

## "A Christian"

A Christian? What does it mean to be a Christian? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore who is a Christian and what it means to be one.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We don't want to be Christians in name only; we want to serve God with all our hearts and souls. We don't want to be part of a social club or merely belong to a popular worship society. Our Lord calls us to something much higher and nobler. The Lord has called us to be part of His family, to walk in His ways. In Christ we must die to sin and live for righteousness. In Christ we care for those who hurt and make every effort to lead everyone to faith and obedience to Christ. Oh thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

When someone mentions the word "Christian," well, what do you picture in your mind? Some picture Christians as people who genuinely love the Lord and strive to follow His teaching. Others say, "My parents were Christians, so I'm a Christian." Well, being a Christian, however, isn't like being an American. We can say, "I was born in America, so I am an American"; but Christianity isn't like that. Many children are born in a Christian environment and learn Christian ways in early childhood; but this by it's self, doesn't make them Christians. They become Christians when they choose to follow Christ and give their lives to Him.

Now this is not a childish choice; it's the most critical and important decision that you'll make in your lifetime and it'll affect every other choice you make. When a person becomes a Christian, he no longer belongs to himself. He's taking on Christ as his Lord and Master. He's taking up his cross to follow the Lord. If he's serious, he'll never be the same. Oh, I hope and pray that you're serious about your faith in Christ Jesus.

Now if you want to study more about being a Christian, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Acts 26: 24 to 29, and then we'll explore what God desires from a Christian.

Our reading today comes from the book of Acts chapter 26 verses 24 to 29. While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

That's a great reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father how we wish everyone would come to know Your Son Jesus. Would follow Him and keep His words. Oh Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Every Christian is first a disciple. Now a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. And the term “disciple” means a “learner” or “pupil.” The disciples of Christ, however, were more than mere students. They devoted themselves to Christ and His teaching. In the last words of the gospel of Matthew Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20). Christ’s disciples were to observe all that Jesus taught. They were never to choose to follow some commandments while ignoring others.

Jesus described what He expected His disciples to be and what they were to do in several passages. And Jesus mentions or gets specific in three passages in the gospel of John. First, the Lord Jesus said in John 13 verses 34 a, to 35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (And) By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Being a disciple of Christ causes you to love other Christians in the same way Jesus loves them. A disciple is willing to lay down his life for others, just as Jesus did. When Christians love each other, people notice that. And they notice that love and are drawn to it. They want so of it.

Second, the Lord Jesus wanted people to focus and remain in His word. He said in John 8 verses 31 to 32 that, “If you abide in my word, (then) you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Now a true disciple does not make his own rules or do his own thing. He makes his home in the words of Jesus found in the New Testament. Now he knows only the truth can set him free. And so he abides in the words of Jesus, so that he may know the truth. And he’s not willing to settle for anything less. He’s not willing to go into human traditions. He’s not willing to listen to men. He want’s to hear what the Lord Jesus has to say. And that’s what’s important.

Third, the Lord Jesus wants us to bear much fruit. The Lord said in John 15 verses 8 to 10, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (Now) As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. (Now here’s how) If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” You see Christians, that is disciples, bear fruit by serving others and by teaching others the gospel. As disciples, they imitate their Master in kindness and love. They make it their business to bring people to Christ and to honor God with their lives.

Now at first, everyone who followed Jesus was called a disciple. Acts 6 and verse 7 says, “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” Well, the Jewish priests became Christians because they knew that He was indeed the Son of God and they wanted to obey the Lord. Now in time, however, the name of Christ began to be attached to the disciples. They were more than merely students, they belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word Christian is more than an adjective; it’s both describes and identifies those who follow Christ. The word “Christian” adds the suffix “-ian” to the word “Christ.” Now this suffix originally applied to slaves. Ant it came to denote the adherents, or the followers, of an individual or group. A Christian, then, is a slave or adherent of Christ. He is committed to Christ and follows His teaching. The New Testament uses the word “Christian” only three times. The first is in Acts 11 verse 26, and it says there, “And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” Now these believers, these disciples “were first called Christians in Antioch” because their behavior and their speech were like Christ. And this passage fulfills a promise found in Isaiah 62 and verse 2 that, “The nations will see your

righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the LORD will designate." Well the word for "called" in Acts 11 and verse 26 is not the usual word, but one that has the force of a divine command. This is not a term of derision like some think, but one that God Himself designated.

The second use of "Christian" is found in Acts 26 and verse 28, "Agrippa said to Paul, (well) 'In (such) a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?'" Well, Paul was defending himself in Caesarea before Agrippa and Festus and giving him reasons to believe. And Paul responded in Acts 26:29, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains." Oh anyone who knows the love of Christ wishes for everyone else to know that love and grace.

