

What Is a Christian?

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”
Acts 26:28

Introduction:

1. One-third of earth's population of six billion claims to be Christian. How can this be true in any real way?
2. Most people think of our nation as being Christian for phrases in our pledge and on our money. Guess again!
3. If you were to interview most people on the street or at an American mall, they would claim to be Christians.
4. Because we have a Bible in our house or even are members of this church does not prove the point at all.
5. We need to define the word and concept by the Scriptures and examine our own individual lives by it.
6. If Jesus Christ is Creator, Savior, King, and coming Judge, there are four great reasons to be a Christian!
7. If the world could prosecute Christians, it would! Is there enough evidence to convict you as a Christian?

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

- A. Disciples, those assembling and being taught in a church, were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).
 1. This name was likely given by the enemies of the disciples to identify them with their Master.
 2. Observe that these disciples were organized in a church and came together regularly for teaching.
- B. Herod Agrippa II, king of Judea, was almost persuaded to become a Christian by Paul (Acts 26:28).
 1. What a fantastic opportunity for this man! But he wasted the grace of God in hearing the truth.
 2. Though the arguments were sound, he said, “I would, but I cannot; I could, but I will not.”
- C. Peter encouraged his readers to be ready and willing to suffer as righteous Christians (I Peter 4:16).
 1. There is implied in this exhortation a rather certain connection between Christ and persecution.
 2. Yet, a disciple of Christ suffering for His name and cause should glorify God for the privilege.
- D. English took the suffix *ian* from Latin, meaning “of or belonging to,” as in Arminian or Bostonian.
- E. Therefore, by its English definition, a Christian means a person ‘of or belonging to’ Jesus Christ.
- F. By the Bible, a Christian is a wholly committed disciple of Jesus Christ that assembles with a church for teaching and may be liable for persecution for following Christ, though without other offences.
- G. Since the word “Christian” is used so sparingly, we need to learn more about the word “disciple,” which described those believers assembling in Antioch of Syria that were first called Christians.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

- A. **Disciple.** Generally, one who follows or attends upon another for the purpose of learning from him.
- B. Therefore, in general, a disciple is the follower or student of a master (Matthew 10:24; John 9:28).
- C. Jesus did not let men get away pretending to be His disciples without lives to back it up (John 8:31).
 1. He defined true discipleship not as lip service or mere faith, but rather as continuing in His word.
 2. The truth and freedom are obtained by continuing in obedience to what you learn (John 8:32).
 3. He then antagonized the false hearers a little until they wanted to kill Him (John 8:37,40,44,59).
- D. Mere followers did not mean anything to Jesus, for He knew the hearts of all men (John 2:24-25).
 1. Many followed Jesus for the miracles and loaves, which was not enough (John 6:2,24,26,64-66).
 2. Many in his hometown of Nazareth wanted to see His miracles, but hated Him (Luke 4:16-30).
- E. When crowds followed Him, He quickly brought to bear the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:26-33).
 1. The decision is not, will there be a cost, but are you willing to count and pay the cost for Him.
 2. If you count up the cost of your little life and are not willing to pay, you have made your choice.
 3. Jesus identified some of the dearest things in life to test the true love of followers (Deut 6:4-5).
- F. Jesus taught plainly that following Him was a life of self-denial with eternity in view (Luk 9:23-25).
 1. There are three demands of followers: self-denial, daily crucifixion, and live like Jesus Christ.
 2. If you seek to save your life here, you will lose it both here and eternal life in the world to come.

- G. Jesus made the issue of true discipleship the keeping of His commandments (John 14:15; 15:10), for any departure from the apostolic doctrine of Jesus and the apostles is belly worship (Rom 16:17-18).
- H. Jesus made the issue of true discipleship the loving of other disciples (John 13:35; Acts 2:41-47).
- I. Discipleship begins at baptism into Christ and produces change (Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-5; II Cor 5:17).
- J. Therefore, having a Bible in the house, or being baptized, or church membership does not prove us.
- K. Our lives, at home and in public, in all thoughts, speech, and actions, should reflect Jesus Christ.

WHAT ARE COMMON EXCUSES?

- A. It should be obvious that Agrippa would have had to pay a steep price to be a Christian (Acts 26:28).
- B. Consider three excuses that some gave to the Lord Jesus Christ for not following (Luke 9:57-62).
 - 1. The three extreme statements by our Lord identify dangerous excuses hindering believers; Jesus is not saying He never had a pillow, parental funerals are wrong, and farmers wear blinders!
 - 2. The first excuse is the choice many make for comfort, gain, and pleasure in this life (Lu 18:14).
 - 3. The second excuse is the love of family and friends that is too much to give up (Matt 10:34-39).
 - 4. The third excuse is the backward thought of your carnal life before (Luke 17:32; II Timothy 2:2).
- C. The rich, young ruler gives us an example of the horrible pull of covetousness (Matthew 10:17-27).
 - 1. It is very easy for Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, to know what you love dearly and test you for it.
 - 2. Therefore, Paul taught Timothy about money's danger and dealing with it (I Tim 6:6-10,17-19).
 - 3. But Zacchaeus knew exactly what to do and did it immediately to save his house (Luke 19:1-10).
- D. The parable of the sower identifies two more excuses that are used to turn away (Luke 8:13-14).
 - 1. Persecution, or opposition of others against us, is too much for many (II Tim 3:12; Mat 5:10-12).
 - 2. Covetousness and cares of life, no matter how noble, are too much (Phil 3:18-19; II Tim 4:10).
- E. Some believing Jews had the excuse of being rejected from human organizations (John 12:42-43).
- F. Other religious Jews were unwilling to humble themselves and repent for their sins (Luke 7:29-30).

Conclusion:

- 1. "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29). We should not settle for anything less than Paul!
- 2. The life of being a Christian begins at baptism, when you take the name of Jesus Christ and justify God.
- 3. Therefore, if you are not baptized, you have not even started the life of being a disciple. Pursue it today!
- 4. Therefore, if you are baptized, you must examine your life by the standard of discipleship we just learned.
- 5. If the world could prosecute Christians, it would. Is there enough evidence to convict you as a Christian?
- 6. If the Lord Jesus Christ were here (and He is here), does He count you worthy of Him as a true disciple?

For further study:

- 1. The sermon outline, "[Take Up Your Cross Daily](#)," for a detailed study of bearing your cross for Christ in Luke 9:23.
- 2. The sermon outline, "[Pressing Saints or Belly Worshippers](#)," which deals with Paul's great contrast in Philippians 3.