

"Being a Christian"

Finding our place and our identity in this world can be a challenge. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're examining what it means to identify as a Christian. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures give us valuable answers to the questions of life. They help us see ourselves and to see what God desires for us. God said in Isaiah 55 verses 8 and 9, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." The more we follow the will of God rather than our own desires, the more we'll find a positive identity in Christ and realize the value of being a Christian. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

Occasionally I hear of someone going through an identity crisis, wanting to know who he is or to find "himself." The Scriptures help us understand who we are, why we are here, and what will happen to us when this life is over. Acts 17:28 says, "for in Him(that is in God) we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" I tell you as the offspring of God, we shouldn't see ourselves as worthless beings and realize that Psalm 139:14 says that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." We didn't evolve from animals but were created by God! Let's find our identity as offspring of God himself and seek to become like Christ. That is God's will for us.

Oh there's a big difference between being in Christ and being out of Christ. There's a big difference between being approved of God and not being approved of God. Genesis 1:26 reminds us that we are all created in the image of God, and we should all get in a right relationship with Christ.

Now we offer this study on "Being a Christian" free! If you'd like a printed copy 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. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from 1 Peter 2:9 to 10, and examine the joy and privilege of being a Christian.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 9 and 10 and there he describes people who are in the body of Christ, the church, and how they are toward God.

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; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Oh what a wonderful thing to be a Christian. Aren't you happy that God makes that possible for all us. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful to be Your people. A people of Your own possession. A holy nation and royal priesthood. And Father we pray that we may always proclaim the excellencies that You have given to us about Your nature and what a wonderful God You are. Father help us to love You, to love each other and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The word Christian is only found three times in the New Testament. Acts 11:26 says "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Some people think this verse refers to the word "Christian" as a term of derision used first by people who weren't Christians. But the word "called" in this verse is a

special term referring to what God names and fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 65:15 where God says, "My servants will be called by another name." And so to be called a "Christian," means that one belongs to Christ. And this is a blessing and honor.

The word Christian is used a second time in Acts 26:28. In that passage King Agrippa is replying to Paul's desire to convert him to Christ. And Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." Well, Paul replied to Agrippa, "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, (that is a Christian) except for these chains." Well, I feel the same way. I want everyone who hears me to become a Christian and to live for the Lord.

The third time that we find the word "Christian" is in 1 Peter 4 verses 15 to 16. Peter wrote, "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." The description "Christian" shouldn't be considered something to be ashamed of. We should glorify God by being named a "Christian" and being called that. It's an honor to wear the name of Christ!

Sadly, many who call themselves "Christian" talk and behave in ungodly ways. Their speech and behavior shame the name of Christ rather than honor it. 2 Timothy 2:19 says, "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.'" If we call ourselves Christians, we must realize that we belong to something bigger than ourselves. What we do reflects not only on ourselves but also on our Lord and Savior who died for our sins. Many people reject Christ because of hypocrites who call themselves Christians but are evil. They dishonor the name of Christ.

And sadly, many who think that they're Christians have never entered that relationship. You remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." You see some think that there are many ways of becoming a Christian, but the Lord has only one way to become a Christian. Now becoming a Christian requires hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel out of love. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." One must hear what the Lord says in Scripture, if he is ever to be a Christian.

Now faith is necessary. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Repentance, also, which is a change of heart and ways, is necessary. The first thing Jesus ever said as a preacher in Matthew 4 verse 17 was "Repent." Now if we believe, we should not be ashamed to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Romans 10 and verse 10 says, "For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." But we must also be baptized into Christ, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of our sins according to Acts 2 and verse 38.

True Christians follow the Lord and His teaching in the New Testament. They hear and do what the Lord teaches. Sadly, many think that they're Christians but follow human traditions or cultural ways rather than follow the word of God that's written in the New Testament. Let's be people who follow the Lord. The New Testament provides a number of positive statements that help each of us to discover how God sees us and what He made us to be "in Christ". When a Christian faithfully follows the will of God, many things can be said about him. Now this lesson is not exhaustive, but it does reflect how God sees true Christians.

