**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN - 1
*What is a Christian?***

**INTRODUCTION** - Having discussed self-renewal we now want to talk about what it means to be a Christian. Today we will discuss what a Christian is. Next week we will address how the Christian is described, followed by being a Christian at all times, then we will note the Christian’s perspective of eternity.

 **I. Christian**

a. The word is a derivative of the Greek word, Χριστιανός, (christianos), and is defined as, “one who identifies himself as a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ.” (L&N 11.35); “one who is associated with Christ” (BDAG).
NOTE: As we use this term, we need to be clear in our discussion of what it is. Many in the world, both believers and unbelievers alike use the term to describe the above definition is a broad sense – EVERYONE who believes in Jesus as savior, regardless of religious affiliation. Many in the denominational world used the term to describe those who they THINK are saved, who may or may not be following Jesus’ instructions.
WHEN I use the term in this study, I am speaking of one who has obeyed the gospel and is a TRUE follower of Jesus based upon the Biblical plan of salvation. Thus in THAT SENSE he is “one who identifies himself as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ.”

b.       The word is used 3 times in NT.

   i. [**Acts 11:26**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2011.26) where Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch and we read, ***“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”.*** This “calling” could be a divine calling, for in [**Isaiah 62:2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Isaiah%2062.2) we read, **“*The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the Lord will name.*”**

    ii. [**Acts 26:28**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2026.28), where Paul is giving a defense before King Agrippa and appeals to him about believing the prophets. Agrippa responds, ***“You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”*** It is a text in which the gospel is rejected and he refuses to become a Christian.

    Iii [**1 Peter 4:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%204.16), **“*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*”** A text that calls for us to be faithful, even in the face of persecutions.

c.   How does one become a Christian? (brief review) One becomes a Christian by obeying the gospel. Hearing, believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized for the remission of his sins **(**[**Acts 2:38**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.38)**).** [**Galatians 3:27**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Galatians%203.27) tells us when you are baptized into Christ you put on Christ. [**Romans 6:3-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%206.3-4) tells us we are **“*buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*”**

 **II. What it means to be a Christian**

a.  ***You are a new creation*** –

   i. “Born again” – [**John 3:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%203.3)**,[5](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%203.5%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)** - as Jesus told Nicodemus, you must be “born again” of water and the Spirit. [**1 Peter 1:22-23**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%201.22-23) tells us we are “born again” of incorruptible seed through the word of God.

   ii. [**Romans 6:3-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%206.3-4) tells us that when you come up out of the water, you are “raised to walk in newness of life.”

   iii. [**2 Corinthians 5:17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Corinthians%205.17) tells us, “***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” (**[**2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Corinthians%205.17)**)**

   iv. When you become a Christian, you have been given a new lease on life. All your sins have been washed away and it’s a chance to start over.
It’s not a miracle where your sinful desires are suddenly wiped out, but you ARE forgiven! You need to accept that forgiveness.

b. ***You are a child of God*** -

    i. When one becomes a Christian, he is added to God’s family.

    ii.  **[Galatians 3:26-28](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Galatians%203.26-28%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)** describes us as sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. This text ties this relationship to baptism as well.

    iii.   [**Romans 8:16-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%208.16-17) tells us that we are children of God, and as children we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

   iv. Consider what a privilege it is to be identified with God and with Jesus.
[**1 John 3:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%203.1) tells us, **“*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*”**

   v. But being a child of God also comes with responsibilities. We are to submit ourselves to our heavenly Father, just as we would our earthly father **(**[**Eph. 6:1-3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph.%206.1-3)**)**. We are to obey Him.[**1 Peter 1:14**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%201.14) describes us as obedient children.
When we disobey, He might even chastise us **(**[**Heb. 12:5-11**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%2012.5-11)**)**

c. ***You belong to God*** –

    i. [**Romans 6:3-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%206.3-4) tells us we are raised to walk in newness of life. The context is one that reminds us that while we are freed from the bondage of our sin, we are now servants of God [**Romans 6:16-19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%206.16-19) reminds us that we are slaves of the one we present ourselves to obey. Having obeyed from the heart “that form of doctrine” (see vs. 3-4 – baptism) and having be set free from sin, we are now slaves of righteousness. See also vs. 22-23 which describes what being His slave actually means.

    ii. [**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Corinthians%206.19-20) tells us that the price was paid for us and therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies.

