

What Is a True Christian?



What Is a True Christian?

By Roderick C. Meredith

*More than 400 sects and denominations
call themselves “Christian”—but
they all have some basic, and often
fundamental, differences.*

*Would Jesus Christ recognize the
organizations using His name today?*

*How can you be sure of what
a true Christian should be?*

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Chapter I

Christ Is the Standard

Have you ever met a true Christian? Have you ever attended a church full of true Christians? Are you sure? What is it that makes a person truly Christian?

America calls itself a Christian nation. It even prints the words “In God We Trust” on its currency. In many Western nations, Christianity is the official state religion.

Yet in our mixed-up, confused world, there are more than 400 sects and denominations calling themselves “Christian.” They all have somewhat different beliefs and practices. Even so, *every one of them* is named after Jesus Christ! Partly because of this, many non-Christians scoff at the idea that Christianity is directly inspired by God.

And no wonder, for many of the greatest wars in modern history have been started by professing Christian nations. And statistics show that the incidence of rape, robbery, and murder has been skyrocketing in many of the Western, so-called “*Christian*” nations over the past several decades.

Why?

Could it be that most citizens of these countries *do not really understand* what Christianity is all about? Could it be that, even though millions are heavily involved in “churchianity,” they do not really grasp—or live by—the plain, clear teachings of Christ?

Philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in his *Attack Upon “Christendom,”* wrote, “The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist... [and] what has to be done is to throw light upon a criminal of-

fense against Christianity, prolonged through centuries, perpetrated by millions... whereby they have cunningly, under the guise of perfecting Christianity, sought little by little to cheat God out of Christianity, and have succeeded in making Christianity exactly the opposite of what it is in the New Testament” (pp. 32–33).

Why would he say this? Part of the answer is in the fact that the greatest and most bloody wars in all human history have been waged primarily in Europe—the very heart of western, “Christian” civilization. In fact, the professing Christian church *directly instigated* a series of “holy wars” during the Middle Ages, called the “Crusades.” Here is one description of the supposed **blessings** which “Christians” put on the murderous and bloodthirsty activities of the Crusaders: “The knight who joined the Crusades might thus still indulge the bellicose side of his genius—under the aegis and at the bidding of the Church; and in so doing he would also attain what the spiritual side of his nature ardently sought—a perfect salvation and remission of sins. He might butcher all day, till he waded ankle-deep in blood, and then at nightfall kneel, sobbing for very joy, at the altar of the Sepulchre—for was he not red from the winepress of the Lord?” (“Crusades,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 7).

Were **these** men *true followers* of the humble carpenter of Nazareth who said to “love your enemies”?

Yet remember that these men called themselves by the **name** of Christ—“Christian.” It seems that nearly all Western religions, philosophies, and sects insist upon applying the *name* of Christ to their own ideas, teachings, and practices. In ancient times, the pagans at least openly and honestly *acknowledged* their worship of the various “gods” and demon spirits of their own choosing.

The Name of Christ Is Often Misused

Since the life, death, and *resurrection* of the Son of God, a great **deception** has resulted in the placing of Christ’s **name** on every type of pagan, heathen, perverted philosophy of man that has come along!

Shocking as it may sound, the fact that many churches, doctrines, ideas, and practices of men are called “Christian” *proves absolutely nothing!*

Did *Christ start these ideas and institutions? Do they follow His teaching and His example?*

How can you know?

Almighty God inspired the Apostle John to describe the Devil as “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives the whole world**” (Revelation 12:9). Again, in Revelation 20:1–3, God describes how Satan will soon be restrained “*that he should deceive the nations no more.*”

These inspired scriptures certainly show that most people and nations have been misled and **deceived** by Satan the Devil! This, very frankly, is the key that explains why there are so many obvious contradictions in our supposedly “Christian” society. It shows why this world is so mixed up and confused about what the word “Christian” really means. It shows that our civilization has not been following Christ, but has been deceived into going *many different ways* under Satan’s confusing influence!

Strangely, yet at least honestly, some of this world’s noted religious leaders and scholars have acknowledged that our professing “Christianity” has not even seriously tried to follow the literal *teaching* and *example* of Jesus Christ—its supposed Author!

Observe also this revealing and even shocking quote from highly respected historian Will Durant:

Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the Church; the Greek language, having reigned for centuries over philosophy, became the vehicle of Christian literature and ritual; the Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. Other pagan cultures contributed to the syncretist result. From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity... and a personal immortality of reward and punishment; from Egypt the adoration of the Mother and Child, and the mystic theosophy that made Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and obscured the Christian creed; there, too, Christian monasticism would find its exemplars and its source. From Phrygia came the worship of the Great Mother.... The Mithraic ritual so closely resembled the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass that Christian fathers charged the Devil with inventing these similarities to mislead frail minds. **Christianity was the last creation of the**

ancient pagan world... [The Eucharist] was a conception long sanctified by time; the pagan mind needed no schooling to receive it; **by embodying the “mystery of the Mass,” Christianity became the last and greatest of the mystery religions** (*The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, pp. 595, 600, emphasis added).

