

How to Be a Real Christian

What is a real Christian, and how do you become one? Is there anything you must do? Don't fall for the "easy believism" of today's popular Christianity; you need to understand real Christianity—and how to live it!

All Scripture quotations were taken from the King James Version except as noted.

Labels. We all use them. Pigeonholing. We've all done it. Labeling or pigeonholing gives us a false sense of security. Once we've labeled or classified someone or something, we feel more comfortable and more "in control" of it. We've all heard the saying, "If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck." But have you ever wondered if we can safely apply this principle to Christianity? If one wears a Christian label and is kind and good and sincere in his beliefs, does that automatically make him a Christian? Before we can become anything in life, whether it be a doctor, lawyer, plumber, or factory worker, we must know what it is and what we must do to qualify to become one. In like manner, before we can become a Christian, we must know what a true Christian *is* and how to become one.

There are many religious people in the world today and many different persuasions. Jesus Christ said it would be so and warned us to "take heed" (Matthew 24:4). It's one thing to be "religious"; it's quite another thing to be a real Christian.

A few years back a book called *The Bible Code* clawed its way to the top of the best-seller charts. Have you ever wondered why a book purporting to find "hidden messages" in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament would sell hundreds of thousands of copies to believers and nonbelievers alike? The answer should be apparent to all. Simply because people have an innate hunger for spiritual truth, and, if they cannot find it by normal means, they will reach for anyone or anything that promises to give them an answer. And sometimes "the mysterier the better"!

Millions are deceived by cults who promise deeper insights and revelations into "new truths."

By the same token many people seek a deeper reality through what is commonly called "organized religion." They join a church, are baptized and confirmed, give their money, attend services faithfully, pray daily, read the Bible, and in general obey the rules of the church of their choice, hoping that somehow their outward performance can lead them to find inner peace and a deeper relationship with God.

Many people feel that if you are religious, then you must *be* a "real Christian." At the same time many feel a deep-down gnawing inside—a hollow, empty, unsatisfied craving. Many sense something is missing. Seeing hypocrisy in the churches at large and the confusion of contradictory doctrinal tenants, many are confused and throw their hands up in despair. They recognize there is a fundamental difference between just "being

religious” and being a “real Christian” but do not know what to do about it. If you were to survey a cross section of society and ask, “Are you a Christian?” many would reply, “I’m a church member” or “I’ve been baptized” or “I go to Sunday school” or “I go to mass every week.” But those replies raise another important question: *Is* being a Christian simply a matter of outward activity or sincerity of belief? Sincerity is an admirable quality, but it is no criteria for the truth. Even the most pious person eventually perceives that “religion” alone cannot satisfy. Sooner or later most find that feverishly burying themselves in religious activity can neither produce the peace of mind nor guarantee the acceptance with God they were seeking. At the end of life’s journey, when looking back and all is said and done, it sometimes seems that a cold wind of uncertainty blows over us and, like the song, many end up crying out to heaven and asking, “Is that all there is to life—is that all there is?”

This leads us to ask a very personal question. We need to ask ourselves while there is still time, “Am *I* a *real* Christian...or am I just a religious person? Am I a Christian just because I *think* I am?” Friends, we need to prove what we think we know (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said in Ecclesiastes 3:1, “He [God] hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that *no man can* find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.” He added in Proverbs 25:2, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.”

Pascal, the French philosopher, said there is a “God-shaped vacuum” inside every human heart. When God created man, He instilled within the mind of man several driving forces, including self-preservation, curiosity, procreation, and *the desire to worship something greater than himself*. Man is incurably religious by nature. That’s why every human society—no matter how advanced or primitive—has some concept of a higher power, some vision of a reality that goes beyond the natural. Science—mankind’s newest messiah—will never eradicate religion from the earth because it cannot fill this “God-shaped vacuum” in the human heart. Thus it is that even in “enlightened America” millions of people consult their horoscopes each morning while millions more counsel with the Psychic Friends Network looking for answers.

“Religion” vs. Real Christianity

What is a true Christian anyway? To most, the word “Christian” is ambiguous, even in our so-called Christian culture. Happier faces are seen on bottles of iodine than on some Christians. A “Christian” in our Western world may mean anyone who is not an atheist, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, or Moslem. As a result of this confusion, to some Christianity is an argument. To many, it is a performance. To a few, it is an experience and a way of life.

There are many organizations extant calling themselves “Christians”: Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Mormon, and Independent. There are Churches of Christ, Churches of God, Episcopalians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Unitarians. There are Amish,

Mennonites, and Quakers. There are Pentecostals, Presbyterians, and Spiritualists. All told, there are many thousands of differing denominations, sects, splits, and offshoots in the United States today, all claiming to be “Christian.” There are countless “slants” on what is popularly called “Christianity”: traditional, conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical, all claiming to follow Christ but having vastly different and sometimes diametrically opposite beliefs. Have you ever asked yourself, “What does Jesus Christ think of the spectacle of thousands of different, competing denominations and sects—each calling itself ‘Christian’—and yet differing and bickering over nearly every doctrine and tenet imaginable?” Is God divided? Is God the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:23)? Some advance the notion that “We are all trying to go to the same place; we are just taking different paths to get there.” In defending some commonly held (but unbiblical) beliefs, some reason, “But surely, all these churches can’t be wrong.” We should ask, “Since so many commonly held beliefs are at variance with the Word of God, can all these persuasions be right?” Truth is exclusive and logical. *If* any one is right, since they are all different, all the rest must logically be wrong. Jesus said that the gates of hell (Greek, *hades*, meaning death or annihilation) shall not prevail over His church (Matthew 16:18). Did Christ teach *several thousand* different methods of salvation and ways of life—or just *one*? In John 10:1–14, Jesus pointed out that He is the Good Shepherd and that any who would enter into the Kingdom of God by any other means than the way He prescribed were thieves and robbers. He pointed out that many “shepherds” of God’s flock are but hirelings, following the almighty dollar and the path of least resistance. To cut through some of the confusion shrouding men’s minds about real Christianity, let us first establish what a true Christian *is*.

