

“Study Guide “3”

“Questions that Keep People Away from Church”

Question: “What is a Christian?”

Story: They tell the story of a father who came home from work one day very tired, all he wanted to do was sit in his chair, read the paper, and rest. Well, his little boy had a burning question that he just had to have answered. “Daddy I have a question.” “Not now son I am tired.” “But daddy this is very important.” “Not now honey, please, daddy is tired just go play.” “Daddy I really want to ask you this question.” “Now son I have told you I am tired just go play and I will answer your question later.” Daddy picks up the evening paper and begins to relax and read. Well, his son is willing to give up. So as dad lifts the paper to read the little guy jumps in the middle of his paper. How would you have responded? The father grabbed the little guy and was about to punish him when his son said, “Daddy it is a very important question!” The father, being the patient man all fathers are, yeah right, said, “Okay I’ll answer your question, but it had better be good.” The little boy looked at his father and asked, “Daddy what is a Christian?” Now he had dad’s attention. “This is an important question the father said. “A Christian is someone who has given their life to Jesus Christ. They love others like Jesus loves. They worship God and desire to serve Him all of their days. They are more concerned with the Will of God than with their own will and ways. That is a Christian. The little boy looked at his dad and then said, “Daddy have I ever seen a Christian?”

A. The questions that keep us from doing what we need to do are not usually very complicated, they just need answers.

- 1. What is it going to cost me?**
- 2. Is there work involved?**
- 3. Will someone show me how to do the job?**
- 4. Is there a guide for me to follow?**
- 5. What will happen if I mess up?**
- 6. Who am I responsible to report to?**
- 7. How much time will it take?**
- 8. Has anyone done this before me?**
- 9. What are the benefits of doing this job?**
- 10. How can I overcome my fears?**
- 11. Do I have the talent required to do the job?**

Question: How do you respond when someone asks you, “Just what is a Christian?”

B. The word Christian is used several times in the New Testament.

" Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent **Barnabas** to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. **Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul**, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. **The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.**" (Acts 11:19-26, NIV)

"Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can **persuade me to be a Christian?**”" (Acts 26:28, NIV)

"However, **if you suffer as a Christian**, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name." (1 Peter 4:16, NIV)

Question: Having just gone over these verses has your answer changed as to just what is Christian?

C. The words that have been penned concerning the word “Christian” and “the Christian Faith” shed amazing light on our question.

1. Anonymous wrote: “Christianity is the spirit of Jesus Christ at work in the world.”

2. **Thomas Arnold said: “The distinction between Christianity and all other systems of religion consists largely in this, that in these others, men are found seeking after God, while in Christianity is God seeking after men.”**
3. **Robert Browning – “How very hard it is to be a Christian.”**
4. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge – “Christianity is not a theory or speculation, but a life; not a philosophy, but a living presence.”**
5. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge – “The greatest of all blessings, and the most ennobling of all privileges, is to be indeed a Christian.”**
6. **Robert E. Gibson – “A Christian is the keyhole through which other folk see God.”**
7. **Matthew Henry – “I reckon him a Christian indeed who is not ashamed of the Gospel, nor a shame to it.”**
8. **Clarence Jordan – “The measure of a Christian is not in the height of his grasp but in the depth of his love.”**
9. **William Penn – “To be like Christ is to be a Christian.”**
10. **Elton Trueblood – “The world is equally shocked at hearing Christianity criticized and seeing it practiced.”**
11. **Samuel Wilberforce – “Christianity can be condensed into four words: Admit, Submit, Commit, and Transmit.”**

D. You would think with such a short list of profound words being spoken about the word Christian that everybody would know the answer to our question, but that just isn't the case.

1. **So much bad has happened in the name of Christianity it makes people wonder.**
2. **Definitions have been made to suit individual belief systems and that has dulled the true definition of just what a Christian really is.**

Let's ask again: "What is a Christian?"

1. **The simplest definition may be the most complicated when we stop to really consider the implications.**
 - a. **A Christian is one who is "Christ-like."**
 - b. **Literally it means "Christ-ones."**
 - c. **All they have in common is Christ.**
 - d. **It is not about race, culture, or even language...**
 - e. **Being a Christian is about being like Christ.**
 - f. **To be a Christian is not to follow a system of thought it is to follow a person.**
 - g. **The person we are talking about is Jesus Christ.**
 - h. **The Apostle Paul said we could imitate him as long as he imitated Christ.**
 - i. **Over the years I have revised my definition of just what is a Christian.**
 - j. **For the longest time for me being a Christian was about following the right doctrine and the right church.**
 - k. **We all know how complicated doctrines can become when we start defining doctrine according to our own comfort.**
 - l. **And as for finding the right church, well that is another question in itself.**
 - m. **My definition is too simple for some and too broad for others, but I think I am on to something with this definition.**

My definition: A Christian is one who follows Christ according to His Holy Word.

Question: How does this definition fit with your understanding?

