

If you claim to be a Christian

Answer these

Millions of people all over the world claim to be Christians. But are they? Are you? Answer the following questions for yourself.

1. Do you believe that Christ, the Son of God, came to this world some 2 000 years ago to be crucified and died also for your sins? Yes / No
2. Do you believe Christ was resurrected from the dead, ascended to Heaven, and sits at his Father's right hand, ruling the world? Yes / No
3. Are you aware of your sins of the past and the present? Yes / No
4. Do you know that to be a Christian, you have to repent, ask for forgiveness, change and become His child and servant? Yes / No
5. Do you know what He expects of you and what He taught? Yes / No
6. Do you regularly (daily) read your Bible? Yes / No
7. Are you trying to take leave of your worldly habits and friends, and are you living according to Christ's commands? Yes / No
8. Do you understand what it means to live as a Christian, live a life to please Him, and be thankful for His forgiveness? Yes / No
9. If you love Christ, do you want to know more and more about Him, His great works in the creation and in history? Yes / No
10. Are you a member of a true church where you hear God's Word regularly, interacting with brothers and sisters, loving Him and the people around you, living a life of thankfulness? Yes / No
11. Is it your real wish to assist in spreading the Word, the Good News, wherever you have the opportunity to do so? Yes / No
12. Do you want to grow in your knowledge and love of God, His Word and how you can please Him and also fight your sins? Yes/ No

Let's take a quick look at what the Bible says a Christian is

Today many claims to be Christians yet don't really follow His teachings or even know what He teaches.

God's Word is quite clear that one cannot just choose to be a Christian! God Almighty is doing the calling. And He is not calling all of mankind (Matthew 22:14; John 6:44), not necessarily the poor, the rich, the famous or the powerful people of the world (1 Corinthians 1:26-27), but only those of his choosing.

To be a true Christian, a person must change and be transformed. Acts 2:37-39 says that Christians must repent and walk a different way of life. A Christian or the children of Christian parents must be baptised by a called servant of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:14-17). Baptising affirms and seals that God has made a person part of his covenant. It is not of the person's choosing, but His!

There are three aspects to the covenant: God's promise, commands, and His wrath if He is rejected.

Surrendering one's life and turning it over to God, is called **conversion**.

Obviously, you cannot change everything at once, but you can have a repentant attitude and turn in the right direction, making basic changes as you embark on a path of overcoming sin, bearing "fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

A person is not "in Christ" unless the Spirit of God is in him or her (Romans 8:9). Only through repentance and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, a Christian is able to understand the spiritual truth of God and His Word (1 Corinthians 2:11)

The example of Jesus Christ

The apostle Paul also helps us understand what a Christian is by simply stating that we should follow Paul as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). The apostle Peter reminds us that we are to follow Christ's example (1 Peter 2:21).

Christ's example includes compassion and love for others (John 3: 16; Matthew 9:36) along with keeping the commandments of God (Matthew 5:17-19). Only Christians will be able to understand the teachings and way of life which the Bible teaches and will strive to live by them (Luke 4:4).

According to the Bible, a Christian responds to God's calling, repents of his sins, receives the Holy Spirit and lives as Jesus taught. While God expects us to be loving examples for our families and others (Matthew 5:13-16), Christians will put their calling before everything and everyone else (Luke 14:26-33)!

A true Christian is a person who has put faith and trust in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, including His death on the cross as payment for the sins of those who believe in Him and His resurrection on the third day. John 1:12 tells us "yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in his name, He gave us as believers the right to become children of God."

Able to obey God's commandments through His grace and power

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). A summary of his commandments are the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. And in Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus teaches that to love God is the great and first commandment, as well as to love your neighbour as yourself. "On these commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." What all this implies, is taught right through the New Testament. Christians don't keep the commandments to be saved but because they are saved.

Maintain victory over sin through daily study of scriptures, prayer and witnessing

“Search the scriptures” (John 5:39), “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9). If you are a member of God's true church where his word and only his word is preached, and you fully believe in Him and his word, fighting your sin and live for Him, you are a Christian.

How to know that you are a Christian

Here are ten true Christian traits or ways to show that you have the Holy Spirit working in you, which provide solid, biblical evidence that you are a Christian and that you can know that you are saved. There are others, but these stand out.

1. Conviction from sinning

Do you feel convicted when you sin? Is there a strong sense in you that you did something wrong? A person that continually sins without remorse may not be a Christian at all. Of course the more you sin and the longer you refuse to confess your sin, a hardening of the heart occurs and eventually you slide into more and more sin.