What Is a True Christian?

According to Webster II’s *New Riverside University Dictionary*, a Christian is “a believer in Christianity; of, pertaining to, or professing belief in Christianity; relating to Christianity or its adherents.” *If* this definition alone were true, then Satan the devil is a Christian, because we read in James 2:19, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: *the devils also believe, and tremble.*” Does Satan the devil believe in Jesus Christ? Indeed he does, so much so that he *trembles* at the thought! But that does not make him a Christian. More than mere belief is required. Faith without works is dead, says the Lord’s brother James (James 2:17–19). Some want to be counted *in*, but not to be counted *on*.

It is not always easy to tell a Christian from a non-Christian. Just because one walks like a Christian and talks like a Christian does not necessarily *make* him a Christian. Today, we have too many sermonettes by preacherettes for Christianettes. Today, too many Christian soldiers are fraternizing with the enemy. Jude admonishes us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, *turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness* [lawlessness], and [thus] denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3–4). History records that more people have been slaughtered “in the name of Jesus Christ” than in any other religion. Untold millions were savagely butchered in various “holy wars” in the past, and your Bible says

that millions more will be annihilated in the not-too-distant future. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* documents Christian persecutions by "Christians" down through the centuries. Compare this with Luke 21:12, 16–17, where it warns, "But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.... And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Many, seeing the hypocrisy of many others calling themselves "Christians," have given up on belief in God altogether. Christ went on to say, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). Unlike the entertaining and watered-down "Christian" messages we often hear today, "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Why such confusion? Who should we listen to? Do "Christian" bands and charismatic speakers who tell stories that make you laugh and cry validate one's ministry? Is there a *source* we can go to—some ultimate authority—to clear away all the confusion? Yes, there is. It is called the Holy Bible.

The Holy Bible Must Be Our Ultimate Authority

The value of the Bible does not consist in merely knowing it, but in obeying it. Many pious people would rather study the Bible than practice what it teaches. No one ever says, "We are the *wrong* church; don't listen to us. We are *false* ministers pretending to be true ministers of God." All claim to be at least a bonafide Christian church, if not "the one and only true church." Many will be so audacious and intimidating as to claim that if you do not belong to *their* particular church, group, or organization, you will go straight to hell. ("Do not pass 'Go' and do not collect \$200!") However, God's end-time body of believers does not consist of weak-willed, compromising, "converted antinomians" (law breakers) who cling to a phony Messiah, but rather those who keep God's Ten Commandments and hold firmly to the true teachings of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17)! We see in Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." There are those who hold the truth—that is, they hold up the very Word of God—but suppress the truth it contains. The Bible reveals that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Second Corinthians 11:15 goes on to say, "Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed *as* the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Yes, Satan the devil has ministers, all *claiming* to be ministers of Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder people are confused? Is it any wonder pagan traditions such as Christmas, Lent, and Easter—disguised and relabeled "Christian"—have clouded the minds of men to the point that they are no longer enlightened by God's truth, but deceived by Satan's lies (2 Corinthians 4:4)? Instead of rejoicing in the liberty of God's truth, most are chained to the shackles of tradition. Satan's serpentine ministers are in the majority and have poisoned the churches with their deceitful venom and smitten the unsuspecting with their message of "love, love, love" to the exclusion of God's laws.

The one claim most churches have in common is that *their* doctrines, tenets, and beliefs come straight from the Holy Bible. How ironic that many identifying themselves with the Christian label expect the world to respect the Book they deceitfully hold to give themselves credibility! Each claims, at least subliminally, that you must come to *them* for interpretation, clarification, and guidance. Yet, if all these churches are “true churches” of the One Way, why do so many believe and teach just the opposite of what the Bible plainly teaches? It almost seems that some go to great lengths to find places where God says “do,” and they say “don’t,” or where God says “don’t,” they say “do.” Sad to say, no one is a Christian just because he goes to church, any more than one is a mechanic just because he goes to a garage. Satan the devil is perfectly willing to have a person “confess” Christianity...as long as he does not practice it. Satan is never too busy to rock the cradle of a sleeping Christian. An idle Christian is the raw material of which backsliders are made. In a very real sense, Christianity is a test of endurance. Christ said that he who endures to the end shall be saved (Matthew 24:13), not those who start out like a house afire and later “burn out.” Since we are left in a quandary upon seeing all the contention, backbiting, and disagreement of these hundreds of groups claiming to be Christian churches, we need to go to the very *source* they claim as *their* source—the Holy Bible. The Bible is the Constitution and the Bill of Rights for the Christian.

What, then, is the **Bible definition** (not Webster’s) of a Christian? Read and memorize Romans 8:9: “Now if any man *have not the Spirit* of Christ, he is none of His.” There it is as plain as can be! There— from your own Bible—is God’s definition of a Christian! If one does not have, possess, and follow the Holy Spirit of God, he is not a *Bible-defined* Christian no matter what he says, how he acts, or what he teaches. The Holy Spirit is the essence, power, mind, and spiritual extension of God. God begets Christians as His sons and daughters through this Spirit. It strengthens and fortifies a Christian spiritually, converts his mind, leads and guides him as necessary, and serves as an earnest or guarantee of eternal life (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Now that we know the **Bible definition** of a Christian, we must go on to ask, “To *whom* does He *give* His Spirit?” Read and memorize Acts 5:32: “And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, which God hath given to them that *OBEY* Him.” Now, isn’t that plain? It cuts right through so much human reasoning and situation ethics! *Disobedience* is not an option. We find no category of “converted lawbreakers” anywhere in the Bible. Christ said, “Why *call* ye me Lord, Lord, and *do* not the things which I *say*?” (Luke 6:46).

