

What's in a Name?

Have you ever thought about what it means to be called a “Christian”? What is the significance of this label? Is it just a title or is there a deeper meaning? The term “Christian” can be found three times in the New Testament. It was first used to describe Jesus’ Disciples to the Church in Antioch (Acts 11:26). It is later found in Acts 26:28 and I Peter 4:16.

Unfortunately, people today consider themselves to be “Christians” simply because they go to church or read the Bible and pray occasionally. Some even say that they are Christian because their parents or spouse is born-again. To be sure, there is more to being a “Christian” than just being called a “Christian.” The Latin suffix “ian” means “belonging to the party of.” Therefore, to be a Christian means to belong to Christ. In order to belong to Christ, one must repent of their sins and have a genuine belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for their sins and rose from the dead that we may have eternal life.

Belonging to Christ means displaying his character in our everyday life. Being a dedicated Christian is not easy. In the United States, our secular (and arguably, pagan) culture has little tolerance for Christ, for Christ’s people, and for Christ’s morality. There is constant friction and conflict between Christians and the unsaved world. The nature and character of a Christian should be the polar opposite of that of an unsaved person. Jesus taught about Christian character in his Beatitudes, which are part of his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12). The characteristics Christ described should flow from within each believer. They include being humble, meek, sorrowful for our sinful lives, hungry for the Word of God, merciful toward others, peaceful, pure in heart, and steadfast in the face of trials and persecution. Those who are Christians in word and in deed should exhibit these characteristics in abundance. For more on the Beatitudes, see “Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes” on the Bible Studies page.

In addition, belonging to Christ means sharing in his suffering. True Christians will suffer; that is a fact. The Bible says:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5: 10-12.

We see the horrific suffering and persecution of our Christian Brothers and Sisters in some parts of the Middle East, Asia and, Africa where they are being put to death or arrested for their belief in Christ. We are very blessed that we do not face that level of persecution here in the United States; however, we are often labeled as intolerant or homophobic because of our stance on social issues such as abortion and homosexuality. In his “Wiersbe Bible Commentary”, Dr. Wiersbe explains, “The world is at war with God, while God is seeking to reconcile His enemies and make them His children. We must expect to be persecuted *if* we are living as God wants us to live.” He adds, “But we must be sure that our suffering is not due to our own foolishness or disobedience.”

It is an honor to be called a Christian, and it is a privilege to belong to Christ! Jesus is merciful, kind, and gracious toward us and the depth of his love is without limit. Jesus not only died for us that we might have our sins forgiven, he went away to prepare a place for us to dwell with him for all eternity. And he is coming back soon to get us. “Christian” is not just a name or label to be taken lightly. It is a life choice. Choose wisely. Choose Jesus Today!

God bless!