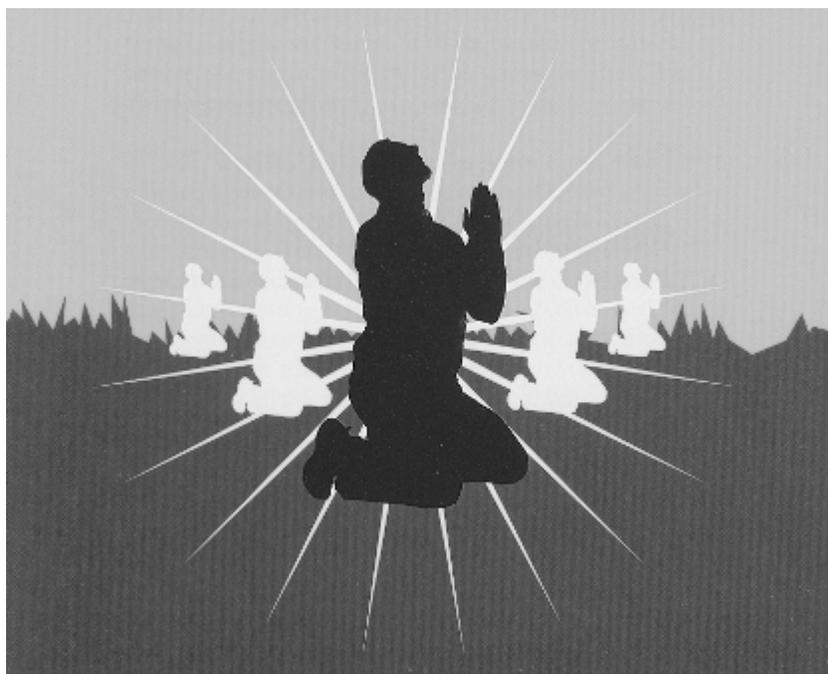


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Are You A Christian?



.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV

Reviewed by: Dr. Lambert Duncan

Are You A Christian?

Romans 10:9-10 (NIV) “⁹ ***That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*** ¹⁰ *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*”

Romans 8:9 (NIV) “⁹ *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. **And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.***”

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) “⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God –*** ⁹ ***not by works, so that no one can boast.***”

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV) “⁵ *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in faith; test yourselves. **Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?***”

While filling out my first job application I came across a question that sticks in my mind, “What is your religion?” For whatever reason, the company I was interviewing with wanted to know my religion. Without giving much thought to the question or any hesitation I wrote “Christian.” After all, my mother was a Christian so that must have meant that I was a Christian also. Not only that, I remember getting all dressed up on Easter and going on egg hunts as a child with the rest of the children my age. That too must make me a Christian. Even better, I knew the Pastor’s full name, I knew the church’s full name, and if pressed, I’m sure I could have quoted a portion of a scripture, not knowing what it meant, or some Christian cliché. At the time these facts, in my mind, were convincing proofs that I could say I was a Christian, even though I didn’t know the first thing about living as a Christian should live, nor could I explain the Christian message.

Unfortunately, there are many people today that feel and think the same way I once felt and thought about being a “Christian.” Some people may go to church on Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday and Christmas and think that means they are Christians. However, I always say that going to church can make you a Christian just as much as going to McDonald’s can make you a hamburger. Most people attending church on the three (3) most popular occasions have no idea that being a Christian is much more involved than showing up in a church three times a year.

According to the “Revell” Bible Dictionary, a Christian is a person who has a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ. In fact, the Greek word “Christianos,” that we translate into our English word “Christian,” means “belonging to Christ.”

To be more specific about belonging to Christ, Paul says in Romans 1:1 (Amplified), “*From Paul, a **bond servant** of Jesus Christ...*” Thereby becoming a slave to the will of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Are you a slave to Jesus Christ?

True Christians are the most unique people under the sun, although not perfect people. If you live with, work with or have any dealing with a true Christian, you’ll notice something very different about them as compared to non-Christians. That is to say, they won’t do or say things everybody else does or says. Again, they’re not perfect, but you will definitely see a big difference in how they conduct themselves compared to the vast majority of people you know, simply because they are children of the Most High God. True Christians are trustworthy, honest, law abiding and dependable people, to say the least. Needless to say, most of us have met those who profess Christianity, but live contrary to the Biblical model of a Christian lifestyle. They drink to the point of getting drunk, they smoke, they cuss, they lie, they steal and cheat, but swear they are Christians. Again, no Christian is perfect (1 John 1:8), however, these sins should not be seen habitually in their lives. 1 John 3:6 says (NIV), “***No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.***”