So a real Christian is a person in whom God’s Holy Spirit dwells, whose attitude and behavior are consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit one is literally begotten by God the Father as one of His sons, to be born again by a metabolic change from physical to spirit at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ into the very family (Ephesians 3:15) and Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:51–53; Philippians 3:21). The process is perfectly analogous to the human birth process. The true Christian maintains an upright relationship with God and man throughout his life of love and service. A real Christian is as horrified by his own sins as he is by his neighbors. A Christian is a living

sermon, whether or not he preaches a word. “Wherefore by their *fruits* ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

Christianity Is a Way of Life

True Christianity is, literally, a way of life. In the Bible, early Christians referred to Christianity as “*the way* of the Lord” (Acts 18:25) and “*the way* of God” (verse 26). Paul said, “But this I confess unto thee, that after *the way* which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14; see also 19:9,23; 24:22). A Christian seeks God’s way of life, His thoughts and His will. A real Christian is one who is willing to do what Jesus *said* to do. “If you know these things,” Jesus exclaimed, “happy are you if you *do* them” (John 13:17).

Just as a good parent protects his children by placing certain restrictions upon them for their own good, so God places certain constraints upon His children. When you become a Christian, you will not be able to *do* everything you would ordinarily like to do. You will not be able to *go* everywhere you would like to go, *eat* everything you would like to eat, or *say* everything you would like to say. In short, *Christianity interferes with your normal way of life!* Many would resent this. Some unsubmitive souls today have the attitude that “*Nobody* is going to tell *me* what to do—not even God Himself!” Consider: what father, when his son strikes out on his own in the world, would not put a loving arm around him and advise, “Now, son, when you are out there in the world, be careful. Don’t be like everybody else. Don’t curse and swear. Don’t lie or steal or yearn for what isn’t yours. Don’t defraud anybody. Don’t worship any false gods. Watch out for wayward women. And don’t work yourself to death—remember God’s Sabbath day.” Are these the harsh commands of a vengeful dictator...or loving advice from a father to a son to guide him and keep his son out of harm’s way? And so it is with our heavenly Father. Christianity—the way of Christ—is a program of behavior modification and character development. We are to grow, change, and overcome (2 Peter 3:18), to become more and more like Jesus Christ in thought, word, and deed. A real Christian will begin to follow Christ in all that he does, says, and thinks. As a result of following the leading of God’s Spirit, he will begin to develop godly character, replacing human carnal nature, which is largely rooted in vanity, jealousy, lust, and greed. Replacing these will be the fruits of God’s Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22–23).

God never deprives us of anything wholesome and good. There may be times when we do not fully understand why God commands us to do or not to do a certain thing, but as an obedient child we are to obey. That is where the walk of faith comes in. True Christianity has no regrets, no kickbacks, no “mornings after.” True Christianity is not a boring, never-get-to-do-anything lifestyle. True Christianity *is* the “Greatest Adventure Ever Lived.” In light of the rewards in this life and in the life to come, it is hard to imagine why anyone would *not* want to become a Christian!

Christianity Is a Calling

If you are not a Christian already, have you ever considered *becoming* a Christian? In the end of days, as you gaze into the fiery eyes of Jesus Christ at the judgment, what will be *your* excuse? It is true that some go through the rituals of their church only because it “seems like the thing to do,” like buying a car or a house, getting married, or having children. Some join a church out of peer pressure or because of family, friends, or coworkers. Still others pay lip service to a deity “just in case”—to be on the safe side. If God is opening your mind and heart so that you see *by the Scriptures*, what is the proper thing to do?

First of all we must realize that the Christian walk is a direct calling of God. Christ tells us in a first-person quotation in John 6:44 that “No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” The Greek word translated “draw” is *helkuo* and means literally or figuratively to “drag, tug, haul, or tow.” It sometimes seems that God “drags us” kicking and screaming into His fellowship in the midst of problems, trials, and despair...or perhaps *because* of them. Our calling is a divine act outside our control. No one can come to God on his own terms. Our calling is something more than merely hearing the message of the Word of God. It goes much deeper than that. It is internal, and is the miraculous result of God the Father “turning on the lights” in our minds to understand the spiritual (Acts 26:18; John 6:44). God the Father specifically chooses and calls us, effectually drawing us to Christ, almost as though by a magnet, enlightening our minds, enabling us to receive and understand the truth (John 6:45; Acts 16:14; Ephesians 1:17). “For ye see your *calling*, brethren, how that *not many* wise men after the flesh, *not many* mighty, *not many* noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). What a *privilege* to be called of God! For double emphasis, Christ repeats again in John 6:65, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man *can* come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

Christ also said, “All that the Father *giveth* me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (verse 37). As shocking as it may be to some, God the Father is *not* calling everyone at this time. God is sovereign. He chooses whom He will call and whom He will *not* call and when He will call them. He is not trying to save the world now. If He were, being omnipotent, He would save it! Quite the opposite, we read in John 12:40 that “He hath *blinded* their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should *not* see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” Contrary to what many have been taught, God is calling only a select few at this time. For what purpose? First Peter 2:9 reveals, “But ye are a *chosen* generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath *called* you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Revelation 1:6 goes further, “And hath made us *kings* and *priests* unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:10 sums it up nicely: “And hast made us unto our God *kings* and *priests*: and we shall reign *on the earth*.” Where? In heaven? No, “on the earth.” Read it in your own Bible. Jesus said in John 3:13, “And *no* man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven.” He said the same in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit *the earth*.” Does this shock you? Here we see still another common “Bible opposite” from the

popular teachings of churchianity. (For more information on this important subject, be sure to send for our free booklet, *Immortality: God's Gift to the Saints.*)