This noted historian plainly acknowledges that church leaders did **not** take Jesus’ life and **His teaching** as the standard for their so-called “Christian” churches!

Ask yourself honestly: *What other true standard* could there possibly be?

Decades ago, evangelist Billy Graham was quoted as saying that while many Americans believe there is a God, most “have not accepted true Christianity or Judaism or Islam. They believe the Bible, but they don’t read it or obey it” (*U.S. News & World Report*, April 4, 1994). This same article quotes famous pollster George Gallup, Jr. as saying that America is “a nation of biblical illiterates... [and] the stark fact is most Americans don’t know what they believe or why.”

This statement by Dr. Gallup explains one of the key reasons why Satan has been so successful in deceiving the vast majority even of those who profess Christianity! These professing Christians “don’t know what they believe or why”!

They *do not* really study or understand the Bible. They only have vague ideas of what they *think* the Bible says. More than half of all Americans are unable even to *name* the four gospels—let alone understand them (“U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey,” *Pew Research Center*, September 2010). A Barna Research poll found that while 62 percent of American adults say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important to their lives today, only 46 percent are sure that He lived a sinless life while on the earth (“What Do Americans Believe About Jesus? 5 Popular Beliefs,” *Barna.org*, April 1, 2015).

Apart from a vague, sentimental recollection of the “Lord’s Prayer” or the twenty-third psalm, the Bible is truly a “mystery book”—even to most churchgoers. Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4). How can one live by “every word” of the Bible and yet *not even know* what the Bible says?

The Bible provides the *foundational knowledge* upon which true Christianity is built, for unless one proves—to his own satisfaction—that the Bible is God’s inspired revelation to mankind, one is “lost in the fog.” But today most people follow the dictates of their own conscience without biblical understanding in religious matters. People make up *their own* religious ideas and concepts as they go along.

As a result, there is utter **confusion**. “Here is the way I *feel*,” some will say, or “Here is the way I look at it.” How you and I “look at it” may make interesting coffee-cup chatter, but what truly matters is, “How does **God** look at it?”

Are Denominations “Christian” Because They Do Good Works?

There is no question that good works have been done by a wide spectrum of religious organizations. As people treat their neighbors well, they and those around them experience blessings. Speaking of the spiritual laws and principles of the Bible, Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). In other words, these inspired words describe intrinsic values and forces that operate automatically in many cases—just like the law of gravity. If a person does good to others and treats them with love and kindness, it almost *automatically* works out that he is going to be blessed in one way or another. This principle holds true no matter what someone’s religion might be.

However, actions like being personally helpful and loving—or doing “good works” in some kind of organized effort—in **no way**, of themselves, qualify people for eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Fellow ministers of Christ have told me more than once that some of the most loving, generous, and religiously devoted people they have ever known are Thai Buddhists. Many exhibit a personal warmth, grace, gentleness, and spirit of service that is *seldom seen* even in the churchgoing world—*despite* the general destructiveness of their false religion, which rejects the very Savior of all humanity, Jesus Christ. Many professing Christian organizations today—*as well as secular ones*—*ought* likewise to be commended for their service and acts of charity on behalf of the needy or disadvantaged. But if these same groups reject God’s laws and the **entire** way of life that Christ revealed, then what will be the end of their good works?

The point is that, historically, these people may do “good works” one day and the very next day pull out their long knives or guns and

butcher their neighbor! Not truly knowing or fearing the true God—and not being led by His Spirit—they do not have the capacity to live consistently as Christians should live.

Jesus Christ said, “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; depart from Me, you who practice *lawlessness*’” (Matthew 7:21–23). And Christ spoke further about those who worshipped Him to no avail, saying that “‘in **vain** they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men” (Mark 7:7–8).

So, although doing good works is an integral part of Christianity, there is much more. Yes, we certainly *do* need to work on developing gentleness, kindness, and service toward others. But we must also—in a very real sense—be **conquered** by God. Realizing that our own righteousness is simply not good enough (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:23), we must be totally *surrendered* to do God’s will in **every** phase and facet of our lives—not just in “good works.” We must *obey* His Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:17), *keep holy* the days He *made holy* (Exodus 20:8), and let Jesus Christ live His life within us fully through the Holy Spirit (cf. Galatians 2:20, *King James Version*), for we should, in fact, be preparing now to be kings and priests in Christ’s soon-coming world government (1 Corinthians 6:2–3; Revelation 5:9–10). Christ and the Father need to *know where we stand*. We must demonstrate consistent obedience and genuine good character—a *truly surrendered attitude*—in order to be fit to assist Christ in His coming kingdom!

The major “Christian” denominations, down through history, have **not** really taught these truths at all—and they have **not** been explaining God’s awesome **plan** and **purpose** for mankind. They have **not** been actively preparing their followers to be kings and priests in the soon-coming Government of God to be set up on this earth under Jesus Christ (Revelation 2:26–27). They have **not** been preaching the Bible’s prophetic warnings about end-time events that our people so desperately need to hear. In fact, most of them have virtually *no understanding* of the vital quarter of the Bible devoted to prophecy—so they seldom have anything to say about it. And so, because of all this,

these major denominations are **not** doing the Work of God or preparing their people for the Kingdom of God.