Every believer will still sin as 1 John 1:8-10 states, but when you do sin, you will feel conviction from God the Holy Spirit and want to make confession to God (1 John 1:9). If there is never any conviction over sin, then a believer might wonder if the Holy Spirit is living within him or her. Certainly, if there is no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that person is unregenerate and still sins.

2. Loving one another

Surely a Christian cannot claim to be saved and yet hate his brother or sister – and claim to be a believer. Jesus said that this is a strong indication of believers that they love one another. In John 13:34-35, Christ says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

In 1 John 4:20-21, God calls anyone a liar if they claim to be a believer and yet hates their brother or sister, “If someone says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? This commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”

3. Abstaining from sin

Christians still sin, but they do not remain in sin or keep on sinning as if nothing is wrong. There are many who have confessed to be Christians but live in ways that are contrary to the ways of God. The apostle John very seriously warned those who think they are saved but feel free to continue sinning. That

is not a born-again believer. 1 John 3:6-10 says, "No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning." He who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

4. Praying regularly

Imagine that you have just been married but shortly after your honeymoon you are deployed to a far-away place. You receive letters from your loved-one in the mail, but you fail to read them except on Sundays and only then just partly. And you also fail to write back to your loved-one.

How must God feel when we fail to pray to Him on a regular basis and to read the Bible only occasionally? God has sent us the greatest letters ever written – 66 books that show His unconditional love. This is a love so deep that his Son died for you. You must frequently speak with Him or read the Bible.

By failing to pray on a regular, daily basis, and by not reading his letters to you (his Word), you show that He is not really that important to you. It is wrong to pray only when in trouble or in an emergency. God is not a 911 call.

5. Hungering and thirsting for God

Christians love to learn and feel a strong need to read the Bible. To hunger and thirst for this is a strong indicator that the Holy Spirit is actively working in a believer. In Jesus' Sermons on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), He teaches his followers extensively. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

6. Sharing your faith

Sadly, most Christians do not share their faith with others. Are you ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16)? Are you embarrassed about your faith in Christ?

You should fear God more than man (Matthew 10:28). A stern warning comes from Christ: "I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8-9).

7. Glorifying Jesus Christ or yourself?

God is seeking to be glorified in you. He will not share his glory with anyone. Why should He? He is God! He deserves all glory, honour, and praise. Isaiah 42:8 declares of Him: "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols." Your chief purpose in life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

When we seek to glorify ourselves or our own accomplishments, it's as if we are robbing God of what is rightfully His. When we take credit for things, we strip God of some of His glory. God resists the proud but gives grace only to the humble (James 4:6).

How do we glorify God? 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 asks, "do you not know that

your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.”

These verses are more than just talking about what you do with your live. Your actions should reflect Christ in you. When others see Jesus living in you, others are attracted to Christ. And when you boast about anything, let it be because of Christ Who lives in you.

8. Loving the world or loving God?

If we love the things of the world, the love of God is not in us. The Apostle John says, “do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

This includes your family as well. Jesus plainly tells us that, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37) The apostle James said “don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Many Christians spend more time on the computer, watching TV, or spending time on their own hobbies than they do in the Word of God (the Bible) or in prayer. Of and by themselves, these things are not wrong, but when you spend inordinate amounts of time and energy doing these things, then you are showing God that these are your real priorities. The way in which you spend your time, shows where your heart is.

9. Your heart is where your treasure is

Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34). Matthew 6:19-24 records Jesus' statement that humans tend to store up security in their possessions, including money saying, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

10. Your true priority

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Your true priority should be seeking Christ and His kingdom above all else because if you do, you will have all that you need (Matthew 6:33).

To be a disciple of Jesus, you must be called by Jesus

To be a follower of Jesus sounds like a very active pursuit, and it is. Yet, before someone is an active disciple, that person is a passive sinner. The action begins with Jesus' action, first of calling and then of justifying the sinner, turning him or her into a new person. Jesus' historical death and resurrection provides salvation for people dead in sin. Dead people cannot get up and walk; so, first Jesus must give them new life through the Holy Spirit, enabling them to begin following Him.

Once called, disciples of Jesus are given the gift of faith. Disciples can now believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sin; they can repent from their sin and begin walking a new life in gratitude for their salvation. This is where being a disciple of Christ is active. Like the first disciples who left their fishing nets and followed Jesus, disciples of Jesus are called to a new life of following Christ.