Then there is the third use of the word Christian. And it's found in 1 Peter 4 verses 15 to 16, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name." You see those who wear the name of Christian must live to honor Christ. Oh it's a worthy name. And their behavior and words should reveal that they gladly belong to Him!

Now if you're a Christian, you're also a saint. Yes a saint. The word for "saint" and the word for "holy" are really the same word in the original Greek. The word "holy" is an adjective, while the word "saint" is a noun. When people are sanctified (that is made holy) by the blood of Jesus Christ at the time of salvation, God makes them saints. So, every saved person is a saint. Ananias told Paul in Acts 26 and verse 18 that he was to go to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, (and) that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified (that is made holy) by faith in Me." Now if you have been sanctified, that is made holy, by the blood of Christ, you are made holy and because of that you're a saint.

Paul greeted the Christians in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 2, "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those (who are) sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:" Paul said to the whole church at Ephesus, that was made up of Jews and Gentiles, in Ephesians 2:19 to 22, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, (His family) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Now the New Testament knows nothing of some special class of "saints." This concept was developed many centuries later. And if you're a you want to hold to Jesus and what comes in the Bible. Not to those other things.

If you're a Christian, not only are you a saint but you're a child of God. Yes, a child of God. John 1 verses 11 to 13 says that, "He (speaking about Jesus) came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Only God can make a child of God. Only God can make a saint, a Christian or a disciple. Now children of God are born again by the will of God. Galatians 3:26 to 27 tells us how: "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ (that is immersed in water into to Christ) have put on Christ." Now when people believe and put on Christ in baptism, that's when they become children of God, saints, disciple and Christians.

And if we're God's children, let's act like our Father in heaven. Philippians 2 verses 14 to 15 says, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

A child of God must act differently than the world acts. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 verses 44 to 48, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends (His) rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Now if you're a Christian, a disciple, a saint, you're a brother or sister in Christ. Hebrews 2 and verse 11 says, "For both He (that is Jesus) who sanctifies and those who are sanctified (made holy) are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren." All of the Christian are brethren. When Paul and Peter wrote their letters, they frequently addressed people in the church as "brothers and sometimes as sisters." And Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:22 to 23, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and (abiding or) enduring word of God." You have to obey the gospel to be a child of God. As children of God we must love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

God wants us to be united as brothers and sisters. And we unite on His word. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10 and 11, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed (he says) concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." Well instead of holding fast to one another in Christ, and His word, they were splitting into groups. And Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 1:12 to 13, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'" (and then he says) Has Christ been divided? (and he answers No!) Paul was not crucified for you, was he? (No why are you following him) Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" No, why are you talking that way. No we belong to Christ.

As brothers and sisters we must remain united behind the Lord Jesus and not be split into groups and denominations. You remember that the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17:20 to 21, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." Now the current division among people who call themselves Christians is a stumbling block to those in the world.

Brothers take care of one another. Brothers care about each another and stay united. Galatians 6:1 and 2 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Oh we ought to) Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

Are you a true Christian, a disciple, a saint, a child of God, and a brother or sister in Christ? Have you denied yourself and taken up your cross? Let's pray together. Oh Father help us always to love You, to serve You and to follow our Lord Jesus. And to be committed to Him in every single way. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In God's eyes, our highest calling is to wear and honor the name of Jesus Christ. We must never become a fair-weather Christian, a pretend Christian, or a Christian in name only. Christians should truly honor the name of Christ in every aspect of their lives. And a true Christian has denied himself, taken up his cross daily, and given his life to follow the Lord. Sadly, many who wear the name of Christ fail to understand that they truly belong to the Lord Jesus. And when you confess Christ and you're baptized into Christ, take your commitment seriously!

Now Peter describes a Christian in 1 Peter 2 verses 9 and 10, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; (and) you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Now one who takes God seriously realizes what God has done for him to save him and to give him an inheritance in heaven. He realizes how much better God's marvelous light is than the darkness of the world. And he knows he belongs to God!

Who do you belong to? Do you belong to Christ? To become a Christian and to belong to Him, you must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. You must repent of your sins and turn to the teaching of Christ. Upon confessing your faith, you must be baptized into Christ, born again into the family of God. And when you're baptized, that is immersed into Christ in water, God will wash away your sins, He'll make you holy, and add you to His family as His child. Acts 22:16 says, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Oh how I wish you would become a Christian today!

Well we hope that today's study about being a Christian has made you hunger to become one. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, call the Search office it's toll-free, 1-800-321-8633. You can also download lessons or a newsletter online at: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). And you can watch the SEARCH program anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches on our website. And we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church that's in your area a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a Biblical home, then we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.