So read (and carefully reread!) this vital booklet—so that you can understand what *true* Christianity is really all about!

A Planned Deception

The fact is, true Christianity—and true Christians—*do exist*. But they may be harder to find than you would think. If you will examine what the Bible teaches, you will find out *why* there are so few true Christians.

Let me explain. Jesus said, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive many*” (Matthew 24:5, *KJV*). Notice that these people do **not** come in their *own* name! Many people erroneously believe that this verse refers to a multitude of “false Messiahs,” each pretending that he, personally, is the true Christ. *Some* misguided men have, in fact, made such blasphemous claims. One famous example is David Koresh, who died at the besieged Waco compound in 1993. Korean evangelist Sun Myung Moon convinced many thousands that he was the Messiah. Throughout history, a variety of misguided or deluded men have taken this title and role upon themselves.

But common sense should tell us that this is a *misinterpretation* of the Scriptures. Remember that the Bible says “*many* shall come,” and shall “*deceive many*.” The fact is, there just have not been **many** who have personally claimed to be Christ. And there most certainly have not been *many* who were taken in—“deceived”—by them. Koresh and Moon hoodwinked no more than a few. They definitely did not sway teeming millions of human beings into believing that they, personally, were the Messiah!

What, then, is the answer? Is Jesus *mistaken* in His claim? Not at all. The correct interpretation of Matthew 24:5 is that *many* people would come and claim that **Jesus** was the Messiah—but that they would “deceive many” by subverting, twisting, and perverting all that Christ taught and stood for.

These false prophets, then, come in *Jesus’* name and tell people that He is the Christ. Using *His* name, they go on to palm off their own *false* religious ideas and philosophies under the banner of “Christianity”!

Some of these “false prophets” go so far as to take for themselves titles that rightfully belong only to Jesus Christ Himself. They may

compose their own “prophecies” and pass them off as “divinely inspired” or “revealed by an angel.” Some may try to exalt their own writings almost to the level of Scripture—all the while claiming falsely to have derived their prophecies and their authority from Christ. In the name of “Christianity,” they draw people further and further away from the **true** Jesus Christ of the Bible.

You see, if people are clever enough, they can apply the term “Christian” to almost anything. They can wrap an idea or philosophy in nice, religious-sounding phrases and persuade others to believe it.

But there is even more to it than that, for behind misguided men and women, there is a powerful spirit being called the Devil and Satan. Formerly an extremely wise and beautiful cherub or angel (Ezekiel 28:12–15), he is now fiendishly clever and still very attractive and compelling in his appeal to unsuspecting individuals (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14).

God calls Satan the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is further described in Revelation 12:9 as the “great dragon... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives the whole world.**”

So if Satan works in the sons of disobedience, and if he “deceives the *whole world*,” then obviously **billions** of people are taken in by him!

The point is that under the invisible but powerful influence of Satan, there have been *all kinds* of ideas presented as “Christian” that are not Christian at all. Some of them come directly from paganism. Furthermore, the clear, straightforward teachings of Jesus Christ about a *way of life* have been virtually *buried* under an avalanche of strange creeds, doctrines, and liturgy.

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, in *Hurlbut’s Story of the Christian Church*, makes this striking point:

We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A.D., “The Age of Shadows,” partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least. We have no longer the clear light of the Book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later

work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects **very different** from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul (p. 41, emphasis added).

In the above quote, this mainstream Protestant author acknowledges that the professing Christian church became **vastly** "different" after the original Apostles died. **Why?** Who gave *anyone* the **authority** to change the beliefs and practices of the Church? Or did deceived men just take it on themselves to make these profound changes?

What Jesus Actually Taught

To understand how the various churches have become so "different" from one another, we need to get back to the source of Christianity—Jesus Christ. If *anyone* knows what true Christianity is, it is certainly Christ Himself!

As a young Jew in Israel, Jesus was reared to keep the Ten Commandments. He observed God's weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days that God had revealed to ancient Israel. It seems easy for Bible scholars to forget these simple facts, gloss over them, or pretend they are irrelevant.

But as we shall see, the fact that Christ kept God's laws makes a **huge** difference. And those who pretend otherwise do so at great peril to their *eternal lives!*

Listen!

Jesus was asked by a young man, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Christ answered, "If you want to enter into life, **keep the commandments.**" The young man then asked, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 19:16–19).

So, Jesus clearly taught that the **way** to eternal life was to obey God by keeping His Ten Commandments!

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly *magnified* the Ten Commandments. He said, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). A careful study shows that far from “doing away” with these commandments, Jesus made them *even more binding*. Christ revealed that they formed a *spiritual* law, including, but far greater in scope than, the literal requirements God had given to ancient Israel. He taught that His followers were not only to refrain from murder, but also that they were not even to harbor the *spirit* of murder—misguided anger, hatred, and rage—in their hearts (Matthew 5:21–22).

