

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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Study Notes  
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# What in the world is a Christian?

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## Table of Contents

<b>Sermon Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. A Christian.....	2
2. A disciple.....	4
3. A son.....	5
4. A sheep.....	6
5. A steward.....	7
6. A soldier.....	9
7. A witness.....	10
8. A friend.....	11
9. An ambassador.....	12
10. A saint.....	13
11. A believer.....	15
12. A brother.....	16
13. A servant.....	17
14. A stone.....	18

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

## **1. A Christian:**

- this is the word we most use to describe a follower of Christ
- yet in the Bible it is used only 3 times - Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16
- it was not used by the first Christians themselves - but as a derogatory nickname
- the Christians turned it into a badge of honour, to be worn with pride
- we shall see how the word is used in the New Testament:
  - to see if we ourselves are truly Christians
  - and to learn how to be better ones.

### **From Acts 11:26 we learn that a Christian is someone who belongs to Christ.**

- those at Antioch had heard of Christ, been conquered by Him, believed on Him, and turned to Him. Acts 11:20-21.
- God's grace had worked in their lives and they were added to the Lord. Acts 11:23-24.
- they gathered as a church, and were known as Christ's disciples. Acts 11:26.
- the words 'Christian' and 'disciple' (or 'learner') mean the same thing. Acts 11:26.
- Christian disciples continue to follow Christ; have changed characters; and love one another. John 8:31, 15:8, 13:34-35.

### **From Acts 26:28 we learn that a Christian is some one who witnesses for Christ.**

- Paul was on trial for his life before Festus
- Agrippa was there because he was an expert in Jewish affairs and religion
- Paul's defence was a positive declaration of the Gospel, and drew this comment from Agrippa.
- Paul had an impulsion to give out. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 1 Corinthians 9:16.
- he had an impulsion to get through. 2 Corinthians 5:11, Romans 9:3.
- he had been like this from the beginning. Acts 9:20.
- this is the way it was with the other apostles. Acts 4:18, 20, Acts 5:29, 41-42.
- and also with all the early Christians. Acts 8:4.
- Paul made it plain that to be a Christian means to be as he was! Acts 26:28-29
- a true Christian **has** to be like this. Luke 6:45.

### **From 1 Peter 4:16 we learn that a Christian is someone who suffers with Christ.**

- the world will treat those who belong to Christ as it treated Christ.
- Jesus promised this. Matthew 10:22, 24, John 15:18-20, 16:33.
- and Peter reminds us of this. 1 Peter 2:20, 3:14, 4:14, 5:8, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 3:3, 17.
- and the other apostles taught the same. Acts 14:22, Philippians 1:29.
  
- Christians are markedly different from non-Christians.
- Suffering is the inevitable consequence of union with Christ.

Face it! if it is easy, it is not Christianity.  
If it is Christianity it is not easy.

But it is worth it! Matthew 5:11-12, James 1:2-4,  
2 Corinthians 12:9-10, 1 Peter 4:13-16.

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- Are you a Christian?
- What sort of Christian are you?

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **2. A disciple:**

- we saw last week that “the disciples are called Christians first in Antioch,”
- all Christians are disciples. Acts 11:26
- the Bible does not teach a two-tier system of Christianity
- if you are not a disciple, you are not a Christian!

### **What are the marks of a true disciple of Christ?**

#### **Hating - Luke 14:26.**

- Jesus does not say it is possible to be some sort of second-class disciple
- without hating, you cannot be His disciple **at all!**
- we must love Him intensely – and better than anyone or anything else
- He must come first - and there must be no rivals
- it is time to re-read Matthew 10; 34-37.

#### **Cross-bearing - Luke 14; 27.**

- without this, also, we cannot be His disciples
- it means to finish living like others - and never to return
- it means being different, bearing reproach, shame, persecution - for His sake
- it means being openly known as His follower - see Romans 10:9-10

#### **Forsaking - Luke 14:33.**

- without this, too, we **cannot** be His disciples
- it means taking my hands off everything
- renouncing all personal claim to it - nothing is 'mine', but His!
- it means finding my joy, not in any THING - but in Him!

