

4-25-21 What Should a Christian Be Known For?

Acts 19:19-30.

What does it mean to be a Christian? (Forgiven, saved, loved)

It's amazing the different answers that are given to that question. Some say a cult, a political group, judgmental people, an old fashioned American.

Websters Dictionary: "one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ"

Life, Hope and Truth.com: "Being a Christian entail more than just "believing in Jesus" or "accepting Jesus in one's heart." A Christian is someone who is an active follower and imitator of Jesus, who has surrendered his or her life, been baptized and has received the Holy Spirit. He or she is working to "put on Jesus Christ," to walk and conduct his or her life as Jesus did when He was on the earth."

Got Questions.com: "A true Christian is a person who has put faith and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, including His death on the cross as payment for sins and His resurrection on the third day. John 1:12 tells us, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." The mark of a true Christian is love for others and obedience to God's Word (1 John 2:4, 10). A true Christian is indeed a child of God, a part of God's true family, and one who has been given new life in Jesus Christ."

We can say we are anything, what does our actions say, what are the results of our actions?

"Christians." Literally, this means, "little Christs" because they believe in and behave like Christ. The suffix "ian" means, "belonging to, coming from, being like something or someone."

Today, I want to talk about what a Christian should be known for.

Christians should be known for:

I. They Speak Out!

- **Read verse 19-21**
- They are ready to declare the gospel. They are ready to give out the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Do you remember Stephen? He was sharing his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and what happened? He was killed by stoning. And the Bible says that, after his death, a great persecution arose so that Christians fled out of Jerusalem and began going all over the place. So, God took what the enemy meant for bad and turned it for good. That's what verses 19 and following are talking about, the spread of the church because of the persecution.
- Now Antioch was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire only after Rome and Alexandria. It was a big city of some 200,000 people. There were a lot of pagans there, a lot of people who needed to hear about Jesus.
- As they fled Jerusalem for our own safety, they took the gospel with them since that's what Jesus told them to do. So, they went as far north as Antioch. Just to give you an idea, Antioch is about 300 miles north of Jerusalem.
- As they went, they "**preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.**" They were unaware of the changes God had wrought through Peter's experience with Cornelius.

- But **“some”** preached to the Grecians - Gentiles, non-Jewish persons. Not only is the gospel being shared with Jews, but also with non-Jews. The Greek word for **“spoke” (11: 20)** is the word for normal conversation. The implication is that these men didn’t preach as orators in the marketplace. Rather, in their everyday contacts, they told others about Jesus Christ. Ordinary people being used by God to do the extra ordinary.
- We all can do what they did. If the spreading of the gospel or the functioning of the church depends on the labors of full-time missionaries or pastors, the ministry will be severely limited.
- But if every person who has trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord feels the obligation of serving Him and of telling others the good news about Him, the gospel will spread, and the church will be built up. Every Christian should sense his or her responsibility to serve Christ and bear witness of Him.
- **Verse 21, “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”**
- How did the church grow? They had the right message and got it out. The Bible says in these verses that they were **“preaching the word”** and **“preaching the Lord Jesus.”** The written word and the incarnate word must go together.
- So, they grew because they had a powerful message that they shared in the power of God. That’s the main thing we’re to be doing here at Bethel. We are to be sharing the powerful message of the gospel in the power of God.
- As followers of Jesus, we are given the huge responsibility to share the message we received.
- We must speak up!
- Christians should be known for the Gospel they proclaim.
- I put the challenge out there a while back about being purposeful, looking for opportunities to share the gospel, brag on the name of Jesus. The challenge was once a week, once every couple of weeks, once a month, once a quarter, or even once a year. **(play Sarah’s video)**

II. **They Stand Out!**

- **Read verses 22-23a.**
- The Bible says in **verse 22, “News of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.”**
- What did Barnabas see when he traveled the 300-mile journey north from Jerusalem? What did he see in Antioch?
- **“The grace of God.” Verse 23.**
- Barnabas knew by what he was seeing, God was at work in this place.
- Maybe there was a spring in their step, or a peace that passes all understanding, or a living hope in what should be a hopeless situation, or love for each other, maybe the way they served others, or maybe they gave him a gospel witness when he walked in.

- Christians should be known for grace. Not just mercy, something bigger, harder, grace. How can we stand out unless we can demonstrate unconditional love and forgiveness?
- If Barnabas were to walk up next to you in your home, work, doing your hobby, when you out with you family and friends, alone when no one is looking, would he be able to say, would he see the grace of God?
- This world is a cold, dark, and lonely place. People are at each other's throat, believers we must be known for the grace of God.

III. They Are Sold Out!

- **Read verses 23b-26.**
- **“he was glad and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”**
- Barnabas encouraged them to stay, unwavering, and steadfast in their devotion to Jesus Christ.
- The scripture says Barnabas is a **“good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.”** Barnabas was all in for Jesus. There was no confusing him as an unbeliever. He was that guy!
- This was the perfect storm. The gospel going out, people standing out and being sold out, this is fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to work. **“And a great many people were added to the Lord.”**
- Things were so ripe; Barnabas went to fetch Paul. Together they spent a whole year teaching and fellowshiping with God's people.
- The Holy Spirit was working, God was hard at work, can you imagine the excitement of a great many people coming and being saved, then sticking around and being discipled? WOW!
- What I imagine in my mind is what brother Rick Osbourne has explained is happening in Africa. He couldn't wait to get back over there and get back to work.
- **“A disciple is a believer who lovingly follows Jesus and intentionally helps others follow Him.”** As we lovingly follow Jesus, we must intentionally help others follow Him.
- Christians should be known for their surrendered and committed lives to Jesus.

1 John 3:18, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

IV. They Shell Out!

- **Read verses 27-30**
- Christians should be giving people.

- Agabus prophesied that a famine that will come soon and spread across the Roman Empire. So, what do these new Christian believers in Antioch do?
- They took up an offering to help the church at Jerusalem.

1 John 3:17, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

- This is pretty remarkable when you think about it. I mean, for a long time, the Jews sort of looked down their noses upon the Greeks, the non-Jews. But here you’ve got these non-Jews, these Greeks, in Antioch and they’re like, “Hey, those guys down there need help, let’s send it.” Imagine when the Jews in Jerusalem received that money gift from Barnabas and Saul. They’re like, “Where’d you get all this money?!” And Barnabas and Saul say, “From the Gentiles.”
- It is worth noting that the money is not flowing from the parent church to the assist a church in some foreign field, but from the mission field to the homeland.
- God will bless the individuals that see a brother or sister in need and quietly, spontaneously, without pressure, give to meet that need. The famine easily could have hit Antioch as well as Judea.
- The church members in Antioch could have said, "We need to look out for our own needs; let the Jewish brethren take care of themselves." But they trusted God and gave to meet the needs of others. God will pour out His blessing on a generous people.
- God loves to unleash the extraordinary through ordinary people.
- It’s been said we have too many “tippers” in our churches and not enough “tithers.” While tithing (giving 10%) is a good place to start, the Bible also speaks of proportional giving, meaning the more God prospers us, the more we give. Here are just two passages, one from the OT and one from the NT.

Deuteronomy 16:16-17, “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. 17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.

2 Corinthians 8:3-4, “For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.”

Conclusion

If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Are you speaking out? Do you stand out? Are you sold out for Christ? Do you shell out?