

What is a Christian? How would you describe the term? If one **becomes** a Christian, what was he before he became such? Can one cease to be a Christian?

The dictionary (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 239) gives the following definition: “Professing belief in Jesus as Christ or following the religion based on his teachings; Christ-like; Neighborly, decent; a decent human being...” Is the mere claim to be a Christian proof that one is a Christian?

*Webster's Dictionary* (p. 31) even lists the following as a definition of this term: “in a general sense, anyone born of Christian parents.” Is a person BORN a Christian, and to be viewed as a Christian from birth, or does he become such later on in life?

One person commented: “The trouble with Christians is that no one wants to kill them anymore!” Why? The comment is an indictment against the shallow concept of Christianity. In a number of places the apostle Paul went, a riot followed. In preaching training schools, we never touch on the subject of how to handle riots! Why?

It is obvious that we use the name “Christian” rather loosely. As mentioned above, some use it to mean anyone who acts nice. Yet even when we act nice, we can get in trouble as did Paul. He stated that one who lives “*godly in Christ Jesus shall*

*suffer persecution*” (2 Timothy 3:12). We “*are to speak the truth in love...*” (Ephesians 4:15). We are not to use a physical sword against others, but are to use a figurative sword (Ephesians 6:17) which is the word of God. If a person believes that NICE Christians won't challenge their thinking, he has the wrong idea.

“*...the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*” (Acts 11:26). They were not called such in derision, but rather by the prophets Paul and Barnabas, in fulfillment of Isaiah 62:2. This new name “Christian” was to be given after the Gentiles had obeyed the gospel, according to Isaiah. The first Gentile converts were Cornelius and his household in Acts 10. Though they were probably good people (as was Cornelius - see Acts 10:2), yet he (and they) had to hear words by which they might be saved (Acts 11:14). People may join various religious groups, conform to their rules for admission, and all the while having NEVER OBEYED THE LORD'S PLAN OF SALVATION!

When denominations admit that a person can be saved and not be a member of their denomination (and they do), they are admitting their church is non-essential. But when one obeys the Lord and is baptized in order to be saved, his sins are washed away (Acts 22:16), and the Lord adds him to His church (Acts 2:47); he is now a New Testament Christian. He wasn't before, but is now!

King Agrippa affirmed that he was NOT a Christian (Acts 20:26) when he told Paul that “*almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*” It is the case that Paul wanted him to become a Christian but apparently Agrippa lived and died in the land of Almost!

The third and final time that the word “*Christian*” is found in the N.T. is in 1 Peter 4:16. Here the Apostle Peter declared that “*if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf*” (or “*in this name*” - ASV). That is exactly that to which Paul referred in 2 Timothy 3:12.

Thus a Christian is one who has been born again (obeyed the gospel), and is living according to the teachings of the inspired writings of the New Testament. Who are these Christians? How are they different from the world? They are “*new creatures*” (2 Corinthians 5:17) who though “*in the world*” are not “*of the world*” (John 17:16-18). In the remainder of this treatise, we desire to stress the fact that Christians are those who act like it, and use an acrostic to get the point across.

Christians are to be CONSISTENT and constant in purpose. The hypocrisy of the Jews was causing God's name to be blasphemed in the first century (Romans 2:24). If our newspaper was thrown every other day, would the paperboy make us

happy? If our refrigerator worked 3 out of every five days, would such consistency be pleasing to us? What kind of recommendation for Christianity is a spasmodic Christian?

Christians are also to be HONEST. “*He should do that which is honest*” (2 Corinthians 13:7). Oftentimes we do not expect used car salesmen, politicians, etc. to be honest, but Christians must be.

They are also to be RIGHTEOUS. Christians are not perfect - just forgiven! Righteousness is a state maintained by repentance and confession (1 John 1:9).

A Christian is also INDEBTED, as Paul was (1 Corinthians 9:16).

He is to be a SOUL-WINNER (Luke 19:10). This is the very reason that Christ went to Calvary (Hebrews 2:9). He is a soul-winner because it is wise (Proverbs 11:30) to be one.

He is TRUTHFUL, and not lie (Colossians 3:9). The Bible clearly states where liars will be in eternity (Revelation 21:8). Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).

A Christian is to be INFLUENTIAL. Do we have the courage to do the right thing, regardless of present company? We are to be “*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding the work of the Lord*” (1

Corinthians 15:58). Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38); He didn’t just go about!

He is to be ACTIVE. This involves NOT doing evil (1 Timothy 5:22). In early centuries, they practiced infanticide and/or child abandonment - today we practice abortion. What is the difference as far as morality is concerned? The tragedy of casual Christianity of today's world is that it has become respectable, but James 2:20 says that “*faith without works is dead*” (James 2:20).

Finally, we conclude by emphasizing that a Christian is to be NOBLE. The Bereans were more noble than they of Thessalonica because the former “*searched the scriptures daily*” (Acts 17:11) to see if what they were being taught was really the truth. They were “people of the book” we might say! They knew it, believed it, and lived it! Does truth matter that much to us? Am I a Christian? Are YOU?

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the  
30th Annual Mid-West Lectures,  
“*I Know*”

To hear or view the complete lesson go to  
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## I Know...

# What And Who A Christian Is

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International Bible Studies  
Tract Series