



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Dear Miranda,

Thank you for your question. You said you wanted to “look into being a Christian” since you knew nothing about what it means to be a Christian or what that entails.

What is a Christian? The word “Christian” literally means “belonging to the party of Christ” or a “follower of Christ.” What does being a follower of Christ mean and what does it entail?

To become a true follower of Christ one must first be called. The Scriptures are full of invitations. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) “Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (James 4:8) “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) In Matthew 11:28, Jesus tells us to “come to me.” In James 4:8 we are instructed to “come near to God.” In Hebrews 4:16 we are told to “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence.” These are all invitations. However, it is up to the individual to accept the invitation.

If we accept the invitation, we must also accept Jesus as our personal Savior and put our complete faith in him. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” The old nature, which had been dominated by sin, is replaced by a new nature dominated by God’s Spirit. See Romans Chapters 6-7.

We have been invited to a new life, to be lived in a new way, with the promise of entirely new results. Now we need to be willing to walk on a new path designed by God through Jesus for us. This path is one of submission to God’s will. How do we know if we are following our own desires or are we following the will of God as described in the Scriptures? “We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his

word, love for God is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." (1 John 2:3-6)

To be different and separate from the world is a very difficult task, especially in a society that expects everyone to be politically correct and comply with the prevailing ideas that everything is good and acceptable. These are the borders that man has set; they are not the borders God has set. Therefore, we need to be honest with ourselves when making decisions and ask if our motivation is actually self-serving.

In James 4:7-9 we are told to submit to God, to resist the devil and by so doing the devil will flee. We are also told to humble ourselves before the Lord and He will lift us up. We are given a similar message in 1 Peter 5:6-8. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because He cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." How do we resist the devil? We must be alert to the temptations all around us. Although we live *in* this world, we are not "of" the world.

If you choose to be a follower of Jesus, meeting and studying with other Christians of like faith is very important and should not be neglected. (See 2 Timothy 2:15 and Hebrews 10:25.) As you study and meet with others, find an avenue of service that truly inspires you so that you will be able to channel your newly found spiritual energy into service for the Lord. You may choose to get involved in projects where your natural skills can be put to good use. Not only will you be serving the Lord by doing something you enjoy, but you will also get to know fellow laborers in Christ and develop relationships that will last for years to come.

Spiritual growth is a continuous journey, which occurs as you apply God's word to your life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Each Christian must be taught, rebuked, corrected and trained by God's Word. Then he or she will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. This is the essence of the Christian's spiritual growth.

Walking in the Spirit of God is a conscious choice and a life-long process of ridding oneself of the acts of the sinful flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), while growing more and more in the fruit of the spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges God has afforded his children. The Apostle Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). There is a reason he makes that statement - prayer is the Christian’s lifeline. No matter how hard the Christian tries, he is beset with sin from his own fallen flesh, from the world’s allurements and from Satan. The Christian is incapable of withstanding these attacks on his own. The only way he can stand firm against them is to go to the Lord in full submission, asking for His strength. The Apostle tells us in Romans 12:12 to “be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful [instant] in prayer.” What a blessed privilege to be able to lift up our hearts and minds to God at any time and in any place! Believers who come to Him never weary God. Jesus illustrated this point when he told his disciples the parable of a persistent widow, who was answered because she refused to give up. Likewise, we should pray and not give up (Luke 18:1-8). “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your [spiritual] requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

God’s work is tailor-made for each individual. Some people grow rapidly, while others grow slowly but steadily. Therefore, it is important that we not compare ourselves with others. Rather, as we grow as Christians, we should look for God’s providential overruling in our lives and completely trust Him, knowing that each experience - no matter how trying - is allowed by God with love for our spiritual development. “And we know that in all things God works for our good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

We hope we have given you some understanding of what being a Christian entails. We would like to suggest that you listen to a program in our Archives entitled, “So, Where Do I Start?” (January 24, 2016). In this program, members of our CQ staff give basic and practical advice as to what they thought were some of the most important things for a new Christian to focus on. It should prove helpful.

Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.com. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,
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