

How To Be a Real Christian

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In the world today there are well over 2 billion people who claim to be Christian. Among those claiming to be Christian are represented a wide assortment of beliefs and practices that are often contradictory not only to each other, but are often exactly the opposite of what Jesus Christ himself believed, taught and practiced. One dictionary definition of a Christian is one who professes belief in Jesus as Christ. Is a Christian just anyone who claims to be a Christian? If not exactly what does it mean, from the standpoint of Scripture, to be a Christian? What makes one a Christian in God's sight?

In this article is information that can help you understand how you can become a true Christian, or if you are a real Christian, how you can remain one.

Many believe, as mentioned earlier, that anyone who claims to be a Christian must be a Christian. Others believe that being a "good person" or doing "good deeds" is what makes one a true Christian. Or being sincere in one's beliefs. However, merely claiming to be a Christian does not make one a Christian in God's sight. Being what others may consider a "good person," or merely doing good deeds, even good deeds done in the name of Christ, or being sincere -- none of these things, of itself, is what makes one a real Christian.

Break Free of Deception

Jesus said, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). Paul warned of false apostles, false ministers, and spoke of being among false brethren (2 Corinthians 11:12-15, 26). Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:14). Peter warned of false prophets who would deceive multitudes (2 Peter 2:1-2).

If you've studied much Church history, you probably realize that after the era of the original apostles what is called Christianity was transformed entirely from what it had been in the time of Jesus and the apostles. As the historian Jesse Lyman Hurlbut wrote, the Church that emerged from the shadows of history in the early second century (A.D.), was "a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul" (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 41).

The English writer Gilbert K. Chesterton said, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." Very early in the history of the Church men sought to discard God's laws, and teach a gospel of cheap grace that demanded no rigorous obedience to God's word. The Sabbath, the Passover, the annual festivals were abandoned to be replaced by holidays

incorporating practices and ideas borrowed from pagan religions. The doctrines of the Bible about God's Kingdom, about salvation, about the reward of the saved and the fate of the incorrigibly wicked, about the nature of God, about nearly everything taught in the word of God, were subverted and replaced by false teachings that are not found in Scripture.

The Danish philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard wrote that over time Christianity became "exactly the opposite of what it is in the New Testament" (*Attack Upon Christendom*).

In the book of Revelation we find that Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). We find that Satan rules over a system of spiritual harlotry, a false Babylonian religion, through whose sorceries **all nations** have been deceived (Revelation 18:23).

Being a real Christian requires breaking free of the deceptions of the world and coming to understand and believe the true gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). True Christians are not of this world's false beliefs, but are **sanctified** (set apart) by the truth (John 17:16-17).

Seven Steps to Follow

Below are seven steps that can help you be a real Christian. You might say, "Well, I'm already a real Christian." If so, following these seven steps, rehearsing them and continuing in them, will help you remain a real Christian. We must remain vigilant and actively pursuing the truth to avoid falling (1 Corinthians 10:12).

1) Prove there is a real God.

Have you just assumed God's existence, or have you sought out the evidence and really proven it to your own satisfaction. There have been many people, including ministers, who thought they were convinced of God's existence, but eventually came to doubt or reject belief in God's existence.

If you've proven God's existence keep on proving it. Retain and build on whatever knowledge of God you might have already acquired. There are several approaches or lines of evidence one could pursue to prove God's existence.

One is the Creation itself, which could not exist without a Creator (Romans 1:19-20). Recently a number of books have been written by highly qualified scientists explaining in fine detail how the created things of the earth and universe require an intelligence behind their existence. They could not have just happened by "accident," nor through Darwinian evolution (a whole string of "accidents").

We have links to articles and other material that may interest you concerning this subject on our website. Select "Intelligence Versus Nonsense" from our home

page (cogmessenger.org). If you subscribe to our print magazine, which costs you nothing, we will send you a DVD with amazing evidence that Creation is the result of intelligent design. Offer valid while supplies last.

As you continue to study the matter, think about and learn more about the proofs of God's existence and also what God is like. Experience a meaningful relationship with the true God. Many people think they know God. But their conceptions of God are based all too often on religious deception and on empty emotion, not on the truth (John 4:21-24).

There are countless signatures of design in the creation that point to a super intelligent, supernatural creator. A software developer and author in commenting on the work involved in developing a computer operating system observed that (like an operating system that works), "You cannot, by accident, build an airplane that actually flies" (*After the Software Wars*, Keith Curtis).

If a computer operating system that actually works cannot be built by accident, and if an airplane that actually flies cannot be built by accident, can dead chemicals through a series of accidents turn into a bird that actually flies? Natural law simply precludes such a thing from ever happening (See Job 39:26-27).

Does a camera that can detect and record pictures build itself? Who made the eye? Who made the ear that hears? (Proverbs 20:12). The fact is, backed up by common sense, logic, and the most fundamental laws of science, eyes and ears and similar complex designs could not have developed by chance.

