1-6; Eph. 4:12-16
- I. Obedient Living: Matt. 7:21; Jn 15:14ll.; Rom. 16:26; 1 Pet. 1:2, 22; 1 Jn. 2:3-5
- J. Hunger for God's Word: 1 Peter 2:1-3
- K. Transformation of Life: 2 Corinthians 5:17

* From *The MacArthur Study Bible*