He went on to show that not only must a true Christian never commit adultery, but that “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (v. 28). So even the spirit or attitude of adultery is breaking God’s great spiritual law, the Ten Commandments. And *who*, pray tell, had the authority to “do away” with this clear instruction?

The Law of Liberty

Think of it! If the whole world would start living by the Ten Commandments—as magnified by Jesus Christ—we would have no crime, no murder, no adultery, no broken homes, no displaced children, and *no wars!* The deep sense of stability, peace, and security that would then fill the world would have a definite *healing* effect in every way. The incidence of depression and mental disease would greatly diminish. Even physical sickness and suffering would decline, because mental attitudes affect our physical health.

Obedience to God’s law **fre**es us from harmful conduct. The Apostle James called it the “**law of liberty.**” He wrote, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘**Do not commit adultery,**’ also said, ‘**Do not murder.**’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the **law of liberty**” (James 2:10–12).

This New Testament apostle, then, was inspired to urge us to keep the law of God—summarized by the **Ten Commandments!** He also said that if we obey only *part* of that law, while disobeying other

parts, we are “convicted *by the law* as transgressors” (v. 9). So the Ten Commandments were **not** done away or “nailed to the cross”—otherwise, they could not convict anyone of anything!

As magnified by Christ, God’s wonderful “law of liberty” would indeed provide humanity with world peace and individual happiness—*if it were universally obeyed!* But will that ever happen?

Yes, indeed!

Jeremiah’s inspired prophecy describing the coming 1,000-year rule of Christ is quoted in the letter to the Hebrews: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Hebrews 8:10–11).

So it is clear that the very basis of life in the Millennium will be God’s spiritual law, the Ten Commandments. All will come to love, adore, and worship the true God—**and do what He commands**. All will learn to *love their neighbors* as themselves. Through true conversion and the empowerment of God’s Spirit, they will gradually learn to “get inside the head” of their fellow men and—with understanding—be able to help, serve, build up, and encourage *all* human beings to lead happy and productive lives.

As stated above, when God’s “law of liberty” is universally understood and obeyed, the world will truly be at peace—in a way it has never been since Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden.



Chapter 2

What Should You Do?

If you want to become a true Christian—the kind of Christian the *Bible* describes—there are several things you need to do.

First, you must *absolutely prove to yourself* that there is a real God—not an “essence of good” somewhere out in the heavens, but the actual Spirit Personality who created and now rules the entire universe. As the book of Hebrews tells us, “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (11:6).

Furthermore, you need to prove to your own satisfaction that the Bible is truly God’s *inspired revelation* to man. As Paul explained, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Then you need to begin to really *study* the Bible! Do *not* just “read” it. Rather, with different translations, a concordance, and other study aids, begin to carefully *pore over* the Bible. *Meditate* on what you read, *pray* about it, and determine to *obey* God’s word—to **do** what God says, for Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’” (Luke 4:4).

So, you must sincerely yield yourself to **live** by every word of God! Then, through this personal, genuine approach of *seeking* the true God and His will, you will no doubt be led by His Spirit to see that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is indeed the Son of God and Savior of the world—that He is *your* Savior from *your* sins.

Paul describes it this way: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:8–10).

So, we are “justified,” that is, made right—reconciled to God—by our heartfelt acceptance of Christ’s death as payment for our personal sins. *We all* must continually have a deep, personal sense of appreciation and loyalty to Jesus for having “emptied Himself” on our behalf. The Apostle Paul stated in Philippians 2:5–9, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.”

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *gave Himself* for us! He is now our faithful High Priest, sitting in glory at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us as we seek God in prayer (Hebrews 4:14–16). Christ is also the living Head of His Church (Ephesians 1:22–23). And He is coming soon to reign as King over the whole earth (Revelation 11:15).

You, personally, **must accept the real Jesus Christ of the Bible as your personal Savior, your Lord and Master, your High Priest and coming King.** Your commitment to Christ must be absolutely genuine!

But next is a vital key.

You must not merely accept Jesus’ *person*. You must also believe in His *message*—in what He taught and stood for—for Jesus Himself asks, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do **not** do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

We have already noted this same sentiment in Matthew 7:21: “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.”

So what *was* the message that Jesus preached? “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14–15).

Jesus came preaching the **Good News** of the Kingdom or Government of God. As we have already seen, He clearly taught that the **laws** of that Kingdom are based on the Ten Commandments.

Therefore, to be a true Christian, you must *repent* of your sins and dedicate yourself to begin *keeping the laws* of that coming Government, to *believing* the Good News about the Kingdom of God, and to *accepting* Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin and your Lord—your absolute “**Boss**” whom you willingly and lovingly **obey!**

If you would like more information about the *true* Gospel of Jesus Christ, please call or write to request your *free* copy of our eye-opening booklet *Do You Believe the True Gospel?*, or read it at TomorrowsWorld.org.

Repent and Be Baptized

We have already seen from James 2:9 that sinners are convicted by the law. James also states that “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (v. 10). The law has ten fundamental points—the Ten Commandments. If we break *any* of them, we are *convicted by the law*.