“Repent and Be Baptized”

But is there anything we must *do*? Are there any requirements? Indeed there are. We see an incremental motif to becoming a real Christian. Throughout the Scriptures we see a progression: conviction of sin, repentance (turning from sin), faith, baptism, and a lifelong process called conversion or transformation. To one degree or another we all resemble the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:12–24, a type of the redeemed sinner. In this parable we see seven downward steps and then the upward climb of the Prodigal as he repents of his old lifestyle. At first he was caught up in self-will and selfishness, of wanting his own way. Then came separation, sensuality, and spiritual destitution. He came to the point of self-abasement and finally to physical or spiritual starvation. Who among us has not strayed far from God at some time in our lives and traversed these same steps? Finally the son came to the point of realization—he saw his plight and the reason behind it—and resolved to do the right thing. There followed repentance, return, and reconciliation to his father. There was a reunion and much rejoicing. This parable is a type of what we, as sinners, must do to be united with our heavenly Father.

Peter, on the Day of Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts, had just finished convicting his hearers that they were guilty of crucifying their long-awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ. They were convicted of sin, pricked in their hearts, and cried, “Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*” (Acts 3:37) Then Peter revealed unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” On that day alone three thousand were baptized into the body of Christ!

Simply put, baptism is a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit. The word “baptize” literally means to dip, immerse, or bury under water. Baptism was an ordinance instituted by Christ (Matthew 28:19,20), designed to be observed in the church. The ceremony of water baptism is performed by immersion, for the forgiveness of sins upon true repentance and acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice. After this observance, and as a result, one receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:2). Baptism symbolizes the forsaking of the old sinful ways of life, the remission of sins, the burying of the old self in a watery grave, and the arising of the new, Spirit-led man walking in Christ. (Read Matthew 3:13–16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1–8; and Colossians 2:12. For a deeper understanding of this vital subject, be sure to send for our free booklet, *Is Water Baptism Required for Salvation?*)

In reading Acts 2:38, many understand the “baptism” role but totally disregard the “repent” part. Indeed, to repent—to change one’s behavior—is getting down to the “nitty-gritty” where people live. Repentance is a lifelong process of changing one’s mind, attitude, and behavior.

What Is This Thing Called *Repentance*?

Calling sin “sin” is not fashionable today. It is “politically incorrect.” The world is caught up in “gray thinking”—situation ethics. The hedonistic approach seems to be, “If it feels good, do it; if it looks good, watch it; if it tastes good, eat it.” Believing there is any such thing as sin “marks” you as being at odds with society. Even some “professionals” deem “the sin concept” as “obsolete and harmful to the human psyche.” And yet sin is mankind’s number-one problem today. If you say sin is *not* a problem, you’re missing the whole point. What *is* sin? Once again, the Bible is crystal clear sin as to what sin is: “Sin is”—here’s the Bible definition—“the transgression [breaking] of the law” (1 John 3:4). The “wages” of sin—what you “earn” by sinning— is “death.” Death for all eternity, not “eternal life” in a different location. “But the gift of God,” by contrast, “is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Some falsely claim that the law of God is “done away” or “nailed to the cross” and quote various out-of-context scriptures to allegedly back up their claim. *THINK* for a moment! *If* the law of God was “done away”—*if* there was no law to break—then by Bible definition there could be *no sin!* “But sin is not imputed when there is no law,” Paul says in Romans 5:13. And *if* there is no sin, Jesus did not die for your sins and mine. But Jesus *did* come to die for our sins, to pay the death penalty that *you* and I should rightfully pay. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets,” Jesus thundered. “I am *not* come to destroy, but to fulfil [perform, carry out, fill to the full]. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17–18)! Quick! Look out your window. *Have* heaven and earth passed away? Then neither has God’s law! Thus saith the Lord!

The law of God as revealed in the Bible is a good, right, and perfect system of eternal directives and principles that reflects God’s character and serves as a means of expressing His love toward man. God’s law teaches man how to properly worship God, how to love his fellow man, how to live life abundantly, and, at the same time, how to prepare for an eternal spiritual life in the family of God. The law of God is exemplified in both the Old and New Testaments, and is expressed by both physical actions and spiritual motivations. The Ten Commandments, given by God Himself, are the perfect expression of His love and are the foundation of all biblical teaching, showing man how to express love toward God and fellowman, and are consequently the focal point of the Christian way of life.

A real Christian knows that sin—the breaking of God’s law—is very real. A real Christian really repents. He stops sinning—stops transgressing God’s law—and comes to the real Jesus with real repentance for real forgiveness. A real Christian has not lost the power to sin, but the desire to sin. Anything other than real repentance and change of heart may appear righteous for a while but is in reality only a satanic counterfeit. Know this: for every sin, Satan is ready to provide an excuse. He is perfectly willing to have a person confess Christianity...as long as he does not live it.

Repentance is the act of acknowledging one’s sins, and resolving to fully obey God. It begins when God opens one’s mind to see himself in comparison with God and His law.