#### **Continuing - John 8:31.**

- going on and on and on - never giving up - never giving in
- going on doing what? - shaping our lives by His Word
- if God's Word does not bear fruit in our lives - we are fakes. Mark 4:3-9, 14-20.
- such counterfeits will be lost. Matthew 7:21-23.

#### **Loving - John 13:35.**

- this is the badge which all true Christians wear
  - this is something they **have**, not appear to have!
  - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 explains how love behaves
  - Galatians 6:2 and Ephesians 4:32 tell us more.
- 
- "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" John 18:17.
  - Before beginning - count the cost. Luke 14:28-33.

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **3. A son:**

- the message of the New Testament is "sonship through propitiation."
- a Christian is someone who has God for his Father.

### **Not all men are the children of God - only believers.**

- in the Old Testament God is only the Father of Abraham's seed. Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1.
- in the New Testament God is only the Father of those who repent of their sins and turn to Christ as sin-bearer and master, thus becoming Abraham's spiritual seed. Galatians 3:26, 28b-29, John 1:12, 14:6.
- this sonship is not natural. It is a gift of grace - an **adoptive** sonship.  
Galatians 4:4-7, Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 1:4, 1 John 3:1-3

### **Some important things to know about this adoption.**

- it is the highest privilege which the Gospel offers.
- your sonship is to be the controlling thought in every point of your Christian life.
- when you think what a disciple **is**. Mark 3:35, Matthew 28:9-10, John 20:17-18. Hebrews 2:11-13.
  - when you want to know how to behave. Matthew 5:43-45a, 48, 5:16, 6:1-18.
  - when you pray. Matthew 6:17-18, 7:7
  - when you worry about material things. Matthew 6:25-32.
- The moment you forget you are God's child; you will not be able to live your Christian life so as to please Him.

### **Some things which happen to a Christian who constantly remembers his adoption.**

- He is overcome by the greatness of God's grace.  
1 John 3:1-3, Luke 15:18, John 17:23.
- He longs for heaven.  
Adoption means being a 'chosen heir'!  
He cannot help thinking of what awaits him. Galatians 4:7, Romans 8:14-19.
- He stops seeking second experiences.  
For he is well aware that the **basic** ministry of the Spirit is not to give us power etc., but to be to us the Spirit of adoption! Romans 8:5, Galatians 4:6.
- He longs for personal holiness.  
He can see what it is - family likeness.  
He has a motive for seeking it – to avoid shaming his Father.  
He knows how it will come about - instruction and discipline.

How badly we need to recover the truth that Christians are .sons!!  
It is one of the choicest jewels in the treasure-box of God's Word  
- and one of the most neglected.

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **4. A sheep:**

Please have your Bibles open at **John 10:1-30**.

- on the mountainside is a sheepfold, with many different flocks in it. 1.
- all of these sheep belong to one shepherd or another - though there are others who lay claim to them. 1-2.

### **How can you tell which sheep belong to the Good Shepherd?**

- His sheep hear His voice. 3, 26-27.
- His sheep follow Him. 4-6, 27.
- His sheep share a new fold. 7-9.

### **What privileges do they enjoy?**

- They enjoy life, 9. - life of a new quality 10.  
- life of a new dimension. 28.
- They enjoy the Shepherd's presence, and protection. 11-15, 28-30.
- They enjoy the Shepherd's promise. 16.

### **Why do they enjoy these things?**

- The Father chose them. 29.
- The Son was sent to die for them. 11, 15, 17-18.
- The Holy Spirit calls them. 3, 27 - see 16:13-15, 15:26.
- Everything they have they owe to the goodness of the Shepherd! 11, 14.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life " (John 3:16).

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **5. A steward:**

A steward is a person in charge of property belonging to somebody else.