As a Christian, I am a child of God. John 1:11 to 13 says that, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become

children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Being a child of God matters greatly. Romans 8:14 to 17 says, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” Now the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

Ephesians tells of the ancient pagans who after hearing the truth obeyed the gospel. Ephesians 2:19 says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,” God’s family. Galatians 3:26 and 7 explains, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” We become children of God by believing, repenting, and being baptized into Christ.

Now as a Christian, I am a saint, that is sanctified by the blood of Christ. Some people think only some Christians are saints, but the New Testament doesn’t teach that. Some have determined that to be a saint you have to meet certain criteria that they themselves have established. Well, the New Testament calls every person who becomes a Christian a saint. You can read in 1 Corinthians 1:1 to 2, “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.”

You see, Paul reminded the Corinthians of their former life of immorality, but also helped them to see what God could do to help them become godly people freed from their old sinful life. 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11 says, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (and then he says) Such were some of you; but you were washed, (that is when you were baptized)but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” You see, God washed them, made them holy, and made them free from guilt.

As a Christian, I am a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” Now in Christ we all have a past, yes, and we were once sinners, yes, but we didn’t stay in sin. We repented and were baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We were forgiven and washed in the blood of Christ. Romans 6 and verse 4 says, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” You see, when we are born of the water and the Spirit, which takes place in baptism, then we’re born again and new creatures in Christ!

Colossians 3:1 to 4 says, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” Oh our focus as Christians is to please God and to serve Him. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9:23 and 4, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

As a Christian, my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 19 to 20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God,

and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." As Christians we must avoid the works of the flesh and embrace the fruit of the Spirit. Paul said in Galatians 5:22 to 24, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

As a Christian, I am created in Christ Jesus for good works. God wants me to become like His Son Jesus. And Ephesians 2:8 to 10 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58 urges us, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil (your labor) is not in vain in the Lord."

The Lord Jesus said to His followers in Matthew 5 and verse 16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Now because of what Christ has done for us, we want to love and serve others. Galatians 6 and verse 10 says, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

As a Christian, I am chosen in God's eyes. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen." 2 Thessalonians 2:14 says that we're called by the gospel. Now many people are called by the gospel. And when people hear the gospel, and believe it, and obey it by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism, they become children of God and are, from that time forward, chosen. You see, Paul wrote in 1 Peter 2 and verse 9 to 10, But you are a chosen race, Christians, 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; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Because we're God's people, we must live holy and godly lives that honor God and the name of Jesus Christ. We must listen to the Lord and to His word found in the New Testament. We must love the Lord from our hearts and love our neighbors.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us all to be faithful Christians who love You and love our neighbor. Who do Your will, who recognized Your grace and what You have done for us. And commit ourselves, to deny ourselves, and take us our crosses daily and to follow You. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

There's a big difference between being a Christian and not being one. There's also a big difference between being Christians in name only and genuine Christians who love the Lord. Now you might have parents or grandparents who were god-fearing but that doesn't mean that you're right with God. You can worship at church; but if you follow the devil all week, you'll shame the name of Christ. You can claim that you said a sinner's prayer, but that's not how people became Christians on the day of Pentecost. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Many people deceive themselves, thinking that everything is all right with their souls. But Jesus said what He did, not to condemn people, but to help them see what they need to do to change to be right with Him. He was in the saving business, and you know what, so are we. To be saved, you have to do things the Lord's way! After all, He is the Savior and the Lord; and only the Savior and Lord can make

the rules of how to be saved. Now if you choose to do it some other way, you're only deceiving yourself.

On the day of Pentecost in the first gospel sermon, the people guilty of crucifying Jesus were pierced to the heart and asked the apostles, "what shall we do?" You see they wanted forgiveness.

And Acts 2:38: Peter is saying, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." You see that's how you are forgiven and that's how you become a Christian. And that's the Lord's way.

We hope our study on being a Christian, has caused you to see the value that God places on His children. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send 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. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Also we want to let you know that SEARCH is on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and when you do be sure to like the programs. That spread the programs to other people. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get ahold of us don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Please show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. Let them know that you're watching and that you enjoy In Search of the Lord's Way. As always we want to say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.