

This Is Christianity

Joshua Goodling - www.inspiritnews.com

Mark Twain is quoted as saying; "If Christ were here now there is one thing he would not be - a Christian." The sad truth is the way many people who claim to be Christians today live their lives, Mr. Twain would be correct. A Christian by definition is a person who believes in and strives to live as Jesus Christ would live. Christianity is not an organized religion, it is not a certain denomination, it is a way of life.

Recently in the news, I've seen way too many news stories of child abuse, cruelty to children, and other disgusting actions. These acts are terrible in themselves, but what also really frustrates me is when the story goes on to state that the person committing the acts claims to be a Christian, or is a member of some church that lists Christianity as its foundation. Some of these people use Christianity as an excuse for their actions. Equally exasperating is when someone commits murder or other crimes, and then says something like; "God told me to do it!"

I see a major dilemma in America and the world, of people claiming to be of the Christian faith, but not acting in a manner that backs up their claims. People such as these ruin and destroy the name of God, and devastate the impression that the world has of true Christianity.

The problem is there are many people who know about God from what they've heard at church, things their parents have told them, and programs they've seen on television. However, just knowing about God doesn't change lives. In order for someone to truly be a Christian, they must have a personal relationship with God.

Let me illustrate it this way. I have letters from President Bush. I even have several Christmas cards from the White House. I've read the President's story, and watched him as he's led our country. So, I know a lot about him. However, if I were to call up the White House, and say; "This is Joshua, patch me through to the Oval Office." I wouldn't get to talk to President Bush, because he doesn't have a clue who I am. I know about him, but I don't personally know him.

The same is true in regards to a lot of people's "Christianity". They know a great deal about God, about the Bible, and about certain rituals and traditions of their certain denominations, but they have no personal relationship with God. And that isn't just referring to people who commit crimes and then claim to be "Christians". There are even pastors, church leaders, and others who claim the name of Jesus Christ, but whose life hasn't been changed.

The Bible even mentions these kinds of people:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you...' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Notice He says; "I never knew you", which indicates there was never a personal relationship. So, just because someone "claims" to be a Christian, and even preaches or promotes the Christian faith, that doesn't necessarily mean they are a Christian. There are some people who only are in it for the money or the fame, and then there are those who only think of Christianity as a "fire escape" from hell. There are also people who twist the Bible around to form their own version of Christianity. You can tell a genuine Christian by the way they live, and I'll get more into that in a moment.

First of all, let me define what a real Christian is.

Attending church at a certain denomination, being kind to your neighbor, or living a good life doesn't make anyone a Christian. The Bible is very clear when it comes to the Christian faith.

Being a member of or attending a Baptist church, a Catholic church, a Presbyterian church, a Methodist church, (and I could list all of the hundreds of denominations who claim to preach the Christian faith) doesn't make one a Christian. When you die and stand before God, He's not going to ask you what denomination you were a member of.

Let me clarify here that attendance at a local church is good, and should be part of our lives, but my point is that church attendance doesn't make you a Christian.

In the same light, being a good person and helping others doesn't make you a Christian. Now, those are some of the actions that a genuine Christian will participate in, but those acts alone don't make you a Christian.

The Bible tells us exactly what makes a person a Christian:

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

Notice that there are two distinctions here. 1. confession with the mouth (a head knowledge) and 2. believing in the heart (a personal relationship).

One way of illustrating this is: Suppose we meet a person and they become an acquaintance of ours. When we see them we recognize them simply because in our head we know who they are. Then we meet a person that we become friends with, we know them by recognition, but also because they are a friend. So when we see them, there is that visual recognition, but there is also that heart recognition, we have special feelings towards them because we know them personally. The same is true of the Christian. We must know about God, but we must also know Him in a personal way. Of course, in order to personally know Him, one must realize their own need of knowing Him, and their inability to change their life themselves.

Many people say that they don't need God, but yet they never find true joy in their lives. When a person repents of their sin and selfishness and chooses to begin that new and personal relationship with God, they will experience happiness and their life will be different.

The Bible tells us that anyone who is truly a Christian will have a new life; they will live differently than others.

"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)

Now, here is where a lot of people miss the mark. They claim that being a Christian means that they act weird in some way, make fools of themselves, etc. However, when the Bible says that a Christian is to be different, it is referring to the way in which a person lives their life, such as being kind to others (even those who are not kind to you), honoring and respecting your parents and those in authority, seeking to help those in need, not ruining your body by things such as smoking and other things hazardous to one's health. In other words....living a "clean" life.

A true Christian is to follow the commands of the Bible, paying close attention not to twist verses out of context or claim things mean what they really don't. One must interpret scripture in light of all other scripture. And one must learn to live for others.

In the Gospel of John, we find the following story:

"So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

(John 13:12 – 17)

Back in the time period in which this story took place, people wore open sandals, and the roads were just dirt and dust. So, when people would come into a house, they would remove their sandals, and the servant or lowliest person in the household would wash their feet.

Here Jesus Christ took it upon Himself to do this task. Here was the Son of God washing feet, one of the lowest jobs of the day. He did it to leave us an example of how we are to live our lives as Christians. We are to put others first, we are to be kind and helpful. People should notice something different about us.

There are a lot of people in today's world who wouldn't dare stoop to such a task, but yet they claim to be Christians. They look down their nose at other people, they fly off the handle at the slightest irritation, they scream and holler at their family, and then they claim the name of Jesus. That is NOT a Christian attitude, or how a Christian should live.

I should point out here that even Christians aren't perfect. Anyone who claims to be perfect is wrong. There will be times in even the best Christian's life where he/she makes wrong choices, and does things they're not supposed to. The true Christian will however shortly realize the error of their ways and make steps to correct them.

Now there are some religious groups who try to force their doctrine upon others, and who claim anyone who does not follow their beliefs as their enemy. That is not the proper attitude of a Christian. While I firmly believe in God and know my personal relationship with Jesus Christ has made a difference in my life, I am not foolish enough to think that everyone is going to agree with me. What you choose to believe is your choice to make. However, I will tell you from experience that a genuine relationship with Christ can bring peace to your life and give you the joy and happiness many are seeking for.

The next time someone claims to be a Christian, watch their life. You can always tell a TRUE Christian by the way they live. And if you're going to claim the name of Jesus Christ, make sure your life backs up your claim.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

At the age of four, Joshua Goodling was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The doctors gave him one week to live! That was over 34 years ago. Joshua is now an inspirational speaker, author, and the founder of inspiritnews.com. He is available for speaking engagements anywhere in the world, and has always received an enthusiastic response to his inspirational and life changing messages. For more information visit www.joshuagoodling.com or write him at the address below..

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