

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A CHRISTIAN?

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From a biblical perspective, true Christian conversion is a supernatural work of God that produces repentance, faith in Christ, and a transformed life. Scripture is equally clear about what does not make someone a Christian.

Common false concepts that do not make someone a Christian:

- Observing and engaging in 'Christianised' religious activity (Matthew 7:21-23)
- Believing in a distorted Christ that always produces a distorted gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4; 2 John 1:9-11)
- Adhering to a form of cultural Christianity (John 3:3)
- Having an intellectual agreement with Christian ideology (James 2:19)
- Trying to be a person with good morals, seeking to merit salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 5:4, 2:21)

'Thinking that I deserve heaven is a sure sign I have no understanding of the Gospel.' – *Sinclair Ferguson*

- Having a concept of the Christian faith without ever living under the Lordship of Christ (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23; Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:6)

'Self-proclaimed Christians who worship a god that requires no self-sacrifice, no obedience, no submission, and no surrender are not worshiping the God of the Bible, no matter how much they claim they love Jesus.'

When someone becomes a Christian – literary 'Christ-like' – they are saying, 'not I, but Christ in me'. Christ comes before all things in your life. He is first!

Jesus is my personal saviour to save me, and my Lord to guide me, therefore I will choose to live for Him (Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:15).

Becoming a Christian means we must understand that:

1. We are sinners and our sin has separated us from God. Sin is anything that causes us to fall short of God's perfect standard (Gen. 3:8; Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23)

2. We cannot save ourselves but need a saviour – our salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, not by our own works (Romans 5:6; Titus 3:5-7; 1 John 2:12)
3. Jesus Christ is sinless and His death on a cross paid the price for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. True salvation comes when we repent of our sins and surrender our lives to Christ (Acts 2:33-38; Romans 10:9-10; Mark 1:15)
5. True salvation brings eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:13)

The aim of becoming a Christian is that we grow and transform into the following:

Believers: We understand what Jesus did for us on the cross and its significance in our lives. Believers are strong Christians who have a personal relationship with the Lord and are active in His church.

Disciples: Disciples are fully committed to Jesus, His teachings, and His church.

True disciples of Christ:

- Seek to grow deeper and more into His likeness (Philippians 3:10)
- Pursue a lifestyle that pleases Christ in every way (2 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Timothy 2:19)
- Are fully obedient to Christ and His teachings (John 8:31-32)
- Prefer Christ in everything they do by putting Him first above their own desires and everything else (Luke 14:26-27)
- Love what Christ loves – the church (Ephesians 5:25); fellow believers (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:11); the lost (John 3:16; Romans 9:3)
- Are proactive in seeking to extend the Kingdom of God through prayer and winning souls (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 9:22)

Repentance

Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. (Matthew 3:8 NLT)

Genuine repentance is when we turn away from our old lives and determine to live according to God's will and with His strength. A change of mind that leads to a change of direction and action. It's okay to make mistakes, but over time our lives should transform to reflect God's standards.

'Changing your mind from what you have believed on any given subject to what God has revealed on that subject.'
– Charles Finney

Repentance is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God: '*Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*' (Matthew 4:17)

Christians are called to live sacrificially, putting Christ before all else.

1. **Historically:** Jesus died on the cross around 2,000 years ago. He cried out, 'It is finished!' The price for our sins has been paid by his sacrifice.
2. **Daily:** We are called to live according to godly principles every day. Repentance is not just a one-off initial occurrence, but it is continuous through the believer's journey (1 John 1:9).

The changed life

When we become Christians, our lives change. We begin to actively trust God in every area of our life, and every day we identify with Him. We align ourselves with God's plan, the local church. We become active members by getting involved, volunteering and building relationships within the community of the church (Hebrews 3:14; 10:25).

Baptism

Repentance leads to baptism. It is the next step for the believer who has truly repented (Acts 2:38).

The word 'baptise' is translated from the Greek word *baptizo*, which means to dip, overwhelm, plunge, being fully immersed in water.

Being baptised after becoming a Christian is a symbolic act of washing away the old self, of our sins being washed away and being born again as a believer in Christ, looking forward to everything that God has for us. Water baptism for the believer is a declaration to the world that the old life has been done away with and the identification of living the new resurrected life in Christ.

What maintains a Christian?

- Being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:16)
- A life of prayer (Luke 18:1)
- Feeding on the word of God on a daily basis (Matt. 4:4)
- Maintaining a healthy fear of the Lord (Proverbs 22:4)
- The joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10)
- Being a giver (Matthew 10:8; Acts 20:35)
- Remaining rooted and planted in the House of the Lord (Hebrews 10:25; Psalm 92:13-15)

Bibliography:
Partnership Guide, Chip Kawalsingh
Truths That Build, Dick Iverson
The Unsaved Christian, Dean Inserra