

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

By Ricky Leonard (with edits by Sarah Leonard)

The term “Christian” was first used by non-Christian people to describe some followers of Jesus in the city of Antioch. The locals were using it in a negative (scoffing, mocking) way at the time but it stuck. These preachers of the gospel were going around preaching Jesus as the Messiah and performing miracles, healings, and doing other wondrous things. The people of that area had heard about Jesus by word of mouth and saw that His followers were doing the same things as they had heard Jesus did, so they called them Christians or those acting “like Christ.”

A Christian is someone who does things like Jesus - has the same attributes as Christ. What are some of these attributes (things attributed to Jesus)?

He preached the good news of the gospel.

He gave encouraging words.

He always told the truth, but in a manner that testified He truly cared about their souls and their eternal destination.

He walked in love.

He did miracles.

He healed the sick.

He always gave glory to God instead of taking the credit for Himself.

He spent a lot of time in prayer and communion with His heavenly Father.

He always obeyed what God spoke to Him.

He was a teacher.

He was bold.

He had the “fruits of the spirit” which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.

He always told the truth.

He had integrity.

HOW DO YOU GET TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

It begins with a simple cry of your heart; a simple prayer to God.

When you get tired, weary, and fed up with trying to live this life and you want a fresh start; whatever the reason, just call out to God and speak to Him from your heart. The words are not as important as your sincere desire to want change. **Ask God to forgive you** for your sin, for rejecting Him, and for all the bad things you have done. **Believe that Jesus is the son of God** and that he died to take the punishment for you, and then was raised from the dead! Then, **ask Him to come into your life** and make you a new person. He will. You might feel different after the prayer or you might not but don't worry about that.

That's the beginning of being a Christian. Now you are officially a member of the family of God!

You've taken the **first step** and God has met you there. When you spoke that simple prayer to Him, something miraculous just happened, He sent His Holy Spirit to live inside of you. Holy Spirit is God. There are three persons, that are one person, that is God. There is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It's

not as confusing as it sounds. Think of yourself: you have a body, you have a soul, (mind, will and emotions) and you have a spirit, something deep in you) don't you? We truly are complicated beings.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now that the Holy Spirit lives inside of you He will be your new guide. He's not a voice inside your head, but He is your inside guidance system. He directs by a "knowing" or a "strong feeling" or by giving you a "peace" inside about a decision or choice you make. Sometimes, though not often, you will hear a voice inside speaking to you. He leads you through life by letting you know just what to do. It takes some training, or retraining of the way you do things. Before you say yes to something, first check your inward witness, your guidance of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit will always give you answers that are found in the Bible, the Word of God. If it is contrary in any way to God's written word, reject it. If it does not seem right, don't do it! If you are not "at peace" on the inside, don't agree or take action. If you do, you will see that your human reasoning was incorrect.

Now that you have prayed and you have Holy Spirit as your guide through life, you've begun your Christian life. Just as with anything else, the more you practice listening and following this leading, the easier, more familiar, and more natural it will become to you. This life is filled with challenges and ups and downs but being a Christian is the best thing that could ever happen to anyone!

READ THE BIBLE

Get a Bible that you can easily understand. There are many versions of the Bible, but it is ALL the word of God and all profitable for teaching us and training our character. The most important thing is that you are reading the Bible. If you can't understand the translation that you are reading, try a different one. If you still don't understand what you are reading, pray and ask the Holy Spirit

inside of you to show you what the passages mean. The amazing thing about the Bible is that it doesn't matter how little or how much you have studied it, there's always something new for the Holy Spirit to teach us. If you have access to the internet, a great many websites online and phone apps now have the Bible you can read for free if you don't yet have a Bible.

About different versions: the first half of the Bible (the Old Testament) was originally written in Hebrew, and the second half (the New Testament) was originally written in Greek. Since then various groups of scholars have translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into English which is why there are different versions with slight variations in wording. Some versions of the Bible are a little more accurate translation from the original text than others. As you grow in your faith, you may find it useful for studying to read a version that is more accurate to the original text or even to read several different translations alongside each other to see how they compare. If you're having difficulty in finding a good translation or version for you, ask other Christians what they use.

Make a plan of study for yourself and read your Bible every day. This is your lifeline and source of knowledge for anything you may face in life. The Bible, combined with Holy Spirit, can literally give you an answer to any question! In the beginning, we suggest that you don't read other Christian books; read only the Bible. After a while, you'll become so familiar with the teachings of the Bible that you'll recognize when a book or a teacher isn't speaking exactly the truth from the Bible. The Holy Spirit will also guide you in this, and you'll feel unsettled when you hear or read teaching that's not quite right or just plain false. Find yourself a Bible study group which meets regularly and get with them. Ask questions!

FIND A CHURCH

Find yourself a church, a group of believers who are teaching and preaching the Bible. Make sure the church claims to be Christian

and let Holy Spirit again guide you by that inward witness that the church you're visiting is a good place. Try not to be distracted by the style of music or the way the people dress or any other superficial appearances; the things that God values are often different from what popular culture says is good. He looks at the heart of people, and He will tell you by the leading of the Holy Spirit whether a church is good at the heart of it or not.

The Bible is clear about the importance of gathering with other believers! We look out for each other, encourage each other, and help each other grow. When you are all grown up in faith it's not time to sit back and relax; it's time to reach out and help someone else continue to grow. Church is a great place to both learn and teach.

When you have completed these basic steps, then **you are on your journey to be like Christ**. This journey will last throughout your entire life on this earth. It is a day by day walk of faith. You will always be learning and making mistakes and growing and continuing to learn. If you do your very best, then you are on your way to becoming more like Christ. Christians are not born, they're built by a constant pressing on and striving to obtain their ultimate goal, to be more and more like Jesus Christ, a Christian.

Enjoy the journey, stay at peace with all men, allow Holy Spirit to guide you **AND NEVER GIVE UP!**