True repentance is the first step toward reconciliation with God, and thereby toward ultimate salvation. A truly repentant Christian realizes that not only has he “missed the mark”—that he has sinned—but he also has a deep appreciation of God’s unmerited pardon, mercy, and grace (Psalm 51:1; 130:4). When a Christian slips, falls down, or backslides, he is conscious of guilt (Psalm 51:4,9), of spiritual pollution (Psalm 51:5,7,10), and of helplessness (Psalm 51:11; 109:21,22). Thus he comprehends himself to be just what God has always seen and declares him to be: a sinner.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul spoke of two kinds of repentance: *worldly repentance*, such as being sorry you “got caught” and had to pay the consequences, and *godly repentance*, which is a true change of heart—to be sorry to the point of changing your mind and behavior. It seems that more people repent of their sins from fear of being caught than from a true change of heart. To grieve over sin is one thing; to repent is another. It takes more courage and motivation to repent than to keep on sinning. Godly repentance means that you literally turn around and go the other way. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Be sure to read David’s beautiful Psalm of repentance in Psalm 51, which shows a broken and contrite heart.

Here are a few verses in your Bible commanding repentance:

- **Matthew 3:2:** “And saying, *Repent* ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- **Matthew 3:8:** “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for *repentance*.”
- **Acts 3:19:** “*Repent* ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”
- **Acts 17:30:** “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to *repent*.”
- **Acts 20:21:** “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance* toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **Acts 26:20:** “But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should *repent* and turn to God, and do works meet for *repentance*.”
- **Matthew 4:17:** “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘*Repent*: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”
- **Luke 15:10:** “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that *repenteth*.”

Look these verses up in your own Bible and meditate upon them. You will find that true repentance consists of several things. First, there is a true sense of one’s own guilt and sinfulness. Then there is an appreciation of God’s mercy in Christ. When you see yourself as God sees you, there comes an actual hatred of sin (Psalm 119:128; Job 42:5,6; 2 Corinthians 7:10). And finally, there is sincere turning from sin to God with a persistent endeavor to live a holy life in a walking with God in the way of His commandments. A Christian is not perfect, just forgiven.

The Christian Walk Is a Walk of Faith

Faith is also a prerequisite. It is indispensable. We read in Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” What is faith, but belief and conviction in something you cannot see? Faith is defined in the Bible as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is the sure knowledge that indeed God exists, and that He will accomplish those things He has promised. Faith gives man a safe harbor where he can drop anchor and feel safe. It is the daring of the soul to go further than it can see. There is no better demonstration of faith than a man planting seed in a field. Yet, like the farmer who plants no seed, when you cease to use and act upon your faith, you lose it. Some are stricken when their spiritual guru—the “leader” of their particular church or organization—lets them down. It is a sickly faith indeed that is shaken because some frail human being goes wrong. Jesus Christ will never let you down—follow Him! We are cautioned in Hebrews 3:12, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” For “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

In 2 Corinthians 5:7 we read, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” In other words, we live our Christian life by faith in contrast to depending solely upon the temporal things of life. In the same writing, Paul instructs the Corinthians to trust in things eternal: “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Thus, our Christian walk in life is indeed a walk of faith.

How do we walk by faith? The Psalmist wrote, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). This verse encourages all to be guided by the Word of God. Why? Because *it* is the lamp and the light for our feet and path in life. Without the Word of God, we walk aimlessly on the wide road of life. It is interesting to note that an oil-filled lamp or lantern in Christ’s time did not have the same proclivities of a modern flashlight which may shine as far as a half-mile on a dark night. An oil lamp would cast a dim glow only a few feet ahead in one’s path, and as one walked, it illuminated the way as needed, not a great distance ahead. So it is with our Christian walk. We walk by faith, perhaps not seeing a great distance afar off but our way is illuminated *as needed*. Faith is the daring of the soul to go further than it can see. Jesus also said, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). The basic elements of faith are courage, action, and risk—stepping out bravely and acting upon what we believe (James 2:22–24). Again, the emphasis is on being guided or nourished by Scripture in contrast to things that are earthly. Hence, our walk by faith is a walk guided by our absolute authority, the Holy Bible.

Why is it necessary to walk by faith? Jeremiah stated it very clearly: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: *it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (Jeremiah 10:23). Since we are not capable of guiding ourselves correctly or rightly

according to God's Word, is it any wonder man has so many problems when God is cast aside? Our faith deals with what God says—not what learned men say. The Bible is divinely revealed knowledge—knowledge we would not otherwise obtain. As a people, we need divine direction in our lives. Right thinking will get us to the foot of the mountain, but faith will get us to the top. Faith will give you the power to either move your mountain or tunnel through. Faith helps us to walk fearlessly, run confidently, and live victoriously. In addition, walking by faith keeps us from wavering or being deceived by Satan the devil who, we are told in Revelation 12:9, “deceiveth the whole world.” A deceived person does not *know* he is deceived...or he would not *be* deceived! Further, we are warned in Matthew 24:24 that false christs and false ministers would deceive, if possible, the very elect. Daniel warned, “And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed” (Daniel 11:35). We are again cautioned in Ephesians 4:14, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” How do you know *you* are not deceived? How do you know the Church of God International will not deceive you? Do you have on the whole armor of God that you may stand against the wiles of the devil (Galatians 6:11)? Without diligently searching the Scriptures, we can be carried about by every wind of doctrine or teaching (Acts 17:11). But, if we walk by Bible-defined faith, we will not be fooled by Satan or his false prophets. Read your Bible. Cherish it, love it, *live* it. No man or any organization is your spiritual lifeline, but only Christ and His Word

How do we get faith? Again the Bible gives the answer: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Faith in faith alone is only positive thinking. Our faith comes directly from the Word of God. Feed your faith and your faith will grow, leaving doubt to starve to death. The Word of Christ is the *source* of our faith. Thus, our Christian walk of faith is synonymous to walking by the Word of God. Hence, we must allow the Word to direct and guide our lives as Christians. Without the Word, we have no true faith.

