

## What is a Christian?

### ***Introduction:***

In the book *The Little Prince*, the author describes a conversation between a fox and a small boy. The boy, who asks how he should try to communicate with the fox, is told to say nothing at first. “Words are the source of misunderstanding,” says the fox. Have you ever noticed how misleading the English language can be? If you always took it literally, many common expressions would make no sense at all.

For example, ask to buy a yard or a garage at a *Yard* or *Garage Sale* and see what they say. Seems like false advertising doesn’t it? Have you ever seen a *Body of Water*? Is that describing somebody who gets around by just going with the flow?

Many signs, like *Watch Your Head*, seem to ask the impossible. You’re likely to get a whiplash trying. Ever seen *Slow Children Playing*? Do they grow up to be *Slow Men Working*? How about a sign saying *Clean Restrooms*? You’d think they’d have employees to take care of that!

What do you do with instructions that are not specific enough like those on a can of spray deodorant, *Shake Well Before Using*? Are they referring to you or the can?

Many people have a fear of flying—why do airlines refer to *Departing Passengers* and call the destination *Terminal*?

Some words when used together seem mutually exclusive like *Good Grief*.

Unfortunately, it can be just as confusing in the religious world. Have you ever wondered about *Those on Beds of Sickness*? If they would just stay off of those beds they’d probably feel fine. Have you ever been asked to *Kneel as Far as Possible*? Just how far is it possible to kneel, anyway?

Has a song leader ever asked you to *Turn Over In Your Hymnal*? Impossible until they make larger hymnals. It’s even harder when a pastor invites you to *Turn With Me In Your Bible*. Sounds like some sort of gymnastics routine.

Perhaps you’ve been told how important it is to *Give God Your Heart* and wondered how you could do it. Of course it can’t be taken literally, but when you try to apply the concept any other way, you find it’s no easier. Some say, “You give God your heart by *Surrendering Your Will*. How do you do that? By *Giving Your All* or *Putting Your Hand in God’s Hand*?”

Maybe you’ve been told that no one ever comes to God who does not first *Fall on The Rock and Be Broken*, but where is the rock and how do you break? Some say you need to use the *Eye of Faith* and *Behold the Lamb*. What does that mean?

It gets worse because Jesus said you need to *Be Born Again*. Since you had no control over your first birth it’s easy to wonder what you can do about a second one.

If you feel confused, you’re not alone. Nicodemus, one of the brightest religious leaders of Christ’s day, had trouble understanding. When Jesus told him about the need for a new birth, Nick responded, “But how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (John 3:4). There ought to be a plain and simple answer to a question this important. There is!

“*And this is eternal life: [it means] to know (to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with, and understand) You, the only true and real God, and [likewise] to know Him, Jesus [as the] Christ, (the Anointed One, the Messiah), Whom You have sent” John 17:3 (The Amplified Bible)*

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*After receiving a lengthy standing ovation, a great actor offered to do recitations at audience request. The delighted crowd called for one recitation after another as the actor complied. A request was made for the 23rd Psalm, which the actor recited with wonderful expression. As he finished the passage, the audience broke into cheers and applause. Suddenly, the actor noticed an elderly man in the audience whom he recognized as the godly pastor of his boyhood church. On impulse he invited the old man to come forward and asked him to recite the same Psalm. The old gentleman did so, and when he had finished, nearly all in the theatre were silent—many, including the great actor, were weeping. Regaining his composure the actor commented, “I knew the 23rd Psalm, but my old pastor knows the Shepherd.”*

## 1. What is a Christian?

*You may be surprised to know that most people who are asked that question give answers that have to do with how a person acts. They usually mention things you must or must not do if you are a Christian. If a person defines a Christian as someone who is nice or good, there is a problem, because there are many nice people who are not Christians. There are even some disagreeable people who claim to be Christians.*

## 2. Are we saved because we do good things?

- Romans 3:20
- Galatians 2:16
- Galatians 3:11
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Titus 3:5

## 3. Is the following statement true or false? A person will never go to hell, simply for being bad!

## 4. How are we saved?

**Read John 17:3 several times (maybe even out loud a time or two). Compare your translation with the Amplified Bible. (found a few lines up from here)**

## 5. Who spoke the words found in this verse?

## 6. Based on this verse, how do you get eternal life?

## 7. If there is someone you wish to get to know, how do you do it? What are some things that you would do together to get better acquainted?

## 8. How would you go about getting to know Jesus and God?

According to Jesus, eternal life is based on knowing Him and His Father. That's it! If I don't make it to heaven one day it will be because I don't know Jesus. If I do make it to heaven it will be because I know Jesus as my Friend. Therefore, spending time getting to know Him as a Friend is the most important thing I can do as a Christian!

## 9. According to Matthew 7:21-23 and Luke 13:24-30 what sort of people are denied entrance? Do they sound like bad people? Why are the people denied entrance?

Did you notice that in Matthew 7, the Lord calls some people who did good things, “workers of iniquity”? Apparently, the Lord has a different definition for good and evil than most of us do—His definition centers not on what we do, but on Who we know!

