

# *Spiritual Considerations...*

*Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.*



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*Dave Phillips, editor*

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## What is a Christian?

**Dave Phillips, Germantown, Tennessee**

Have you noticed how many people struggle with the exact definition of a Christian? It seems to be an issue that we are making more and more difficult because of the way we are discussing it. Pointing fingers and calling names will not help solve the problem. Honest reflection may help.

We want to have a specific, descriptive designation for a Christian and an explanation of what one should believe. We sometimes desire not to be so dogmatic about our beliefs that we are offensive to others who may hold differing beliefs. After all, we may reason, who says that they are not right in areas where we are wrong? Don't we all know people of various religious beliefs who seem to be very moral people and certainly exemplary citizens of the community? Wouldn't it be pompous or egotistical to suppose that we are "right" in everything and they are "wrong?"

This is where the concept of *religious tolerance* is born. It sounds enticing. We should hold our views privately and not be so abrasive that we "turn others off" because of our actions. But what if we are tolerant of a religion that teaches principles contradictory to the Bible? At some point, religious tolerance becomes spiritual compromise. What are we to do? Should we cave in? Do we double our fists and fight? We could start by going back to the Bible to find answers.

Luke, a physician, recorded the beginning of a church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). Because of persecution, the disciples were dispersed from Jerusalem and began preaching to Jews and Greeks about Christ. When they came to Antioch, many people heard them preaching Jesus and turned to the Lord. Barnabas was sent to this struggling church and encouraged them. Paul was then brought down to teach them for about a year. Luke says the disciples were called Christians for the first time here.

Here are some principles imbedded in this chapter that will be a challenge for those of us claiming to be Christians:

- *When people hear Jesus preached (Acts 11:20), they will turn to the Lord (11:21).* I think an implication is that we are converted to that which we hear preached - whether Christ or a party spirit. What message are we preaching?
- *When churches are young and need encouragement, they do not need criticism, but an intense effort for someone who is more experienced to help them find grace, joy, and encouragement (11:23).* Is there a young Christian near us that needs our encouragement?
- *When the church needs instruction, it cannot be accomplished overnight* but requires a long-term commitment on the part of spiritual leaders (11:26). How committed are we?
- *The people were called disciples (learners) before they were called Christians (followers of Christ).* If I will not follow Christ, can I call myself a Christian? The real question for those of us claiming to be Christians is, "Who am I following?"

The challenge for the modern day church is no different than it has been for generations. The church is made up of people who claim to follow Christ. When someone wants to know who is a Christian, our response should be 'those that are following Christ.' Thankfully, the Lord knows those that are His (John 10:14). He says that those that claim to be His followers will listen to His voice and follow Him much as a sheep will follow the voice of the shepherd.

By the way, whom are we following? If we read His instructions in the Bible, would we obey? Ay, there's the rub.

## Heard at Harding University Lectureship, 1999

*"We worship our work; work at our play; and play at our worship." Charles Hodge*

## **Following Jesus: What Does it Mean?**

**Tank Tankersley, via Park Avenue News, (Memphis, TN)**

Are you a Christian? This question, properly understood, is the most important one a person can be asked. The problem is that so many of us don't understand the question. When it is asked we hear something else. We hear "Are you a good person?" or "Do you treat others right?" or "Do you believe that Jesus is the son of God?" And what does "believe" mean anyway? Doesn't God's word tell us that "the devils believe, and tremble?" It is a very good thing to believe that we are God's creation, and that He sent His only son to save us from our sins, and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is a very good thing to believe, and repent, and confess, and be baptized. But surely there must be something more to it than believing that Ted Williams hit .406 in 1941. I believe that the sun is 93,000,000 miles away. And I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, God in the flesh, the savior of the world. Surely Jesus merits more than this. Doesn't he?

Maybe we should be asking another question. Are we following Jesus? That is, does this belief of ours amount to anything? Have we really been struck by the reality that He knows better than we can ever hope to know what is best for us? Have we genuinely ceased living for ourselves and yielded to Him, so that He might live through us, and make of us all that He would have us to be, and all that He has the power to make of us, if we will but let Him? Are these unsettling questions for you? They are for me.

Whenever we buy anything, we count the cost. We only make a purchase if we want the thing we get more than we want the money with which we part. When we spend our time and energy, we do so because we are convinced that the return will make it all worthwhile. We have often been admonished to "count the cost" before deciding to follow Jesus. And so we should. But who can doubt that it is worth it? We surrender our lives. In return, we get lives that are transformed into all that He who gave us life would have them be. That's a bargain, at any cost.

## **Long Sermon?**

A preacher, known for his lengthy sermons, noticed a man get up and leave during the middle of his message. The man returned just before the conclusion of the service. Afterwards the preacher asked the man where he had gone.

"I went to get a haircut," was the reply.

"But," said the preacher, "why didn't you do that before the service?"

"Because," the gentleman said, "I didn't need one then."

## **A Disciple of His**

**Author Unknown**

The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure.

I'm finished and I'm done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame vision, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarf goals.

I no longer need preeminence, position, promotion, platitudes, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by present, lean by faith, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is Heaven. My road is narrow. My way is rough. My companions few. My God reliable. My mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus.

I must go until He comes. Give till I drop. Preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He'll have no problem recognizing me.