The writer of Hebrews wrote, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Without faith we cannot please our Lord. We become pleasing to God when we *do* what He says. “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). James said, “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Faith with works is a force; faith without works is a farce. Truth is not always popular, but it is always right. God's truth is exclusive! Anything that does not agree with the Word of God must be excluded. This includes so-called “converted lawbreakers.” If we truly love and want to please God, we will walk by faith. The faith that pleases God is a faith that stands upon God's Word. How do you walk? We hope your walk in life is by faith.

The Three Components of the Christian Walk

Now that we have seen what a Christian *is* and how to *become* a Christian, how should we walk or *live* as a Christian?

We are to follow Christ in all manners of life for the rest of our lives. In effect, we are to “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). We are to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1), Paul said. “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). We see a stern warning concerning the ways of this world in Revelation 18:4: “Come *out* of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

We cannot accomplish this on our own strength. Without God’s help—if you try to live the Christian life without being a Christian (that is, without the guiding power of God’s Holy Spirit) you cannot last. You will not be able to endure to the end (Matthew 14:13). Confess your sins and ask God’s forgiveness. Be baptized and have hands laid upon you so that you may receive the Holy Spirit. We see these principles capsulated in Hebrews 6:1–2, where they are defined as “the doctrine of Christ”: “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” If you need further help or guidance in this area, be sure to write or call the Church of God International. There will be someone there to help you and to pray for you.

Let us now get down to specifics. As Christians, we have seen that we are to walk, or go through life, in a certain way. In Matthew 7:13–14, Jesus tells us that the correct path in life is narrow: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait [hard, rough] is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

What then is this path? The Scriptures teach us that the path to eternal life is through Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

So we know that, as Christians, we have already turned to face the right direction. As all Christians certainly know, though, the story does not end with the “sinner’s prayer.” After repentance and baptism and having received God’s Spirit, we must carry on as usual. We must go to bed and rise again the next morning, again having to face a sin-filled world, our own carnal nature, and the wiles of the devil. In order to be the “salt of the world” (Matthew 5:13), we must know how to walk that walk. The Christian walk can be broken down into three interrelated parts.

The First Fundamental of the Christian Walk is Proper Worship. The word “worship” appears in the King James Version of the Bible 108 times. Under the classification of worship could be included such things as praise, prayer, and thanksgiving. Worship, though, is more than these things alone. Worship is an homage, reverence, and adoration rendered to God, and which is sinful (idolatry) to render to any

created being (Exodus 34:14; Isaiah 2:8). True worship is much more than blind acknowledgement that God exists. Too many try to get something from worship without putting anything into it. Many think God will accept any old kind of worship we happen to throw his way, but God is very specific as to what kind of worship He will accept. God specifically forbids us to learn the way of the heathen and then to attribute that worship to Him. *Read* Jeremiah 10:2 and Deuteronomy 12:30–32. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). We can worship God in spirit and in truth, in the quietude of our minds in nearly every time and place. To worship God is to give Him the glory, honor, and thanksgiving that He rightly deserves (1 Peter 4:11). There are many debates these days about public prayer in schools. Let's be real. In truth, who can stop anyone from praying in his mind in school? One does not need to sing or shout or adopt the customary posture of prayer in order to speak to God. One can give glory, praise, and honor to God by having a heartfelt attitude of thanksgiving and praise at home, at school, or at work. We can thank and glorify God when walking down the street, through the woods, or when gazing at the starry heavens on a clear night. Worship should not be just a weekly event, but a daily habit (Psalm 34:1; 119:164). Congregating together on God's holy Sabbath is a special time over and above all other times that should never be forsaken (Hebrews 4:9; 10:25). "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1)! How sweet and how uplifting to fellowship with those of like mind and spirit! "Iron sharpeneth iron," we are told in Proverbs 27:17, "so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Christian fellowship is a luxury that should never be forsaken, nor taken for granted.

The Second Component of the Christian Walk Is Obedience. This means obedience in actions. We are told in James 2:20, "Faith without works is dead." Having made a decision to follow Christ in word, we must obey His teachings in deed and spirit as well. Delayed obedience is the brother of disobedience. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Christ was one child who knew more than His parents—yet He obeyed them! It is our duty to obey God's commandments, not to direct His counsels. You may not understand all that you read in the Bible, but you can obey what you do understand. We must strive to be examples to a lost world. We may be the only "Bible" many people ever see. Let us be holy, so that, as vines in the Master's vineyard, we might bring forth good fruits that will set us apart from the thistles of worldliness (Matthew 7:16–20).

The Third Essential of the Christian Walk Is the Study of God's Word. It has been said that if all the neglected Bibles were dusted off at the same time, we would suffer the worst dust storm in 100 years! In 2 Timothy 2:15, we are told to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This is not a mere suggestion. The Scriptures are a mighty weapon against evil, called the "Sword of the Spirit" in Ephesians 6:17. The might of God's Word is described in Hebrews 4:12, where we are told, "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

We have been given the Scriptures so as to distinguish what is right and what is evil, and to judge teachings (1 Corinthians 6:2,3). Let us not dismiss this gift! Too often we see the believer who is only interested in the so-called “Plan of Salvation,” and fails to see the value of learning the deeper things of the Scriptures. A Christian is like an air-plane—when you stop, you drop. We are to *g-r-o-w* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). We do this by studying God’s Word. We are assured in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “*All* Scripture [not just the New Testament and the Psalms] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

It is by the Scriptures that we should live, learn, teach, and interpret all that is around us. Without viewing our world through the looking glass of the Scriptures, we will fall into the sad state described in 2 Timothy 3:7: “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

As you go about your Christian walk, remember that partial obedience is *disobedience*. Delayed obedience is *disobedience*. Deliberate ignorance so as not to obey God’s Word is also *disobedience*. Sometimes we do not love Jesus with all our hearts, but only a small portion of it. We must strive to be complete Christians, “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). It is easy for a Christian to focus on just one facet of the Christian walk. Such a worshiper might praise God in all things, but never *do* anything. Some Christians may grudgingly obey in his actions, but rebel in his heart. The Christian might study the Word of God, but not act upon it. All of the components are essential, but none can stand alone. “Synergy” is a term used to show that the sum total is greater than the individual parts composing it. So it is with the Christian walk. These three pillars of faith, obedience, and the study of God’s Word support one another. A threefold cord, Scripture says, is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12). To neglect one of these pillars is to neglect them all. The Christian must worship the Lord, obeying His commands, which are understood through the prayerful study of Scripture. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8–10).