### **Two parables about stewardship**

Matthew 25:14-30 – The parable of the talents.

- not everyone received the same - but everyone received something
- it was not their own - but, put into their hands by the Master
- two used what was given them - and had something to give the Master when He returned. These were rewarded.
- one did not use what was given him - and had nothing to give the Master. He was condemned.
- there are only two sorts - the rewarded and the condemned.
  - Christians are stewards
  - some professed Christians do not use their God-given talents for God
  - so they are not stewards - they are not Christians.

Luke 16:1-9 – The parable of the unjust steward.

- he was accused of wasting, and was certain to lose his job
- he used his initiative to avoid ending up in poverty
- he used what was not his own to advance his own interests
- his sin was not commended - but his initiative was!
  - the unconverted are enterprising in the pursuit of evil
  - Christians are not to be outdone by them, but are to be just as enterprising in the pursuit of good
  - we are to be particularly shrewd and astute in our use of money - using it for spiritual purposes, just as wisely as others use it for material aims.

### **Two principles applied.**

The two principles from these parables are:

- use for God what He has placed in your hands!
- use your loaf!

Let's apply these principles to:

Time	Ephesians 5:16
Leisure	Romans 14:12
Money	1 Chronicles 29:14
Special gifts	1 Timothy 4:14
The gospel	1 Corinthians 4:1-2

The motive:

"The Son of God loved-me, and gave-himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I had never understood that if He died for me, then I didn't belong to myself. Redemption means buying back, so that if I belonged to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn't mine, or else I had to give up everything for God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn't seem hard to give up all for Him" (C.T. Studd).

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **6. A soldier:**

- this is a well-known picture
- just look at Paul's letters to Timothy - 1 Timothy 1:1-18, 6:12, 2 Timothy 2:3-4
- think of the hymns that you know.

### **Who are we fighting?**

- the devil, a living person - 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, John 8:44.
- a spiritual being
- unspeakably cruel and cunning
- remember the things he has already done - in Eden; to Job; in Judas; to Paul...
- who attacks us
  - physically - 2 Corinthians 12:7, Luke 13:16
  - mentally - 2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:3
  - spiritually - Acts 5:3
  - personally - 1 Peter 5:8.

### **What are we aiming at?**

- the enemy's withdrawal
  - he tries to occupy God's territory (your body, mind, time; talents, possessions)
  - we shall never destroy him - Luke 4:13, Hebrews 4:15, Matthew 25:41
  - but he can be compelled to withdraw - James 4:7.
- the advance of God's kingdom
  - it is our constant prayer - Matthew 6:10
  - it is extended by Gospel proclamation - 2 Corinthians 4.
- the approval of our Captain
  - this is the ambition of every true soldier - 2 Timothy 2:4, 15
  - and a constant New Testament theme - 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 4:1, Hebrews 11:5, Colossians 1:10, 1 John 3:22.

### **How are we supplied?**

- all the equipment we need has been given to us - put it on and use it!  
Ephesians 6.10-17
- certain tactics are assured of success - James 4:7
- the Captain himself is on the field with us - Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 4:16-17
- and we know the war will soon be over! - 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

are YOU at war?

- if not      -      you are certainly not a soldier
- you are certainly not a Christian.

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **7. A witness:**

- a witness is someone who testifies to **facts** that he knows to be true
- this is the way the Bible uses the word - see Isaiah 43:10-12
- it is **not** used of someone reciting his personal religious **experiences**.
- Jesus commissioned all His disciples to be witnesses in Acts 1:8.
- these words are binding on us - Matthew 28:20.

### **The people God chooses.**

- ordinary men & women - not angels, supermen, or special people
- this is stressed in Acts 4:13, and 1 Corinthians 2:26-29
- no qualification is needed - other than being a believer.

### **The plan God adopts.**

- "...ye shall be witnesses unto ME..."
- the world is not evangelized by opinions, or even testimonies
- but by the truth about the SAVIOUR.