    iii. Redeemed means that a price was paid. Jesus paid that price **–** [**Ephesians 1:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ephesians%201.7)**,** [**1 Peter 1:18-19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%201.18-19)**,** [**Gal. 3:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gal.%203.13)

   iv. Belonging to God means we live for Him. We are His servants, stewards, slaves. We must obey Him. We serve Him with a loyal heart. [**1 Peter 2:9-10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%202.9-10) describes us as “His own special people.”

d. ***You live by faith*** -

   i. Faith means that we trust God and we believe Him (not merely believing IN Him). It is a firm persuasion that motivates our lives. [**Hebrews 11:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%2011.1) describes this faith

   ii. [**Hebrews 11:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%2011.6) tells us that without faith we cannot please Him

   iii. It is fundamental to our salvation – [**Romans 1:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%201.16)**,** [**John 3:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%203.16)

   iv. [**2 Peter 1:5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Peter%201.5) puts our faith at the very foundation of what we build on.

   v. Some 5 times in the New Testament we read of the faith of Abraham and that “*it was accounted to him for righteousness*.” **(**[**Romans 4:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%204.3)**,** [**5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%204.5)**,** [**22**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%204.22)**,** [**Galatians 3:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Galatians%203.6) **&** [**James 2:23**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/James%202.23)**, see also** [**Gen. 15:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen.%2015.6)**)**  In Abraham we see the type of faith we need as Christians – he developed an unwavering trust in God. BUT, it was also a faith that OBEYED God! As a result, God was pleased with him.

   vi. Faith needs to govern our lives – [**Galatians 2:20**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Galatians%202.20)**,** [**2 Cor. 5:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Cor.%205.7) – we walk by faith, not by sight.

   vii. This is something easy to say, but it is not that easy to do! Faith becomes a challenge when obeying God conflicts with that which is comfortable. But that is also when we show God how much we do trust Him. How much we truly are Christians.
[**1 Corinthians 4:1-2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Corinthians%204.1-2) says, **“*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*”** The word, “faithful” is a derivative of the same root word as faith and believe and means to be one worthy of being trusted. In other words, our faith in God is such that He has faith in us to do the right thing.

e. ***You are blessed***

   i. The blessings we all experience in this life are innumerable. But as Christians, there are other blessings – spiritual blessings – we enjoy in Him.

    ii. You have peace with God –
Sin produces enmity with God. But because of Jesus (i.e. we become Christians) the enmity that existed before is gone – [**Ephesians 2:14-15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ephesians%202.14-15)[**Rom. 5:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom.%205.1), **“*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*”**

[**Phil. 4:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%204.7) – when we trust God***, “the peace that passes understanding will guard our hearts.***

   iii. ***You have the privilege of prayer*** –
[**Heb. 4:15-16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%204.15-16) – because of Jesus, we have an advocate to the Father. WE can approach Him in prayer as Christians. Consider also [**Heb. 7:24-25**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%207.24-25)**,** [**1 John 2:1-2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%202.1-2)
[**1 John 5:14-15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%205.14-15) speaking to Christians he said that the confidence we have in Him – we can ask and He will hear us. (He may not answer the way we want, but He hears. AND He knows what is best.)

   iv. ***You have hope*** – Christians have something better to look forward to when this life is over.
As Paul gave a defense to Felix he said, **“*I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.*” (**[**Acts 24:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2024.15)**)** This hope caused him to live with a pure conscience and without offense (vs. 16)
[**1 Peter 1:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%201.3) speaks of God who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ… [**Colossians 1:5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Colossians%201.5) describes it as a hope laid up in heaven. [**Hebrews 6:19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%206.19) describes it as our anchor in heaven.
When we are facing troubles, discouragement, and setbacks, this is something we must continually keep in our minds.

f.   ***You have responsibilities***

   i. Along with our blessings, we have obligations. Contrary to what many teach, we are called upon to remain faithful to Him.

   ii. We have a responsibility to be faithful children, serve God and trust Him as we have discussed above.

   iii.      We also have a responsibility to be different than the world. We are different

   iv.      And we need to keep growing – the very premise of our discussion this year.
[**2 Peter 3:18**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Peter%203.18)**.** [**2 Corinthians 4:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Corinthians%204.16)**,** [**Romans 12:2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%2012.2) – we are to be renewed day by day. That is something we must be striving to do.

**CONCLUSION** –

Our goal this should always be to prefect our lives as Christians.

May this lesson remind us what being a Christian is about.

Let us all strive to be better in our pursuit of eternal life.