

What is a Christian?



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Most people have many questions about Christians and Christianity. Let's look at some of the most common and their answers. If the questions you have are not covered here or you are still not sure, find someone to ask—don't keep wondering.

What is a Christian?

A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ—He was God who came to earth as a person 2000 years ago and He rose again from death and is still alive today in heaven. A Christian is someone who's life has been changed because they have come to know Jesus Christ. It is not possible to become a Christian and stay the same.

Why do we need to change to become a Christian?

Actually things work the other way around. You do not need to live a perfect life to become a Christian. It is when we become a Christian we recognise that we cannot go on living the way we did before. We come to see that sin is spoiling us and we need to do something about it.

So what is sin?

Someone once said that 'sin is anything with 'I' in the middle.' If we put ourselves first, then God and other people get put last. Sin separates us from God like a dark cloud casting a shadow over our lives. If we have always lived in shadow we do not know what it is like to live in bright sunshine. Sin spoils our lives. God loves everyone and has good plans for us all and sin keeps us away from God and that good plan.

If God loves everyone how can He let us stay separated from Him?

God is perfect, but as I said, sin has spoilt us. If God comes near to us then our sin would spoil Him too. God cannot allow this: something needs to happen to make us un-spoilt so that He can come near to us.

Why doesn't God just restore everyone from their sins?

God did not make us robots, and He isn't going to make us do anything that we don't want to. He gave us free choice over how we live. God won't make us follow Him and live according to His ways. We have to choose it. We can choose to be restored, or we can choose to stay separated from God.

I was Christened as a baby. Does that mean that I am 'restored' and therefore a Christian?

I am afraid not. There is nothing that anyone can do for you that can make you a Christian. You have to choose for yourself.

Just believing in God is not enough to make you a Christian either. A young man once came to Jesus. This young man believed that Jesus was the Son of God and therefore believed in God Himself. Unfortunately, after talking with Jesus he went away sad because he was not prepared to do what Jesus asked of him. This meeting is found in the Bible in Luke, chapter 19, verses 18-30.

So What do I need to do to become a Christian—how do I get 'restored'?

In some ways becoming a Christian is very easy, you just need to make some choices; but in other ways it is hard. Those choices are hard to make and stick to. These three points should help:

1. Something to understand

We need to understand a little about how God makes us restored. Where there is sin there always needs to be punishment for that sin to deal with it. The only punishment for sin is death (the Bible, Romans, chapter 6, verse 23). This is not usually the death of our bodies—everyone's body will die in the end. The punishment for sin is the death of our spirit, which is an eternal punishment of being separated from God. The rest of that verse from Romans, chapter 6 goes on to say that "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." So we can either have eternal life (by following Jesus), or face eternal punishment: it is our choice.

So what has Jesus got to do with punishment for our sin? Think of a court room where the judge sentences us to death. At the last moment when we are about to be taken away, someone from the public gallery jumps up and says

that he will die in our place and the judge can let us go free. This is what Jesus did for us—He died in our place on a cross 2000 years ago. This is not enough on its own though. The judge (God) is willing to let this other person (Jesus) take our punishment, but we have to agree to let this person take our punishment for us and go free in His place. Wouldn't it be rather foolish to turn down the offer of life?

2. Something to admit...

In Christianity we have to admit to God that we deserve punishment for all the wrong things in our life, and then choose to try not to do these things any more. In other words, we need to say we are sorry and decide to live God's way.

We need to realise that Jesus died in our place, and tell God that we want to accept Jesus' offer of a new life. You could do this by saying a short prayer like the one on the back of this leaflet.

When we have done these things God promises that we will have eternal life. This means that we will always belong to God even after our body has died. As a sign of this, God gives His Holy Spirit to be with us all of the time. The Holy Spirit helps us and teaches us and He is there as a sign that we belong to God. Having God's Holy Spirit means that we will not be the same anymore inside, even though we still look the same on the outside.

3. Something to do...

If you have done the things outlined above, then you now belong to God and are a Christian. It is important that you tell someone that you have taken this step in your life.

However, the story has only just begun. Becoming a Christian is like a birth which brings new life. Just like a baby, there is a lot for new Christians to learn, and a lot of growing to do.

We need food and drink to grow. Christians can get refreshment and nourishment from reading the Bible and going to church to worship God and learn about Him. We also need air to breath, and talking to God in prayer is like this. All these things will help your new life to grow and do well.

You don't need to do any of these things alone if you don't want to. In fact you will find it easier to grow and be more "healthy" if you do talk with other Christians. If you want to speak to somebody about anything in this leaflet you could contact the church—see the back of the leaflet for more details.

Why do I need to do this today, why can't I live my way now and give myself to God on my death-bed?

God wants to change your life for the better now and you would not get the chance to benefit from all the good things that living with God has to offer. Equally if you are in the latter years of your life you might think that it is too late to change. Let me reassure you that it is never too late to get to know God. Many people become Christians later in life and deeply regret not finding out sooner. Jesus promises "life in all its fullness" (The Bible, John, chapter 10, verse 10).

Why not accept that offer of new life, full of excitement and challenge, today?

A short prayer of commitment

Dear God, I have tried to live my life my own way and made a mess of it. I have hurt other people and rejected You until today. I am sorry for all of my sins—please forgive me.

I thank you that you gave Jesus to take my punishment for me.

I am now choosing to follow Jesus and live the way that You want me to.

Please send your Holy Spirit to me to stay with me always and help me. Amen.

For more information please contact:

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