### **The place God indicates.**

- **we** have a responsibility to evangelize the whole world
- we should be willing to go anywhere for the Lord
- we can never be satisfied while one part is without Gospel light
- but we will never get anywhere unless we begin at 'Jerusalem'.

### **The power God supplies.**

- the first believers had to wait for power to descend
- we don't! - we have the power we need! - Acts 1:4-5, 2:4, 33, 38-39
- do what you have to do - and you will have strength enough to do it.
- have we truly understood Zechariah 4:6?

### **The period God gives.**

- shortly after Acts 1:8 comes Acts 1:11
- hand-in-hand with the commission goes the reminder of the advent
- but the commission last until then - Matthew 28:19-20.

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **8. A friend:**

Please have your Bibles open at **John 15:12-15**.

- what a blessing it is to have a true friend!
- friends can be closer than brothers - Proverbs 18:24
- some people have the world as their friend - James 4:4
- to others the Lord of Glory says, "Ye are my friends..." – v14.

### **What is this friendship like?**

- unique - not the friendship of man with man, but man with God
- marvellous - look who He is friends with! - Matthew 11:19
- intimate - a Friend of all believers at the same time – v14
- enduring - see Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8.

### **Why is it such a privilege?**

- v15 tells us
- a servant does not enjoy his Master's confidence
- but a friend does!
- see James 2:23 and Genesis 18:17-19; Exodus 33:9-11, 1 Corinthians 2:16.

### **Who can enjoy it?**

- those who submit to Christ – v14: see John 14:21, 23-24
- the friendship cannot be entered into without submission to Gospel commands
- it is also developed by submission
- look especially at verses 12 and 17.

### **What else is expected?**

- the proof of His friendship and love is v13
- can ours be anything less??

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **9. An ambassador:**

An ambassador is one who represents his country abroad.

- what dignity! - we represent the King. 2 Corinthians 5:20.
- what responsibility! - we might **misrepresent** Him. Romans 2:24.
- what resources are needed! - but they are all provided. Matthew 28:18-20.

Ten rules for a good ambassador:

1. Remember of which country you are a citizen. Philippians 3:20.
2. Live according to the laws of the home country. Romans 12:1-2.
3. Put the King's interests first. 2 Corinthians 5:15.
4. Be in constant touch with the throne. 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
5. Show unwavering loyalty. James 4:4.
6. Learn the art of diplomacy. Matthew 10:16, James 1: 5.
7. Be clear what the King's message is. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.
8. Convey that message in the right spirit. 2 Corinthians 4:3, 5:11, 14.
9. Speak in language that people understand. 2 Corinthians 4:2.
10. Remember the judgement. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

“Ambassadors .... in Christ's stead”  
(2 Corinthians 5: 20)

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

## **10. A saint:**

- we usually describe only 'special' people as saints
- but the Bible uses the term of "all them that believe". 2 Thessalonians 1:10.
- see also -Ephesians 1:13, 15, 18, 2:19, 3:8, 18, 4:12, 5:3, 6:18.
- from this we learn:

### **What a true Christian is.**

- the Greek word translated 'saint' is hagios - found over 60 times in the New Testament
- its Hebrew equivalent is found over 800 times in the Old Testament
  - it is used for Aaron's clothes. Exodus 28:2. They were different, because set apart for God.
  - It is used of the holy place.--Leviticus 16:2. It was different, because set apart for God.
  - it is used of the Sabbath day. Genesis 2:3. It was different, because set apart for God.
- hagios means "different, because set apart for God"
- for God Himself is different
  - Isaiah 40:25, 6:3
  - The Father - John 17:11
  - The Son - Acts 4:30, 2:27
  - The Holy Spirit - Acts 1:5, 2:4.
- a true Christian, a saint, is someone who is "different, because set apart for God"
- this comes about through Gospel preaching, and believing. 1 Corinthians 1:2, 18-31.