The apostle Paul puts it like this: For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one (Christ) has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Following Jesus means putting aside all immorality and striving to obey God out of gratitude for salvation. Paul describes the Christian life as kind of a war within you—between the new self, born of the Holy Spirit, and the old self, born of sin (Romans 7:13-25).

You only have to read through the epistles of the New Testament to see how much the apostles are constantly correcting, teaching, reminding, and commanding people to forsake sin and walk according to the salvation Jesus freely gave (1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 4:17-5:15; Colossians 3:5-11).

In this life, disciples are a work-in-progress. They are still in need of correction, proper teaching, and being reminded of who Christ really is, what the Word of God really says, and what following Christ really means.

A Christian is anchored to God's Word

It is easy to make up your own version of what it means to be a Christian that is not grounded in what Jesus really calls people to be. The problem remains that many people who give themselves the title Christian misunderstand what that really means.

That is why the Bible teaches that Christians must be members of God's church. His church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:20,27, Ephesians 1:23, 3:6, 4:12, 5:23,30, Colossians 1:24). Hebrews 10:25 emphasises not to neglect to meet together, but to encourage one another. We all need each other to love, help, motivate and reprimand each other, to have the Word explained to all of us, and to grow in our faith.

Being a Christian is not about being morally good or being of a certain race or ethnicity. It is not about how many relief organisations are founded by that name,

and it should not be defined by the people who claim to be Christians but act in ways the Bible condemns.

Because a person sins or makes up his or her own version of Christianity does not mean the Bible is wrong or that Jesus is not worth following. Jesus remains the only way to salvation regardless of what people do and say. Therefore, we all need good teachers; teachers who know and understand the Bible and who are trustworthy. We need people reading the Bible themselves and praying constantly for the strength and ability to live for Christ.

The Twelve Articles of Faith of the true Church as confessed by the worldwide true Church

Article One

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth: *This declares our faith, trust, and dependence on the one true God, the Creator of the whole Universe. The three in one God (the Trinity).*

Article Two

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord: *The word Jesus means "God saves". And the word Lord means "divine". Therefore, the true, worldwide Church believes Jesus to be divine and the only Saviour of those who believe in Him.*

Article Three

Jesus Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary: *This affirms that Jesus is both human and divine. Jesus had a human mother but no earthly father, but by the power of the Holy Spirit conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus was fully human and fully Divine.*

Article Four

Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried: *Just like every other human Christ in his earthly nature suffered pain, was condemned to suffering and death.*

Article Five

Jesus Christ descended into hell, on the third day He rose again from the dead: *This hell is not the hell for the damned, where the devil and his demons reside. It is the place for the dead. After the third day of his death, He rose again. He rose not as a ghost or spirit but with a body. Thus He did prove his divinity and the great power of God.*

Article Six

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: *Christ ascended back to Heaven to meet with His Heavenly Father (God), to seat at his right-hand side of authority in Heaven. This He did before the eyes of the faithful to prove and assure them that all who follow His path will someday dwell with Him and the Father.*

Article Seven

He will come again to judge the living and the dead: *“Judgement Day”, “Doomsday”, “Day of Reckoning”, etcetera, are the names most people call it now but it all refers to the second coming of Christ when He will come with the task of not salvaging the whole world again but to judge it all.*

Article Eight

I believe in the Holy Spirit: *This affirms that there are three persons of God, which are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*

Article Nine

I believe in the holy worldwide Church, the Communion of Saints: *The Church is not just a mere institution or infrastructural community with facilities, but a necessary spiritual growing family where all are equal before God and where the faithful commune with Christ constantly.*

Article Ten

I believe in the forgiveness of sins: *The true, worldwide Church affirms an everlasting belief that Christ came to the world to die that our sins might be forgiven. So the Church teaches her faithful to constantly rely on Christ's afforded grace for forgiveness of sin.*

Article Eleven

I believe in the resurrection of my body: *The true Church believes that a human is made up of body and soul; dying now will entail a temporary separation of the body from the soul which will be reunited again on Judgement Day when Christ comes again. So, the faithful will go to heaven with body and soul and the guilty will be damned to hell body and soul.*

Article Twelve

I believe in life everlasting: *Before one could pass on from this life to the next life one would die and will resurrect at the Judgement Day.*

The five sola's of the Reformation

- Sola Scriptura – *The Bible, God's Word, alone*
- Sola faith – *faith alone*
- Sola gratia – *grace alone*
- Solus Christus – *Christ alone*
- Soli Deo gloria – *glory to God alone*

***Do you want to know more about these matters?
Contact any of these people:***