The Bible makes *very clear* what sin *is*. Near the end of his life, John wrote that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*). He further wrote, “And whatever we ask [of God] we receive from Him, because we **keep His commandments** and **do** those things that are pleasing in His sight” (v. 22). This verse clearly shows that *keeping God’s law* is so important that even the answers to our prayers depend—at least in large measure—upon it. How vital it is that true Christians come to grasp the fact that they are *accountable* to God to keep the Ten Commandments!

The New Testament tells us *what sin is*. It *never* says that sin is dancing or watching a movie, for sin cannot, in every case, be defined simply by *what you do*. But sin always involves wrong thoughts or attitudes that violate the *spirit* of the law of God.

Certainly, the kind of dancing that incites sexual desire outside of marriage is always sinful, and viewing movies that glorify violence and lust will undoubtedly ease the way for sinful thoughts to rule your mind. But remember that the standard is *not* “Here’s the way *I* look at it” or “Here’s what *so-and-so* says.” The true standard for determining right and wrong is the **law** of *God*. Sin “**is** the transgression of the law.” Could anything be clearer?

A true Christian, then, must internalize God's law so that it becomes part of his thinking and identity—the very fabric of his being. For that to happen, he must be filled with, and led by, God's Holy Spirit. “For as many as are **led by** the Spirit of God,” Paul stated, “they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14, *KJV*).

But *how* do you receive the Holy Spirit? And how does it *function*? The way to receive the Holy Spirit was revealed by the Apostle Peter. He said, “**Repent**, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Since your old self must be *baptized*, that is, “immersed”—figuratively *buried*—in water for the remission of sin, you must repent of, or turn back from, sin! Recall that “sin is the transgression of the law.” So, you must **turn back from breaking God's law!**

You must be *baptized* in a “watery grave” as an outward acknowledgment of both the *death penalty* you have brought on yourself by disobeying the **law** of your Creator and your *willingness* to let the *old self die*.

God's word tells us, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were 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” (Romans 6:3–4).

A Covenant with Your Creator

So when you decide you want to become a true Christian, you need to be willing to “bury” the old selfish self in baptism. Frankly, only God can *grant* you the real repentance you need to fulfill His will (Acts 11:18). But if He is, in fact, opening your mind to grasp what true Christianity is all about—and calling you to be in the first resurrection—then you must utterly **surrender** your will to the Creator. You must sincerely and bitterly **repent** of having carelessly gone your *own way* all these years—and repent of continually breaking and **smashing** God's holy law in both your thoughts and your actions. **Real repentance means to be profoundly sorry—so sorry that you turn around and go the other way!** You must, then, make a *covenant with your Creator*—not only to stop breaking the Ten Commandments, but, with the power of God's promised Holy Spirit, to start **keeping** them as a *way of life*.

You must determine that, with God's help, you will **never** let any desires or vanities or other "gods" come between you and the true God. You will remember to keep holy *His* Sabbath day. You will truly *honor* your parents. You will not only refrain from committing murder, but will carefully guard your mind against even entertaining murderous *thoughts* of hatred or violence against your neighbor. You will not only refrain from ever committing adultery, but you will not even let your mind dwell on lust (Matthew 5:21–28). You must also determine that you will constantly ask God for the strength *not* to steal, *not* to lie, and *not* to covet. As we will explain, it is the power of *Christ in you* which enables you to keep the Ten Commandments as a **way of life**.

Remember, after real *repentance* from rebelling against God and a heartfelt disavowal of your own carnal ways and desires, you should be **baptized**—signifying your acceptance of and faith in **Christ's shed blood** as payment for your past sins. After baptism, you are *promised* the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Then, through His Spirit, Christ places His nature within you—His *love*, His *faith*, His *strength* to overcome your weaknesses and the temptations of Satan and this world.

The love you receive through God's Spirit is not mere human love. It is the very love of *God*, "because the **love of God** has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5).

Now *how* does this love operate? Let God's word give the true answer! "For **this** is the love of God, that we **keep His commandments**. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Through God's love placed in us by His Spirit, **we are able to keep His commandments!**

It is not through *your mental strength*, but through *God's spiritual power*—which His Holy Spirit imparts—that you *can* follow the perfect example of Jesus Christ! You *can* yield to let Jesus live the same kind of life in you that He *did* live as a flesh and blood *human being*—keeping the same laws of God, worshipping on the same Holy Days that *God* ordained, remaining *separate* from this world's society, politics, and wars. And—through earnest prayer, constant Bible study, occasional fasting, and consistent spiritual overcoming and growth—you *can* yield to let God fashion you in His image, to be resurrected as His **Spirit-born child**—*possessed of His very nature!* This is, in fact, the very **purpose** of your existence!

The Spiritual Power You Need

As we have seen, in order to keep God's spiritual law and to overcome our own sinful ways, we need the love that only God can give. And this He has promised through His Spirit. Furthermore, we have just learned from 1 John 5:3 that God's love operates through keeping His law.