“But There Are Hypocrites in the Church!”

A hypocrite is an actor, a person who pretends to be something he isn’t. Someone once claimed he did not attend church services “because there are so many hypocrites in the church.” He was told with a smile, “Then, come right on in. You’ll feel right at home.”

Some have objected to becoming a Christian or fellowshiping with Christians “because there are hypocrites in the church.” There is no incentive, some would argue, to become a Christian when even many so-called Christian “leaders” are hypocrites. Let us address this issue. Yes, in all honesty, there are those who call themselves Christians but do not contain the life of God through His Spirit. Although there are many that may claim to be Christians, everything they do is out of themselves and not out of the inward empowering of God’s Spirit. Some will not forgive or forget real or imagined offenses by some

labeled “Christian.” “He lied to me,” is a common perception. Or, “I was offended by his behavior,” or by this or that remark. Many, it would seem, make a “list” of complaints or disagreements that would scroll to the floor and are only too happy to air them to others to justify their own particular mode of behavior. “Just listen to *me*,” their attitude seems to say, “and I will fill you in on all the dirt.” It is ironic that many of those who oppose “hypocrites” themselves become a stumbling block or an offense to others. “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me,” Christ warned, “it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). The church needs workers, not a wrecking crew. Upon investigation, many perceived offences are based upon little more than misunderstandings, wrong attitudes, and faulty information. God’s Word plainly tells us, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matthew 18:15), and yet most would rather go on harboring their alleged complaint and spread it to others than take the steps to do what the Bible says. When this admonition is violated, it is not surprising that some of them mistreat others.

There is another group of people who are genuine Christians—men and women who have received God’s Spirit—and yet for a while do not live by Christ, live for Christ, or live like Christ. They do not live a life that expresses God as they should. Though they may have once received God’s Holy Spirit, they do not now live a normal, healthy, or proper Christian life. They are “coasting on past momentum.” Since Christianity is, so to speak, an uphill struggle against our own human natures, the ways of this world, and the wiles of the devil, one must at times correct and “push” himself to walk the right path. When you are coasting on past momentum up an uphill grade you will reach a point where you stand still, and then ultimately go backward. We are cautioned in Hebrews 10:26, “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” We must all be aware of this lackadaisical, lukewarm attitude (Revelation 3:16,19). We all know the road back to Babylon—back to our old ways of life—it is but a single misstep away. Yes, there are Christians who are inconsiderate and who may mistreat others who are still Christians; they at the moment are not practicing Christians. If this trend continues, they become less and less like Christ. They become, as it were, “defeated Christians.” Satan has them where he wants them: spiritually immobilized. When church members rest, they rust. As nominal Christians, they may continue their struggle in the Christian walk only to become more and more hypocritical, their light growing dimmer and dimmer. Not all who begin the race will finish the race (Hebrews 12:1). While nearly all Christians have succumbed to this lethargic malady from time to time, we must periodically reexamine ourselves, take ourselves by the scruff of the neck, so to speak, and with God’s help get ourselves back on the right track (1 Corinthians 11:28). We must realize that we cannot pass judgment upon God’s church nor make excuses for ourselves based upon on the behavior of only a few. We must not allow the presence of a few bad examples who may from time to time dwell in our midst to deter us from our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Seeing this latent tendency in man, Paul encouraged us, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, *if we faint not*” (Galatians 6:9). God is love. God is righteousness. A true

Christian, living in God, should express God in his thoughts, actions, and deeds. Only Jesus was never a hypocrite.

Yes, false Christians are hypocrites, pretending to be something they are not, but it is interesting to note that even the hypocrite admires righteousness. That is why they imitate it. The reality is, there always have been and always will be some hypocrites in the church, just as there are in *any* other organization. However, hypocrisy is not the unpardonable sin and can be repented of. Have *you* ever been hypocritical? In one sense, Christianity *is* a “hypocritical” way of life in that we are all sinners, and are trying to become someone we are not (yet). But through repentance, growth, and God’s merciful guiding hand we become more and more like Christ. We must strive to become as wise as serpents, and yet as harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).

A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be. Jesus’ harshest words were reserved for hypocrites. There are times when, out of weakness or error, Christians do make mistakes and sin. But that does not make them actors or hypocrites. Who among us can cast the first stone? Remember that Jesus does not ask us to follow others; He asks us to follow Him. Although Christians can represent Jesus either poorly or well, the real question is not whether there are hypocrites in the church, but whether Jesus is a hypocrite. If someone can prove that Jesus was a hypocrite, then He sinned and the whole structure of Christianity falls into ruin. However, the Bible, God’s Word, presents Jesus as nothing less than perfect. Jesus’ disciples testified that Jesus was without sin (1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5). Jesus Himself challenged His accusers to prove that He had ever sinned (John 8:46).

In the parable of the wheat and tares, Christ foretold that there would be tares or false Christians among the wheat, representing true Christians (Matthew 13:24–30). This prophecy proves your Bible to be accurate. He also predicted that they would be “weeded out.” It is true that many wearing the Christian label may not be as good as you are. Moses had a temper problem. David was an adulterer. Paul was a murderer. It bears repeating that Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.