On the flip side of the coin we have those who actually live a pretty clean life, they don’t drink, smoke, cuss, lie, steal or cheat. These too profess Christianity and fool most, including themselves. While it is true that a true Christian should live a clean sinless life, it is not this lifestyle that saves them and/or makes them a Christian. Paul makes it emphatically clear in Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV), “*⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God –** ⁹**not by works, so that no one can boast.***” Living a clean life apart from the Holy Spirit’s direction is a system of “works.” Salvation is “the gift of God,” and you can’t earn this gift by living a clean life. A gift has to do with the giver’s desire to give, not a person’s efforts to earn something. If God saved us based on how good we live or how good we are then our salvation or becoming a Christian is not a gift as Paul teaches, it’s something we’ve earned through our works. The sad truth is that 90% of the people we encounter in our daily lives believe that being a good person and attending church once in a while guarantees them a place in heaven and makes them Christians. However, the Bible says something completely different. There are seven (7) factors to be considered before you attempt to answer the question, “Are you a Christian?” They are:

1. Confession – (Romans 10:9) You must have confessed that Jesus is Lord.
2. Believe – (Romans 10:9) You must believe in Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead. That is, the same body nailed to the cross is the same body that rose that first Easter Sunday morning.
3. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit – (Romans 8:9) You must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The moment one believes in Jesus Christ he/she is indwelt by the Spirit of

God. It is because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we can love each other with the “agape” kind of love. Romans 5:5 (NIV) says, “*And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*” (See 1 John 3:14) Being able to love people in ways you couldn’t prior to accepting Christ as your Savior is a clear indicator that the Holy Spirit is in you.

4. Self Examination – (2 Corinthians 13:5) You must be able to see Jesus working in your life. There must be an overall change in you from the person you once were. Some change more rapidly than others, but all true Christians will gradually change and become more Christ-like. This is the true indicator that Christ Jesus is in you, otherwise check your Christianity. It is not possible to be the same once Jesus enters your life - you will definitely be changed. To be more specific, if you used to go out “clubbing” you won’t go anymore since there is nothing Christ-like in clubs. If you were a person who lives with someone you’re not married to, you either get married or move out. If you were a dishonest person, you start telling the truth. These are just a few examples, however, the changes in your life will be noticeable to all. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*”
5. Relationship with Christ Jesus – No relationship will survive without regular communication. The Christian way of communicating with God is prayer. True Christians are praying Christians. You must have a prayer life. (Ephesians 6:18)
6. Church Attendance – Although church attendance does not save us, it is God’s will for us to attend a healthy well-balanced church. There is no such thing as a “lone ranger” Christian. It is through attending a healthy well-balanced church that we are developed into usable vessels for the building up of God’s kingdom. True Christians will desire fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ (Hebrews 10:25). They will be active members in a church by exercising their spiritual gifting.
7. Hunger for God’s Word – You must have a hunger to learn God’s Word, the Bible. It is not possible for us to please God and avoid sin without knowing His Word, the Bible. Psalms 119:11 (NIV) says, “*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*”

Although there are some exceptions to some of the seven (7) considerations, they are generally evident in a true Christian’s life. The answer to the question, “Are you a Christian?” can only be answered by the individual asked. The answer has nothing to do with one’s parents, relatives, or Pastor. It’s a question one must be able to answer for themselves.

It would be a sad thing for those who think they are Christians based on their own system of works, to hear the words of Jesus, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers!”

Therefore, if you’re not sure about being a Christian or you’re not a Christian, it’s time to do something about it to avoid the words “away from me.” Here’s what I suggest:

- If you’re not sure – consult a local pastor for clarity; you just may need some reassurance or maybe you’ve fallen away. Always remember, God always stands with outstretched arms ready to accept you back, no matter what you’ve done.
- If you’re not a Christian – it’s time to make a decision to accept Jesus as both Lord and Savior of your life. You can do this right now by praying the following prayer:

Heavenly Father:

I come to you in prayer asking for the forgiveness of my sins.
I confess with my mouth and believe with my heart that Jesus is your Son, and that He died on the cross at Calvary that I might be forgiven and have eternal life in your kingdom. Father, I believe that Jesus rose from the dead and I ask you right now to come into my life and be both my Lord and Savior of my life.

If you have prayed this prayer, God’s word is true when it says, “*If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*” (Romans 10:9). Therefore, because you prayed this prayer, you are now a born again Christian. Here are the next steps you must take:

- Get baptized
- Join a healthy well-balanced church
- Get a Bible
- Begin a daily prayer life
- Change your company, find Christian friends

God Bless,

Pastor D. M. Duncan

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