

What Is a Real Christian?

What is a real Christian? Could you give the Bible definition?

Jesus described the very basis of real Christianity in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. He pointed out certain characteristics that would clearly identify His true followers. Before we pick up the story in Matthew 5 and focus on several of these Christian characteristics in this brief study, you should first read all of Matthew 5, 6 and 7. Then be sure to look up and read every verse given in answer to the following questions.

1. What did Jesus say about the "poor in spirit"? Matthew 5:3. (The expression "kingdom of heaven" is more correctly rendered "kingdom of God.") Did He mean they would be lacking the Spirit of God? Romans 8:9, Luke 11:13.

No, Jesus was not suggesting they would lack God's Spirit. Rather, He went on to show that those who are truly humble, who are not filled with feelings of pride and superiority — who esteem others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3) — will be blessed because they will be in God's Kingdom.

2. What will the meek inherit in addition to being born into God's Kingdom? Matthew 5:5. Was Jesus meek? Matthew 11:29. Will a Christian exhibit this characteristic in the way he conducts his daily life? Ephesians 4:1-2.

There is a difference between being meek and being weak. Jesus was meek, but not weak! He endured abuse and injury with patience and without resentment. A meek person will not try to justify himself when he is wrong. Neither does he feel superior to others. He will not try to get even with others, seeking revenge.

3. What will a true follower of Jesus Christ — a real Christian — be "hungering and thirsting" for? Matthew 5:6. What is the Bible definition of righteousness? Psalm 119:172.

To "hunger and thirst" for righteousness is to be deeply motivated to obey God — to keep His laws, which He gave us in loving concern for our own good. Those who are truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be studying God's Word for true understanding. They will be willing to change when and where they see

they've been wrong, admitting their wrong beliefs, their mistakes and their sins. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God," wrote Paul to Timothy (II Timothy 2:15, Authorized Version). "Prove all things," said Paul to the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 5:21, AV).

4. Who did Paul say are justified before God — the *hearers* or the *doers* of God's law? Romans 2:13. Did Paul make it plain that even though a Christian receives unmerited pardon of his or her sins by the grace of God through faith in Christ's sacrifice, a Christian is nevertheless required to keep God's law? Read Romans 3:31 and all of chapter 6.

5. Who did Jesus say will enter the Kingdom of God? Matthew 7:21. What did Paul plainly say was most important for a Christian to be doing? I Corinthians 7:19.

Notice that in order to enter God's Kingdom there is *doing* required — not just professing that Christ is our Savior! God is also very much concerned about our spiritual "works" after we become Christians. He makes it plain that we cannot enter the Kingdom of God by thinking Christ has "done it all for us."

6. Unless one has the love of God, can he really be a Christian? I Corinthians 13:1-8, 13. What are we if we lack the love of God? Verse 2.

7. Will God's love, which He imparts through His Spirit (Galatians 5:22), lead one to keep the Ten Commandments? Romans 13:8-10. In what way did God inspire John to confirm Paul's statement, showing us what God's love really is? I John 5:2-3. How is God's love perfected in a Christian? I John 2:5.

8. Is a real Christian one who strives to follow Christ by imitating His example and walking with Him? I Peter 2:21, I John 2:6.

9. Who is one of the first people recorded to have "walked" with God? Genesis 5:22-24. What else are we told about Enoch? Hebrews 11:5, last part. Will he be resurrected to eternal life at Christ's Second Coming? Hebrews 11:13, 39-40, I Thessalonians 4:14-16.

10. What other great patriarch walked with God, both before and after the Flood? Genesis 6:9. Did Noah find grace in God's sight? Verse

8. Was he clearly a faithful and righteous man who pleased God? Hebrews 11:7.

11. What was God's command to Abraham? Genesis 17:1-5. Why could it be said that he did indeed walk with God? Genesis 26:5, Hebrews 11:8-10.

12. Was Abraham God's friend? II Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23. How can we become Christ's friends? John 15:14-15.

13. Did God specifically command His Church in the wilderness — His chosen nation of Israel (Acts 7:38) — to walk in His ways — that is, to keep His laws? Deuteronomy 5:32-33, 8:6, 10:12-13, 11:22.

14. Did God promise to walk with them if they would walk with Him? Leviticus 26:3, 12. Would He greatly bless them if they walked with Him? Verses 4-11.

15. But if God's people chose to walk contrary to Him — refused to obey Him — what did God say would happen to them? Leviticus 26:14-39, noticing especially verses 14, 23-24, 27-28.

To "walk with God" clearly means to keep His commandments and laws, and to do those things that are pleasing in His sight. It is the only way to be a real Christian!

16. What will a real Christian's attitude be toward the sinning society around him? I John 2:15-17, I Peter 4:1-4, Revelation 18:4. What will he be striving to live by? Matthew 4:4.

A real Christian will no longer be able to follow all the customs and practices of the society around. Where he or she formerly "went along with the crowd," thoughtlessly participating in various social activities and business practices of the world, he or she will now begin to question his or her life-style.

A real Christian will begin asking: "What is God's will? How does God say I should live?" and will begin saying, with Christ, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). And a real Christian will begin to diligently search the Word of God to learn His will, and follow it.

Of course, God's people must live in this world (John 17:15-16). And while striving to fully obey God, not being conformed to this world's ways (Romans 12:1-2), they should strive to "live peaceably with all men" (verse 18). And if a Christian has to disagree because of a biblical teaching, he or she does so without being disagreeable or self-righteous about it.

17. What further responsibility do Christians have toward the world? Matthew 5:14-16.

While "not of the world" in the sense that Christ meant in John 17:16, those men and women of God who have the Holy Spirit and a knowledge of God's truth and abundant way of life have a responsibility to be bright lights in

the world. God's people should be exhibiting the fruit, or characteristics, of God's Holy Spirit in their daily lives (Galatians 5:22-23).

They should be reaching out with friendliness and with a helping hand toward their neighbors and those they come in contact with every day. People not yet called of God will receive a witness as they see a portion of the mind and character of God in action through the example set by individual Christians.

18. What steps has a real Christian already taken to be recognized by God as one of His children? Acts 2:38. What has God bestowed upon him as a free and unearned gift because of his obedience? Same verse and Acts 5:32.

A real Christian has been conquered by God. His carnal, antagonistic attitude toward God (Romans 8:7-8) is broken. He has come to realize he has sinned against God, having broken God's holy law (I John 3:4). Therefore he has cried out to God and asked His forgiveness of those sins through the sacrifice of Christ, and for a lifting of the death penalty, which every sin incurs (Romans 6:23). Then he has obeyed the command to be baptized, indicating to God his deep desire to live by every word of God for the remainder of his life.

Because of his repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands of one of God's ministers, he has been given the Spirit of the Father and become a Spirit-begotten child of God. It is then that he becomes a real Christian!

19. Can one be a real Christian without having the Spirit of God? Romans 8:9-10.

20. What does God call the person who claims to "know" Christ, but refuses to walk in His ways — refuses to keep His commandments? I John 2:4. What will the one who says he is a Christian be doing? Verses 3, 5-6.

A real Christian has sincerely repented of his sins and is striving, with the power of God's Holy Spirit, to live by his Savior's teachings. He is seeking, in every aspect of his life, to do God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. And he is receiving the happiness and blessings that come from obeying God! □



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