

What is a real
Christian



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Christian



Egerton C. Long

WHAT IS A REAL CHRISTIAN?

A young man is standing at my front door, holding a clipboard and pen. He inquires as to whether he can ask me a few questions about my attitude to the role of the church in today's world and in my local community. "Yes", I respond and he proceeds. "Am I involved in a church?" he asks. "What activities/programs does my church provide?" "Is church only for Christians?" Towards the end of the conversation he says, "Can I ask you, what you think a real Christian is?"

There can be a lot of confusion about this subject and there are a variety of opinions about what the word 'Christian' really means. If you were asked this question, how might you respond? Would you say: "well, I suppose a Christian is someone who goes to church regularly," or, "it's a person who has Christian parents or lives in a Christian country?" Alternatively you might say, "It's a person who lives a good life, tries to live honestly and help others."

None of these things, on their own, make a real Christian. A Christian should go to church, live honestly and help others but that doesn't make them a real Christian. We may be very religious and pray and read the Bible every day, and still not be a Christian. Even being born into a family where the parents are Christians, doesn't automatically make us a true Christian. It's not

something we can inherit from our parents like the way we get our family name. As someone said, “God has no grandchildren.”

A REAL CHRISTIAN

Becoming a real Christian involves changing our relationship to God. It means we enter into a personal relationship – a right relationship - with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. We become members of God’s family and we can call Him “Father”.

Can you do that?

You might ask, “But isn’t everyone a child of God?” The answer to this question is “Yes”, in the sense that God created the human race so we are all children of God but “NO” because our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and the human race has had a broken relationship with God ever since.

A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden they enjoyed a harmonious and beautiful relationship with Him. God provided many different varieties of fruit trees in the garden for their enjoyment. But He said to them, “you can eat the fruit of every tree in the garden, except the fruit from one tree – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, if you eat the fruit from this tree you will die.”¹ That sounds reasonable and

¹ Genesis: 26-17

we might think they should have been satisfied with all that they had. Unfortunately, they failed the test. Why? Because God's enemy Satan, suggested to them that what God said was not true and that they ought to be free to eat anything they wanted. It sounds like the kind of freedom some of us want today – freedom to do anything we want to do.

What was the result of listening to Satan instead of listening to God? They immediately knew they had done wrong and felt guilty. They knew that what they had done would hurt the intimate relationship they had with God and when He came to talk with them, they hid from Him.

A SINFUL TWIST

It would have been bad enough if our first parents, Adam and Eve, were the only ones to be affected by this disobedience, but the whole human family has been spoiled by it. What Adam and Eve became, we are. Separated from God, none of us are what we could or should be. Every child born since then has had a natural tendency towards wrong and it is the result of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

You have probably noticed that we don't have to teach children to do wrong. They do it because it is natural for them to do so and need to be taught to do right. This is because our human nature has a twist to it – a sinful twist.

Have you ever driven a car with faulty steering? It keeps pulling to the left or to the right instead of going straight. Some shopping trolleys do the same thing and seem to have a mind of their own; they want to go in any direction but the right one.

This is an illustration of what sin does in the human heart. Our natural tendency is to turn away from God instead of toward Him. We choose to run our life the way we want to, leaving God out of it. We may do many good things in life but if we don't include God in our life and have a relationship with Him, we will be separated from God forever. This means separation from God both in this life and after we die.

FACING HARD FACTS

We ourselves can't remove the barrier of inherited sin between us and God. The first thing to do towards becoming a real Christian is to recognise that we can't remove this barrier without God's help. When we recognise and acknowledge this then we are in a position to accept what God has done for us. The Bible shows us that this involves admitting that we are sinners – not the perfect people we may like to think we are.

It may be easy for us to classify people involved in criminal or immoral activity as sinners and how often have you heard good-living people say ...

“I’m a good person, don’t call me a sinner, I’ve never done anything really bad.”

But God looks at our heart – our inner life, our tendency to turn away from Him instead of toward Him and this is what sin really is.

The Bible tells us that God once said, “Men judge by outward appearance, but I look at a man’s thoughts and intentions”² We are all sinners in God’s sight, in fact the Bible also says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”³

So the first step in becoming a real Christian is to acknowledge you aren’t one! We have to agree with God that we are all sinners in His sight and that sin separates us from God.

