

What is a Christian?

If you believe that there is a creator God and that the Bible is a reliable source of information about that creator God, does that make you a Christian? Are you a Christian?

What is a Christian?

You might answer this question the way I did when I was younger. I thought a Christian was someone who went to church and did good things. And that was it.

A definition you might find in a dictionary would be something like this:

Christian – one who follows the teachings of Jesus Christ.

That certainly makes some sense since, in the Bible, Jesus is referred to as a teacher and there were those who followed His teachings.

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.” John 13:13 ESV

And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Matthew 8:19 ESV

Initially Jesus had twelve main “followers”. They were referred to as “disciples”.

And he called to him his twelve disciples.... Matthew 10:1a ESV

A “disciple” means a “follower” or “student”.

In addition to the twelve there were other followers who were also called disciples.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,.... Acts 6:7a

Eventually, disciples (students, followers) of Christ were called “Christians”.

And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. Acts 11:26c ESV

So, we are back to the definition: a Christian is a disciple/student/follower of Jesus Christ.

Still, what does it really mean to be a follower of Christ – to be a Christian?

From the Bible we can see three things:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,....” Matthew 11:29a ESV

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,” John 8:31 ESV

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” Luke 6:40 ESV

Disciples/students are those who set themselves to learn from a teacher, to live out the teachings and, according to Jesus, will, when fully taught, become like their teacher. A Christian learns from Jesus and follows His teachings so as to be like Him.

But why should anyone want to be a student of Jesus’ – to learn from Him and follow His teachings?

Part of the answer to this lies in an understanding of who Jesus was/is and what He said about His purpose in life - foundational truths upon which all His other teachings depend.

Who was Jesus? What did He say was a primary purpose in His life? The two questions will be examined in the following two sections.

I hope you will read on.

Note: As you read the above and as you go through the following sections, you will find Bible references. References are all from the English Standard Version (ESV) as found at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

(If you want to look up these verses, be sure to select English Standard Version from the drop-down menu. But feel free to compare with the wording in other versions.)

If you are new to Bible references, the standard Bible reference method is as follows: the name of the book followed by the chapter number and then the verse number (Book Chapter:Verse).

A letter following some verse numbers indicates a part of the verse only. (“a” – first part of the verse, “b” – second part, “c” – third part, etc.).

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