Again, John—the apostle Jesus especially loved in a personal way—writing near the end of the Apostolic Era, tells us that God's love leads us to “**keep His commandments.**” And in spite of clever modern theological arguments to the contrary, John says God's “commandments are *not* burdensome.”

A true Christian, then, will have God's love flowing through him like “rivers of living water” (John 7:38–39). As he deeply *studies* the Bible and feeds on it, and as he fervently *prays* to God every day on his knees for the spiritual strength, faith, guidance, and love he needs, the true Christian *grows* spiritually.

It is obvious that millions of professing Christians *never change!* They may have “grown up” in a particular church. They may have “accepted Jesus” in some evangelistic meeting. However, in most cases the “Christ” they have accepted is **not** the true Christ of the Bible! In most cases, the “gospel” they have been taught is not the Gospel of the Bible! Far too often, it is just an incomplete message about the **person** of Jesus Christ—teaching that the only thing we need to do is “believe” that He died for our sins.

Usually, these unwitting victims of Satan's massive deception are **not** told to keep the Ten Commandments! They are **not** told that Christ must live the *same kind of life* within them that He lived as a human being while on the earth. They are **not** told about the glorious **good news** of tomorrow's world—that *all* true saints are preparing to be kings and priests who will assist Christ in ruling the world (1 Corinthians 6:2–3; Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 5:9–10). The Apostle Paul was inspired to warn us about this false Christianity, which was already beginning in his day: “For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** which you have not received, or a **different gospel** which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it” (2 Corinthians 11:4)!

Unwittingly, most of us *have* “put up” with the kind of empty, namby-pamby “gospel” described above! Many people prefer this

kind of watered-down “gospel” message, because it lets them feel comfortable in their sins. It is a kind of cheap grace that by neglecting God’s law tempts its adherents to “crucify again for themselves the Son of God” (Hebrews 6:6).

But the *true* Gospel tells Christians to *grow* and *change*—to develop the very character of God (cf. 1 Peter 1:15–16). The *true* Gospel—the *real* “Good News”—tells us that we are to be kings and priests in the soon-coming Kingdom of God (Luke 19:11–19; Revelation 20:6). Paul challenged the Corinthians, “Do you not know that **the saints will judge the world?** And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that **we shall judge angels?** How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

So, in this life, we are to wisely use the natural abilities God has given us to prepare for the **goal** of assisting Jesus Christ in bringing genuine *peace* and *joy* to this earth through a government based on God’s spiritual **law**—the Ten Commandments. As *all the world* will eventually experience, we must have God’s law written in our hearts and minds now: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **‘I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’**” (Jeremiah 31:33).

As we actively surrender to allow God—through His Spirit—to build His very *character* within us, we should genuinely become better, kinder, more loving neighbors. We should become better, wiser, more dedicated workers or professional people. We should become more thoughtful, loving, and patient fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. And we should become more zealous bondslaves of Jesus Christ in the great Work of His true Church—proclaiming the truth to all nations.

As Paul wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, *KJV*). *That* is what true Christianity is all about—not merely believing *in* Christ, but having the *living* Jesus Christ **live** within us by the power of the Holy Spirit! *That* is what gives us the spiritual strength and love to live by God’s law. It is **not** our strength. It is *Christ’s* strength—His **power** and His spiritual love

placed within us by the Holy Spirit—because Christ **lives** within the true Christian. *That is the key!*

Bit by bit and step by step, each of us must “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Through God’s help and His Spirit in us, we are to *surrender ourselves daily* to let Jesus Christ live *His* life in us.

God’s word tells us, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). Since Jesus Christ bought and paid for each of us by shedding His own blood, true Christians need to realize their responsibility to *seek God’s will daily* in everything they think, say, and do.

Certainly, we will all stumble at times, falling short of the goal of letting Christ live in us. One must *not* be discouraged by this. It happens to *everyone*. John, the “apostle of love,” wrote about this problem to the *true Christians* of his day: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9).

So, when we “slip up” after conversion and repeat old mistakes (or make new ones!), *if* we are truly repentant and *confess* these sins to God, *He will forgive us*. Further, as John stated, God will “cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness.”

Overcoming, then, *takes time*. It does not happen all at once. **That is why we must never give up.**