Numerous “Christian preachers” have reportedly swindled hard-earned dollars from widows and orphans. Some priests may have committed fornication or acts of homosexuality. Some ministers do not practice what they preach. We are given a stern warning in Jude 4, “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [lawlessness], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Looking to men only, we might have good reason to be suspicious of the very church Jesus Christ Himself founded! Except for one very good reason—Jesus Christ your Creator died for your sins and wants to be your life!

Jesus Christ was not a hypocrite. He practiced what He preached. He taught people to be righteous, and He Himself was righteous. He hated sin but loved the sinner. He never mistreated or defrauded anyone, including the government. He never wronged His creatures. And yet, He was mistreated by many. He taught people to have compassion on

others, and He even fed the poor and healed the sick. He restored sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and made the lame to walk. He fellowshipped with the beggarly and downtrodden. He even restored life to the dead, showing that He had the power to do so. He was not greedy. He never swindled any hard-earned money from others; rather, He gave up His glorious throne in the heavens to be with man. He taught people to be kind and had mercy upon those who came to Him, never taking reward from them. He never committed fornication; rather, He honored the institution of marriage. He taught people to be soft-hearted, and compassionate. He laughed, He cried, He consoled, and He comforted. At one time He even rescued a sinner from being stoned to death, yet did not stone all her accusers who were also worthy of death. He taught people to love their neighbors as themselves. He loved man, lived for man, and died for man. And as He was dying a most excruciating death upon the torture stake, He prayed that the unrighteous mockers around Him would be forgiven. He kept His promises. He told His disciples that He would die and be resurrected, and true to His word He was resurrected three days and three nights (72 hours) later so that He could impart eternal life to all who would receive Him. He was the pattern for all Christians. Now He wants to live inside of you so that you too may be a real Christian. If you were accused of being a Christian in a court of law, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

What Being a Real Christian Is All About

Paul admonished us to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). We need to do this. We need to strive to be one of those comparatively precious few who are genuine, practicing Christians who have received God’s Spirit and are experiencing “at-one-ment” with Christ—not one of those who “received Christ” out of coercion or convenience, or was just *mentally* convinced or persuaded, but converted right down to the ground. We need to receive the very Spirit of God and fan it to flame. We need to express Christ in everything we say, do, and think. Our day-to-day living must become genuinely more and more Christ-like, and not just fake it. Christ is living in us and we are living in Christ. Christ has become our life that we may live out Christ. We are to live more and more by the Spirit of God that indwells us. We are to take Christ’s living on earth not only as our standard, but also as our pattern or model in order to live the same way Christ lived. The Spirit is a dynamic power and will move us to fulfill Christ’s two-fold commission to His church to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19) and to “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16,17), meaning to nurture His called-out ones. As such dynamic Christians, we are to be like Christ living again on earth. We must learn to love people as Christ loved people. We must become righteous as Christ is righteous. We are to be, in effect, “little Christs” as Christ lives in us to express the Father through us.

We should never be false or defeated Christians. Even if everyone around you seems hypocritical—or even if no one else around you is a Christian—*you* need to be a *real* Christian. That is our calling. You should be a Christian because God created you to contain Him, to be one with Him, and to express Him. You should be a Christian because

you will have to pay the penalty for your *own* sins...unless you accept the payment that has already been made for you by Christ's substitutionary death. You should be a Christian because you need Christ to bring God's very essence into you. You should be a Christian because you *need* to be a Christian—because you want to be a Christian more than anything else. You need to stand out from the crowd. As the old song goes, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the Word." When all is said and done, being a Christian is a matter of necessity and truth. You need God, and God desires you to be in His Family and in His Kingdom. Being a Christian is a matter strictly between you and your Creator. No one can decide for you. No one can pressure you. You do not need to look at anybody else. You need to be a Christian for God, for yourself, and for those around you.

Labels? We all use them. Wearing the Christian label is a badge of honor, respect, and glory. Wear it like a king. Wear it as though your eternal life depends upon it. Because it does.

And that, my friends, is what being a real Christian is all about.

Some Scripture References for Your Reflection

1 John 3:4: Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. **Romans 6:23:** For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Hebrews 9:22:** Without shedding of blood is no remission.

1 Corinthians 15:3: For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Romans 5:8: But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 8:7,10–11: Go, and sin no more.

1 Peter 1:18–19: 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 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

John 5:21: For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.

John 5:40: And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

John 6:33: For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Matthew 22:21: Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Matthew 15:32: Then Jesus called his disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Matthew 14:14: And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Philippians 2:5–8: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Luke 23:34: Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Matthew 16:21: From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Acts 10:40: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly.

1 Corinthians 6:17: But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Philippians 1:21: For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Colossians 1:27: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

John 15:4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.

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.

Romans 8:11: But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Philippians 1:19: For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:31: And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Ezekiel 34:2–3: Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

John 10:12–15: But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Romans 9:23: And that He might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.

2 Corinthians 4:7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Galatians 5:22–23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

2 Timothy 4:22: The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Radically Real Christian

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I’m not shouting, “I am saved.” I’m whispering, “I get lost.” That is why I chose *this way*.

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I don’t speak of this with pride. I’m confessing that I stumble and need someone to be my guide.

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I’m not trying to be strong. I’m professing that I am weak and pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I’m not bragging of success. I’m admitting I have failed and cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I’m not claiming to be perfect. My flaws are too visible but God believes I’m worth it.

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I still feel the sting of pain. I have my share of heartaches, which is why I seek HIS name.

When I say, “I am a Christian,” I do not wish to judge. I have no authority. I only know I’m loved.

—*Author unknown*

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