### **How a true Christian behaves.**

#### **As an individual**

- he is set apart for God - the God who says 1 Peter 1:16
- he has to be different, because he **is** different!
- certain things have to be cut out. Ephesians 5:1-4
- for the saint, sin is not the done thing. 1 John 5:18.
- he has a different set of priorities. 1 Thessalonians 4:7
- and knows that it is absolutely essential to pursue them. Hebrews 12:14

#### **As one of a fellowship**

- the word 'saint' is always found in the plural - except for "every saint - Philippians 4:21.
- it is clear that saints are not found in isolation
- we are never saints on our own - only together
- true saints are conscious of the truths of Ephesians 2:19, Galatians 3:28 and Romans 12:5.
- each saint says to every saint - "Yours because His".

"The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints;  
they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked  
shall be cut off." (Psalm 37:28).

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **11. A believer:**

- 80 times in the New Testament Christians are called "those who believe".
- a believer is "a person who has faith".
- when we are clear what faith is, we will be clear what a believer is.

### **What faith is.**

#### Faith is knowledge (notitia).

- no-one can believe unless he knows certain facts. Romans 10:14.
- the basic facts can easily be summarised. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Acts 13:38-9.

#### Faith is assent (assensus).

- these facts have to be understood. Acts 17:2-4.
- you have to believe they are true. Acts 28:27.

#### Faith is trust (fiducia).

- you come to believe these facts for **yourself** personally, and move beyond the facts to trusting a person. Act's 16:31. John 1:12, 3:16.

### **How faith behaves.**

#### Faith trusts Christ alone.

- it does not put confidence in any external or privilege. Philippians 3:3-8.
- it does not put confidence in any good works. Titus 3:5.

#### Faith becomes a sustained attitude.

- the believer sees what cannot be seen. Hebrews 11:1.
- he engages in the spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:16, 1 Timothy 6:12.

#### Faith results in a changed life.

- this is the whole point of Hebrews 11.
- and is a point stressed in James 2:14-26.
- do YOU have faith?
- are YOU a believer?

"He that believeth on him is not condemned;  
but he that believeth not is condemned already,  
because he hath not believed in the name of  
the only begotten Son of God. "(John 3:18).

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **12. A brother:**

- Christians are described in this way over 200 times in the New Testament
- it was by this name that they usually spoke of each other
- see Acts 11:26, 29
  - every Christian was a "brother" - 1 Corinthians 5:11
  - everybody else was a "neighbour" - Luke 10:29-30

### **1. The word is used because believers are all members of the same family.**

- God is the Father of all those who repent of their sins, and turn to Christ as sin-bearer and master. This is an adoptive sonship.  
Galatians 3:26, 28b-29    Romans 8:14-17    Ephesians 1:4-5  
John 1:12, 14:6    Galatians 4:4-7    1 John 3:1-3.
- God the Son is their Elder Brother.  
Matthew 28:10,    Mark 3:31-35,    John 20:17,    Romans 8:29,    Hebrews 2:11.
- God the Holy Spirit gives them their "sense of family".  
Romans 8:16,    Galatians 4:6-7.
- Thus all the redeemed are brothers.  
Matthew 23:8,    Luke 22:32,    Acts 9:17.

### **2. The word is used because believers are to behave towards each other in a certain way.**

- To put it in a nutshell, they are to love as brothers.  
John 13:34, 15:12, 17, 1 Peter 2:17.
- In practice, this mean:
  - avoiding favouritism - Romans 12:16
  - encouraging unity - Philippians 2:2-3
  - showing hospitality - Hebrews 13:1-2
  - doing good - Galatians 6:10
  - giving help - Romans 12:10-13.
- brotherly-love is to be
  - the fruit of Christ's love to us - Ephesians 5:1-2
  - natural, not forced - 1 Thessalonians 4:9
  - ever on the increase - 1 Thessalonians 4:10
  - lasting - Hebrews 13:1
  - sincere and fervent - 1 Peter 1: 22.
- It proves the genuineness of our faith
  - to ourselves - 1 John 3:14
  - to the world - John 13:35.