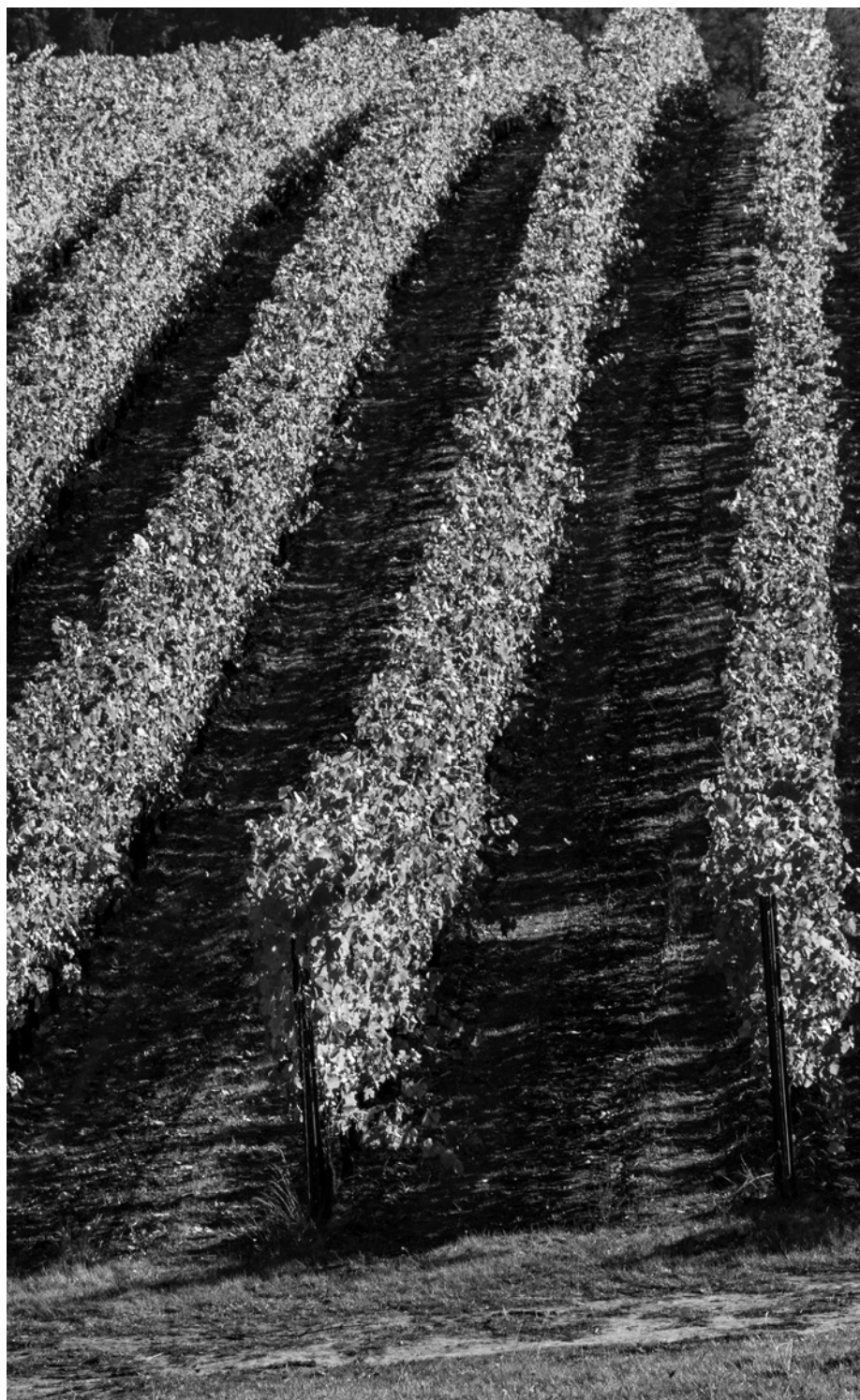
“Is There Hope for Me?”

Many people are wrongly convinced that God could never forgive them because their sins are so awful. Yet, speaking as a sinner in serious need of forgiveness, the prophet Micah wrote, “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God?... Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:6–7).

The answer seems too good to be true: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (v. 8).

Jesus Christ, the Lord God of Israel, came into this world to *save* mankind—not to condemn *us*, but to condemn *sin* (cf. John 1:1, 11–14;

3:17; Romans 8:2–3). Our part is to *repent*, to accept Christ as our Savior, to turn toward God and His perfect law with our whole being—and to be baptized for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). God will completely forgive *and forget* the past sins of every person who takes these actions sincerely (1 John 1:8–9). There is no limit to the mercy and goodness God will show to *every* person who seeks Him wholeheartedly (cf. Jeremiah 29:12–13).



Chapter 3

The Fruits of a True Christian

Jesus said, “Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). The “fruits” or *results* of God’s Holy Spirit working in our lives show whether or not we are truly Christian. Jesus explained the most important thing for a Christian to do when He said, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37–39).

For the true Christian, God becomes the center of *everything*. The genuine Christian is really **God**-centered. He will want to please God in *all* his thoughts and actions. He will constantly remember that God is his Father and that Jesus is his Savior, his High Priest, and his living, active Head. Therefore, he will **not** be looking for clever trick arguments to “get around” keeping God’s commandments or His inspired Holy Days.

Rather, he will “feed” on Christ by constantly *studying* and drinking in the inspired word of God, the Bible (cf. John 6:56–57). He will learn the habit of *seeking God in earnest prayer* as Jesus did (Mark 1:35). In all of this, he will learn to “walk with God”—to have his thoughts and actions more in tune with God and Christ every day of his Christian life.

A genuine Christian will also be led by God’s Spirit to “love his neighbor *as himself*.” He will strive, with God’s help and guidance, to be kind, loving, and giving. The *real* Christian will seek to live by Christ’s instruction that it “is **more blessed to give than to receive**” (Acts 20:35).