2. **A Christian is someone who lives like Christ.**

- a. **Christ taught us not to worry about the daily necessities of everyday life.**

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor

or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." **(Matthew 6:25-34, NIV)**

- 1.) **Christ says that we are not to "worry".**
- 2.) **We rename "worry" so people will not call us "worry warts," but have we really stopped worrying?**
- 3.) **Jesus tells us how God cares for the birds and we are more valuable than birds to Him.**
- 4.) **He tells us not to worry about clothing because God will care for our needs.**
- 5.) **Jesus even says that we are not to worry about tomorrow.**
- 6.) **Then He lives His life each day in the truth of these God principles.**
- 7.) **As Christians we will live like Jesus.**

b. Jesus shows how to evaluate the worth of things around us.

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" **(Matthew 16:26, NIV)**

"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" **(Luke 9:25, NIV)**

- 1.) **What are you willing to trade for your eternity?**
- 2.) **Jesus says there is nothing in the world worth our eternity.**
- 3.) **When we read and study the Gospels it is easy for us to see how Jesus lived His life.**
- 4.) **The followers of Christ will live like Christ.**

c. I think we sometimes miss our purpose in this life.

- d. ***Our purpose is to glorify the One True God who created us in all we say and do.***
- e. ***That happens when we live like Jesus.***

3. A Christian is someone who loves like Christ.

- a. ***The Greek language uses three words to describe the kinds of love we may share with one another.***

- 1.) ***Eros...***
- 2.) ***Philos...***
- 3.) ***Agape...***

- b. ***The purest love one may share with another is Agape.***
- c. ***Unconditional, all encompassing love.***
- d. ***Love that reaches out to the unlovely.***
- e. ***Love that knows no limitations or boundaries.***
- f. ***Love that always goes the second mile.***
- g. ***Literally the love of Christ.***

*" It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."
(John 13:1, NIV)*

- 1.) ***What a tremendous phrase: "...the full extent of his love..."***
- 2.) ***This is the washing of the disciple's feet.***
- 3.) ***This is the time when He talks about the one who was to betray Him.***
- 4.) ***This is the time when He once again tells them about all the things that will take place when they get to Jerusalem.***
- 5.) ***This is the time when He tells Peter he is the one who will deny Him.***
- 6.) ***And so what does Jesus do?***
- 7.) ***"...He shows them the full extent of His love..."***

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." (John 15:9, NIV)

- 1.) ***"...as the Father has loved me..."***
- 2.) ***"...so have I loved you..."***

3.) Just how did the Father show His love to us?

" Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." (1 John 4:7-12, NIV)

h. Then Jesus gives the ultimate love we are to have for one another.

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."
(John 15:13, NIV)

i. To live like Christ means we are to love like Christ.

Question: How can we do a better job of loving like Christ?

4. A Christian is someone who serves like Christ.

a. Jesus made it very clear that He had not come to be served, but rather to serve.

"When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Mark 10:41-45, NIV)

1.) What was it the 10 heard that made them so indignant with James and John?

Question: How do we feel when someone is pushing for their own agenda in the kingdom so they can be first?

2.) Paul illustrates the servant attitude of Christ.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
(Philippians 2:5-11, NIV)

3.) Really all we have to do is examine our attitude to see if we have the attitude of Christ.

4.) When we have the attitude of Christ serving will become natural.

b. Christ tells all that is necessary for us to serve just like Him.

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24, NIV)

c. To live like Christ I must serve like Christ.

5. A Christian is someone who suffers like Christ.

a. Of all the things I believe we would like to eliminate from the Christian experience one would be suffering.

b. Nobody really enjoys sufferings.

c. Some people do it better than others, but no one really enjoys the thought of suffering.

d. But to follow Christ means that suffering will more than likely follow.

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' " (Matthew 10:34-36, NIV)

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
(John 16:33, NIV)

"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." (**Matthew 10:22, NIV**)

"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin." (**1 Peter 4:1, NIV**)

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (**1 Peter 4:12-17, NIV**)

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (**Matthew 5:11-12, NIV**)

6. A Christian is someone who follows the Will of God like Christ did.

"but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave." (**John 14:31, NIV**)

"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." (**John 15:10, NIV**)

"For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." (**Romans 5:19, NIV**)

"Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second." (**Hebrews 10:9, NIV**)

Question: How is it possible for someone like me to know the Will of God?

- a. **Study the life of Christ.**
- b. **Study the Word of God.**
- c. **Pray without ceasing.**
- d. **Listen to the Still Small voice of God.**
- e. **Yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit.**
- f. **Seek advice from faithful friends.**
- g. **Do the work.**

7. How is it possible for someone like me to live like Christ?

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26, NIV)

"children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:13, NIV)

"In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "" (John 3:3, NIV)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV)

"he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5, NIV)

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23, NIV)

" Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well." (1 John 5:1, NIV)

Question: "What is a Christian?"

"Daddy, have I ever seen one?"

"Father in Heaven, am I one right now?"

