

Your Identity In Christ

You Are A Christian

How a person understands his/her identity matters a great deal in how that one will live. For those who are in Christ, the Bible demonstrates there is a rich spiritual identity. This involves being a Christian. Yet, while it is common for people to identify as a “Christians,” many may be unfamiliar with what is truly involved in being a Christian. Still, we see this concept plainly taught in the pages of Scripture (Acts 11:26). Therefore, if you are going to fulfill your true purpose in Jesus Christ, you must embrace your identity as a Christian and all this involves.

1) You have accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

The word “Christian” is only used three times in the Bible (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). As you consider these, notice a few key points. First, the word always refers to people (never a thing, organization, idea, etc.). Second, it is used in reference to a specific type of person. Namely, this is someone who accepted that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ (the Messiah, the Promised One). For example, Acts 11 demonstrates those who were called Christians had heard and accepted this message about Jesus (vv. 19-26). Then, Acts 26 records the apostle Paul’s message before King Agrippa about how he had once been convinced of his need to oppose Jesus of Nazareth (vv. 4-11), but had now been convinced Jesus is the resurrected Messiah (vv. 12-23) - even calling for Agrippa to accept this truth so as to become a Christian (vv. 26-29). Prior to the name Christian becoming popular, these were identified as believers (Acts 5:14), those belonging to the Way (Acts 9:1-2; 24:22), and the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). Therefore, of all the people in this world who reject Jesus, you are among the few who truly accepts that Jesus of Nazareth is the one sent by God, the Savior of the world, and the only way to the Father (John 14:6-7)!

2) You have obeyed what Jesus requires for salvation. The Bible teaches the need for one to

become a Christian (Acts 26:28-29). Those who are true Christians have not just acknowledged the truth that Jesus is the Messiah; but have actually obeyed what He has required to be saved (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46). Unfortunately, there are many who profess to be Christians today that teach some other gospel besides the one Jesus has taught in the pages of the New Testament (Galatians 1:6-9). Namely, to be saved and become a true Christian, you do what you can read people being told to do in Scripture. That is, you must hear the gospel’s message so you understand your need for and opportunity to be saved, believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Christ as Lord, and be baptized (immersed) in water for the forgiveness of your sins (i.e. Acts 2:36-41; Romans 10:9-10, 13; Acts 22:16). In doing these things, you have submitted your life to Jesus.

3) Your allegiance now lies with Jesus. The suffix “ian” to a word means that one belongs to or is an adherent of what precedes it. For example, Mark 12:13 refers to people who were loyal to Herod. In the same way, as a Christian, your allegiance is expected to rest with Jesus, the Christ. In fact, the Scriptures often use the terms “Lord” and “King” to describe how you must view Him (Revelation 19:16). While there are many lords (masters) and kings (rulers) people may recognize over them, Jesus Christ must be seen as being above all these! Therefore, whenever you became a Christian, you brought yourself under the authority of Jesus Christ. Then, as a Christian, you must continue to live under the authority of Jesus Christ by continuing to faithfully submit yourself to Him (Revelation 2:10). The life of a Christian cannot be simply about living according to your own desires and ambitions any longer (although we all still commit sin at various points). Instead, our lives must be fully committed to however Jesus (our Lord and King) wants us to live (Matthew 12:30; Romans 6:15-23; Galatians 2:20).

4) You are willing to suffer for the sake of Jesus's name. It is commonly believed that the term "Christian" was given by unbelievers to insult the believers of Jesus Christ before it was accepted and used by these believers to describe themselves. Perhaps this was part of why Peter spoke of being ridiculed and suffering in having the name "Christian" (1 Peter 4:12-16). Regardless of how the term was used, though, there is still suffering that is connected with wearing the name Christian. For, wearing this name puts you at odds with most of the world. It puts you at odds for accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and Messiah who was risen from the dead. It puts you at odds for believing what Jesus taught that is contrary to the conventional wisdom of the world. It puts you at odds for living according to a standard of morality that most will not understand or accept. It puts you at odds for worshiping and serving God according to the instructions He has given in the pages of His word. And, just as Jesus was hated by the world, so will those who are closely aligned with Him will be hated by the world (John 3:19-21; 15:18-21)! Those who are Christians, though, understand this commitment and have determined that even dying for Him is well worth the sacrifice (Luke 9:23-26)!

Being in Christ means that you are a Christian. But, as we have seen, this is not an empty title or merely a way of describing yourself. Instead, this means that you have accepted who Jesus claimed to be as truth and allowed those fundamental truths to reshape your life in every way. Now, you have closely aligned yourself with Christ in every aspect of your beliefs and conduct to the extent that you are even willing to suffer for Him on this earth!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?