What Is a True Christian?

A genuine follower of Jesus will strive to be a “giver”—to help, serve, encourage, and lift up his fellow human beings—and *he will put his whole heart into helping to give God’s precious truth to others!* As Daniel wrote, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who **turn many to righteousness** like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

In his own life and personality, the Christian will, more and more, manifest the spiritual “fruit” that Paul described: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23).

Through Christ’s Spirit living within him, the true Christian will demonstrate *love*—a sincere, outflowing concern for all human beings—and warmth and affection for all those around him. The true Christian will always have a deep and abiding **love** for God and for Christ His Savior. He will *appreciate forever* the fact that Jesus Christ came down to this earth to suffer, to shed His blood, and to **die** in order to reconcile us with God. So, the genuine Christian will have an everlasting feeling of love and loyalty to Jesus Christ!

Furthermore, true Christians will experience inward *joy* and *peace*, which are priceless. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). All Christians will grow in the spirit of *kindness, longsuffering, goodness, and gentleness* that the above passage describes.

Another vital fruit is *faith*—the spiritual strength to *trust in God* and demonstrate commitment to that trust in every area of life. As King David was inspired to state, “But let all those rejoice who put their **trust** in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield” (Psalm 5:11–12).

The final fruit of the Spirit is *self-control*—the spiritual strength to master one’s sins and lusts in order to *obey God*. Again, if you truly *surrender* your heart, mind, and will to God, accept Jesus Christ and are baptized *in His name*, you are promised the **power** of the Holy Spirit to give you this kind of strength and self-control.

Paul wrote to Timothy, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Through God's Spirit, He gives us the *power* to obey His commandments. And our obedience *shows* that we have that Spirit. As John wrote, "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 John 3:24).

John also states, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a **liar**, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:3–6). The *Living Bible* paraphrases these last two sentences: "**That is the way to know whether or not you are a Christian. Anyone who says he is a Christian should live as Christ did.**" And as we know, Christ **kept** His Father's commandments—including the *fourth commandment*—setting us an **example** (John 15:10).

But *we* should not expect "perfection" in *our* lives all at once! We have already learned that we are to **grow** in grace and in knowledge. The true Christian life is one of overcoming and growing to become more like Jesus Christ—even in our innermost thoughts and desires.

But for the true Christian, the magnificent future makes all the trials, tests, and "growing pains" *more than worth it* (cf. Romans 8:18).

Keep Your Eyes on the Goal

If God has called *you* to true understanding and you grasp what you have been reading in this booklet, you have undoubtedly been called to become a *full son or daughter of God* (2 Corinthians 6:18). The meaning and ultimate purpose of your calling is **awesome**.

As you daily yield your thoughts, your time, your energy, and your very *life* to letting Jesus Christ live His life in you, you will be building more and more of the very character of God. Month by month and year by year, you will be learning to think, act, and live *like Christ Himself*.

Finally, at Jesus Christ's return to this earth as King of kings, you will be either resurrected or changed from flesh into spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). As a Spirit-born child of God, you will then join with Jesus Christ in **ruling** the nations of this earth (Revelation 2:26) and in bringing the entire world genuine *peace* and *joy* at last!

What Is a True Christian?

In your own right, you will then be *glorified* as a ruling member of the Kingdom or Government of God. The Apostle John writes, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

In the resurrection, the true saints will be fully *like* Christ. They will be offered the awesome opportunity and responsibility to help rule the cities and nations of this earth. The Apostle John was inspired to reveal to us the “prayer of the saints” in Revelation 5:9–10: “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and **have made us kings and priests** to our God; and we shall **reign on the earth.**’” The saints will then have glorified spirit bodies that will enable them to do the job, for they will *never* become tired, *never* become sick, and **never die!**

Composed of spirit, filled with drive, energy, and **joy**, the resurrected saints will live forever in the very Family of God, because they will have surrendered to let God build within them the very *wisdom* and *character* of Christ in order to assist Him in **ruling** this entire world and even judging angels!

Thus, John continues, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). Truly, there is a transcendent **reason** to become a *genuine* Christian!

If you would like to know more about the *glory* and *power* ahead for true Christians, then call or write today for our truly exciting booklet *What Is the Meaning of Life?* It is offered to you *free* for the asking—just phone us, or write to us at one of the addresses listed in the back of this booklet. If you have access to the Internet, you can view or download all this material and more from our website. Just go to www.TomorrowsWorld.org and you will find dozens of booklets and articles, along with audio and videos, to help you learn more about these vital topics.

And if you wish to talk to someone personally about baptism, meet with others who believe the truth, or inquire about related matters, please write or call us and request a visit, and also request our very informative booklet *Christian Baptism: Its Real Meaning*.

All of us who understand God’s truth have every good reason to want to *yield* to the God who made us, *accept* His Son as our Savior

and Lord, *surrender* our lives to live by every word of God, *keep* His commandments, allow Him to *build* within us His character, and so *prepare* for the real *tomorrow's world*—the soon-coming Kingdom of our God to be set up on this earth.

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