Two famous scientists, Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, in a devastating critique of Darwinian evolution wrote, "...the probability of life originating at random is so utterly minuscule as to make the random concept absurd..." (*Evolution From Space*, p. 141). "For life to have originated on the Earth it would be necessary that quite explicit instructions should have been provided for its assembly" (*ibid.*, p. 30). "The theory that life was assembled by an intelligence" is vastly more probable than the alternative "of being the correct explanation.... Indeed, such a theory is so obvious that one wonders why it is not widely accepted as being self-evident. The reasons are psychological rather than scientific" (*ibid.*, p. 130).

Fulfilled prophecy is another powerful proof of God's existence. How is it that the Jews, driven from their homeland nearly 2000 years ago, just happened to be restored to a nation-state in their ancient homeland in 1948, setting the stage for the fulfillment of major end time prophecies? How is it that the United States and Great Britain, whose roots can be traced back to Israel and their father Abraham, just happened to become the richest and most powerful national entities in the world in the past two centuries, fulfilling prophecies made millennia ago as recorded in Scripture?

Many more prophecies have been fulfilled, and there are other proofs as well. Search them out, and become convinced that God is real.

2) Prove that the Bible is God's word.

The Bible makes extraordinary claims about itself (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). The Bible has answers to life's questions that compare with no other source. Why and how did mankind come to exist? What is the meaning of life? Is there life after death, and if so, what kind of life? Is there a way that leads to permanent joy and peace?

Critics have assailed the veracity of the Scriptures for centuries, yet time after time evidence has proven the skeptics and critics wrong. Read the Bible. Judge for yourself whether it rings true. Do its prescriptions for happiness and fulfillment actually work?

There's plenty of other material available also which details how the Bible has proven reliable in the face of its critics. One recent book, for example, is Kenneth Kitchen's *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. I don't endorse all of Kitchen's ideas, but his book points out some of the follies of the Bible's critics.

Jesus' command to us all is "believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). And that implies also a personal belief in God himself (Hebrews 11:6). And that leads us to the next point.

3) Study and obey God's word.

Jesus said, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). A false religion which is based on the traditions, speculations and false teachings of men is vain and worthless to God (Mark 7:6-9, 13). Like the Pharisees' religion, any man made religion makes the word of God of no effect.

Being a real Christian requires living by God's commandments, his teachings. "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" (John 8:31-32). Christians are disciples (Greek: μαθητης; *mathetes*, cf. Acts 11:26), "lit., 'a learner' (from *manthano*, "to learn," from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor)... A 'disciple' was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher; cf. John 8:31; 15:8" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*).

A real Christian is someone who actually knows, understands and follows the teachings of Jesus Christ. And since Jesus taught we are to live "by every word of God" (Luke 4:4), that means a true Christian will live by the the entire word of God. That includes keeping the commandments of God (Matthew 19:17-19).

Most Churches, however, long ago departed from God's word in many areas of faith and practice, if they ever followed it to begin with. While there may be many among them who are sincere in their beliefs, and even do many good deeds, they do not abide in God's word in important areas of faith and practice. But as Jesus said, to be his disciple indeed, to really be a disciple of his, you must abide in his word, which means you must study it and obey it.

4) Seek God through prayer daily.

We are admonished many times in Scripture to pray. Seeking God effectively requires studying his word, but it also requires heartfelt prayer, as you develop a personal relationship with God (Isaiah 55:6-7). Jesus set an example of fervent prayer (Hebrews 5:7). We are to pray "without ceasing," or daily (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). David prayed morning, noon and night (Psalm 55:17). To be a Christian, and to have eternal life, regular prayer is essential (Jude 1:20-21).

5) Repent and be baptized.

Jesus commands us to repent (Mark 1:15). Repentance means you surrender to God, you quit sinning, you put God first, before anything or anyone else (Matthew 10:37-39). Upon exercising genuine faith and repentance one receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), which imparts the gift of eternal life (Ephesians 1:13-14). As long as you continue repenting, remain faithful, and retain God's Spirit you will have an inheritance in his Kingdom (Colossians 1:21-23). To do that you must ...

6) Live a life of overcoming.

In our flesh is no good thing (Romans 7:18). Of ourselves we cannot please God (Romans 7:14, 23; 8:7-8). So we must, with the help of the Holy Spirit overcome our own nature (Romans 8:3-5). The war we fight is a spiritual war, a war that is waged between our ears. If we set our minds we can with the help of God's Spirit overcome the sins of the flesh (Romans 8:11-14; Colossians 3:1-10). Those who overcome will be sons of God for eternity in his Kingdom (Revelation 21:7).

7) Be faithful to the end.

The covenant we make with Christ at baptism is for life. God expects and requires us to be faithful to the very end if we expect to inherit eternal life (Matthew 24:13). Those who will be with Christ in his Kingdom are called, chosen **and faithful** (Revelation 17:14). Do you want to live for eternity in glorious power and sublime joy, or would you rather be dead? That's the choice we're faced with. God is holding out the promise of eternal life to those who are truly his. He will be faithful, but we must prove faithful as well (Hebrews 10:22-23, 35-39).

Real Christians will inherit God's Kingdom. Be one.

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