**Read Matthew 25:1-12 a couple of times. Imagine the joy and excitement of a wedding celebration and the disappointment of those who did not get in.**

10. Who is the Groom? What does the wedding celebration represent?

11. What reason does the Groom give for denying some people entrance?"

Have you ever heard someone say "In order to get into that club or that organization you have to know the right people?" Or, "You have to have friends in high places if you want to get in there?" That's what Heaven is all about—knowing the right Person. Knowing the right people—"God the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent" (John 17:3)

12. Would you change the description of a Christian you wrote in question one? If so, how would you change it and why?

A young boy once walked past a long line of waiting dignitaries and past the guards stationed to protect Abraham Lincoln. Without even knocking, he opened the door and walked into the President's White House office. Those in line angrily protested to the guards that *they* had been waiting their proper turn and the boy was out of line. "No he's not," came the reply, "His last name is Lincoln and he has gone in to see his father." Todd Lincoln had a special relationship with the right person and that made all the difference!

The most important thing about Christianity is developing a friendship with Jesus (get to *know* Him!). This is done by spending time each day with Him reading the Bible, meditating on what He is saying to you through it, and talking to Him through prayer. Below you will find one way to do this along with some suggested passages of Scripture to use. You may find it more meaningful if you write your thoughts in a journal.

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: "Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together..."
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned.

### **Passages for This Week**

- John 1:1-18
- John 1:19-28
- John 1:29-34
- John 1:35-42
- John 1:43-51
- John 2:1-11
- John 2:12-25

Do you know what it's like to be lonely? So alone that your thoughts are your only companions? Do you know what it's like as a child to want to play with other children and meet only ridicule? Do you know what it's like to wish for a retreat in the quiet of your own home, but even there find laughter and sarcasm? Do you know what it's like to spend hours, days and nights in the lonely refuge of a mountain or desert? Do you know what it's like to sit high on a lonely mountain overlooking a city, wishing you could be someone's friend? Do you know how it feels to sleep on rough ground without a blanket year after year?

Have you ever walked through a crowd, attended a dinner party, or passed through a marketplace teeming with people yet somehow still felt alone? Have you ever watched from the shadows while others enjoyed an activity or game? Have you ever been invited by someone to get acquainted and then been asked to come after dark so no one would glimpse you together?

Have you ever fed a large crowd and discovered that the food you provided was more appreciated than you were?

Have you ever walked 30 miles to comfort a bereaved family only to be treated as if it were your fault the sick had died? Have you ever been turned away no matter where you went or whom you asked for lodging?

Do you know how it hurts to have no one to talk to, no one to share with, even if that person would only listen? Have you ever cried so hard that your eyes ached and, trying to talk, you could only moan between sobs? Have you ever spent nights in tears that no one will ever know of except you?

Have you ever thought you had found a few who accepted you as their friend and then watched as they left or ignored you so as not to be embarrassed by you? Have you ever felt the pain of rejection or the bitter disappointment of broken trust? Have you ever given of yourself until there was nothing left to give and then heard mocking laughter because you were so vulnerable?

Have you ever sat alone by the edge of a lake and watched gulls drift above the water, wishing you could fly away? Have you ever struggled against giving up the effort to give yourself, struggled until you actually sweat blood?

Have you ever spent entire nights worried and praying for a troubled friend? Have you gone to that same friend for comfort and understanding and heard him say, "I'm too tired to listen?"

Have you ever had people follow you so that they might distort something you say and justify putting you to death? Have you ever been rudely jostled by calloused men, helpless within their menacing circle, because of love? Have you ever had someone spit upon your bruised and bleeding face? Have you ever felt blood trickle down your back from torn flesh while being beaten by a leather whip with metal strips attached to it?

Have you ever felt the sharp pain of thorns forcefully pressed deep into your scalp and temples? Have you ever had to wipe your eyes with a blood-sopped sleeve in order to see through tears? Do you know how it feels to struggle through your own blood while dragging heavy timbers? Do you think you could stagger on, willingly, toward dying for those who hate, despise, and reject you? Would you bear screaming insults, laughter, and mockery as you

collapsed beneath your instrument of death? Would you struggle desperately to rise and continue towards your place of execution?

Have you ever felt the tearing, grinding crunch of nails being pounded through your hands and feet? Have you ever felt, with every nerve, the jolting thud of a cross dropped into its deeply dug hole? Have you ever hung from nails, with open wounds gaping ever wider while crowds taunted, throwing rocks at your bruised and lacerated body? Have you ever hung outstretched as rain and wind buffeted your exhausted body against a cross?

Have you ever gasped hoarsely for breath, aware that you are dying? Do you know how it feels to have vision grow dim as your eyes glaze? Have you ever exhaled your last breath, knowing it is finished?

Have you ever hurt? Have you ever ached? Have you ever suffered? Have you ever died—alone—for those who refused to let you be their friend? While on this earth, Jesus longed for companionship. He still does. Will you be His friend?

**Romans 3:20** “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

**Galatians 2:16** “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

**Galatians 3:11** “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

**Ephesians 2:8-9** “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

**Titus 3:5** “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,”

**John 17:3** “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

**Matthew 7:21-23\*** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

**Luke 13:24-30** “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

**Matthew 25:1-12** “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”

*(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)*

*\* New International Version*