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **13. A servant:**

Please have your Bible open at **Acts 20:18-21**.

- here Paul talks about "serving the Lord"
- "servant" is a title used of all Christians - Romans 6:22, 14:4, 1 Peter 2:16
- what is a good servant of the Lord Jesus Christ like??

### **1. Humble.**

- by using the word "serving"(19) Paul describes himself as the Lord's willing slave
- he put himself at His disposal at the moment of his conversion - Acts 9:6
- he became a follower of the One who said Luke 22:42.
- Paul also had "all humility of mind"(19) - no sense of self-importance
- Slow wise is the person who remembers 2 Corinthians 12:10!
- we are followers of Christ
  - of whom Philippians 2:4-11 is written
  - who set the example of John 13:4-5, 15-17
  - who gave the instructions of Matthew 20:26-28

### **2. Tearful.**

- Paul served the Lord "with many tears" (19,31)
- how can we do anything less - when the eternally lost remain stubborn and turn away the only one who can save them? - see Matthew 23:37, Philippians 3:18
- it is time to "try tear"
- but many of the tears are caused by the trials we have to go through (19)
- think of the tears of David and Jeremiah!
- and Paul knew that there were more to come (22-23).

### **3. Sacrificial.**

- Paul engages in the hard work of giving the Gospel to as many as possible (20-21,26)
- and the hard work of teaching **all** that God had to say (20,27)
- and the hard work of a daily occupation, so that the Gospel could be free (23,34)
- and the hard work of setting a positive Christian example (35).
  - but God's work and will have meant more to him than life itself (24)
  - and certainly much more than having an easy life (25, 36-38).
  - for he knew what the reward would be!! - 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, 2 Timothy 4:6-8

# **What in the world is a Christian?**

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## **14. A stone:**

Please have your Bible open at **1 Peter 2:4-6**.

- most words used to describe Christians occur a number of times
- but some occur once only - such as 'stone'
- from the verses open before us we learn 4 things:

### **A true Christian is spiritually alive.**

- in the natural world a stone is inanimate and senseless!
- but believers are 'living stones' - have undergone a great transformation
- it is not that some; spiritual spark has been fanned up in them. Psalm 51:5.
- the dead have been made alive! John 5:24, Ephesians 2:5, 1 John 5:12.
- new and unique creatures are walking the earth!

### **A true Christian is not an isolationist.**

- we are not to be content to be solitary stones - but part of a building
- the present 'drop-out' mentality is not to infect the Christian's mind
- there is to be no opting out of fellowship with other believers
- Peter's command in v5 is reinforced by Hebrews 10:25
- in the New Testament there is no such thing as 'churchless Christianity'
- 'Church' is Christianity in its outward and organized form
  - get involved in a Biblical church!
  - isolationists inevitably have assurance problems. 1 John 3:14.

### **A true Christian is identified with Christ.**

- in v.4 Christ is described as 'a living stone'
- in v.6 as 'a chief corner stone'
- what He is, we are reckoned to be - this is the truth of union with Christ
  - we are members one of another - but it is to Christ that we belong
  - if you were charged with being a Christian - would there be enough evidence to convict you?
  - are you openly identified with HIM?

### **A true Christian is filled with purpose,**

- not only are we the stones which form the building
- we are also the priests who occupy it!
- the purpose of a priesthood is the offering of sacrifices
- true Christians purpose to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ".

- the following things are specifically mentioned in Scripture as spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God:
  - Psalm 51:17. A broken spirit. A true Christian purposes to mourn over his sin.
  - Philippians 4:18. Money given to Gospel work. A true Christian purposes to use his substance in Christ's cause.
  - Hebrews 13:15. Praise to God. A true Christian purposes to glorify God on the earth.
  - Hebrews 13:16. Doing good. A true Christian purposes to observe both parts of God's Law.

What in the world is a Christian? - now we know.  
Are YOU a Christian in the world?