Thankfully, the Bible also has some good news for us. It tells us that God loves us and He wants to become our friend. He wants us to know Him personally and have a lasting relationship with Him. God wants us to belong to His family. The Bible says, “God showed His great love for us by sending Christ (His Son) to die for us while we were still sinners.”⁴

THE NEXT STEP

The next thing God wants is for us to be sorry for our sin. The Bible calls this ‘repentance’. While this isn’t a word that is common in our

² 1 Samuel 16:7 Living Bible’

³ Romans 3:23

⁴ Romans 5:8

vocabulary, it means being so sorry for our sin that we are willing to do something about it.

God looks for genuine repentance in the heart of anyone wanting to come to Him. It is another step on the road to restoring our broken relationship with Him. In the words of the apostle Paul, “God commands everyone to repent.”⁵

God is so patient, so loving. To prove how much He wants us to come to Him, He continually shows His love in every way He can. Why? Paul’s words in the Bible give us the answer ... “God’s kindness toward you is to lead you to repentance”.⁶

When we are ready to say, “God, I know I am a sinner in your sight and I’m sorry for my sin,” then, He is ready to accept us. “But”, you might say, “How can He do this? Didn’t He say in the Bible, the one who sins is the one to die?⁷ How can He help me?”

WHAT GOD DID

Nearly 2000 years ago, when we could do nothing about our sin and the barrier it created between us and God, He provided a substitute to pay the death penalty for our sin. That substitute had to be without sin. Who could do that? Only God’s Son, Jesus Christ, could meet that requirement.

⁵ Acts 17:30 ⁷ Ezekiel 18:20

⁶ Romans 2:4

So God asked His only Son Jesus to come into our world and pay the death penalty for our sin.⁸ Jesus died so that we might live.

Jesus died by being nailed to a wooden cross. By His death, He took the punishment for sin, in our place. He paid the price for my sin and your sin and for the sin of all mankind. So when we acknowledge we are a sinner, and turn away from our sin, we accept what He has done for us and are forgiven and free to live a wonderful life in relationship with God for ever!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If I want to become a real Christian, there are just a few simple steps I need to follow:

- I must acknowledge that I am not a Christian but want to become one
- I must acknowledge that I am a sinner
- I have to be sorry for my sin and be genuine in my desire to make a fresh start with God (with His help I will be able to do this)
- I need to acknowledge that I can't save myself and believe that Jesus did this for me through His death on the cross
- I accept what Jesus has done for me and ask God to accept me as His child.

⁸ 1 Timothy 1:15

WHAT IS THE RESULT

If I have sincerely followed the above steps, I am now a real Christian. There are many verses in the Bible that make this very clear. For example, in Romans 10:13 it says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Being ‘saved’ means we have accepted God’s wonderful gift of salvation and we will receive many great blessings from God. Some of these blessings are:

- All our sins are forgiven
- Instead of being separated from God forever we are brought closer to Him. As a person who is saved from drowning is rescued from what otherwise would have happened; so, as a new Christian, we are saved from what otherwise would happen to us. In fact, we are safe.
- We receive a new life in Christ. The Bible says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come!”⁹
- This new life is eternal or everlasting. We will live with Christ forever.
- Our new destination is Heaven, instead of Hell (there is no in-between position)
- We have a new companion to help us live our new life in Christ. This companion is God’s Holy Spirit, The Bible says, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom

⁹ 1 Corinthians 5:17

you have received from God”¹⁰

- We are now a child of God, a member of God’s family and a real Christian. The Bible says, “To all who receive Him (Jesus Christ), to those who believe in His name, He gives the right to become children of God”¹¹. There are many more blessings that are ours when we become a real Christian.

Now it’s over to you. If you have never accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, why not do so right now? It’s not enough just to know how to become a real Christian – we have to act on that knowledge.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:19

¹¹ 1 John 1:12

HOW TO RECEIVE JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOUR

If God has been speaking to you as you have read this booklet and if you are willing now to take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, here is what you should do:

Confess – tell God in your own simple words that you are a sinner, needing a Saviour. (Read Romans 3:23)

Accept – tell God that you see Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and will accept Him now. (Read Romans 6:23)

Believe – that Jesus Christ has saved you because you asked Him to do so. (Read Romans 10:13)

If you have made this decision today then sign your name here and tell someone else what you have done. Join a church where you can hear God's Word preached and have fellowship with other believers.

I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in God's sight.

I accept Jesus Christ now as my Saviour.

I thank Him for saving me.

Date _____/_____/_____

NOTES

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