



The Voice of Truth

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What is a Christian? By Jimmy Pettigrew

Those who live for the Lord are called by different terms in the scriptures: brethren, saints, disciples, children of God, etc. Perhaps no term stands out more than the name **“Christian”**. We find this term in the scriptures three times: **Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16**). This term denotes one who is “of Christ” or “belongs to Christ”.

It is unfortunately true that the term “Christian” means different things to different people. A Christian is not necessarily a good person, although that is the concept that many people have. A religious person is not necessarily a Christian. Many gross and ungodly acts have been done in the name of religion, but these were not Christian acts. Furthermore, everyone who declares himself to be a Christian is not necessarily one. Therefore, **“What is a Christian?”**

A Christian is a believer in Christ (**John 8:24**). Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (**John 11:25-26**). A Christian is one that believes Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Again John wrote, “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (**John 20:30-31**). But it includes more than faith alone on man’s part (**James 2:24**).

A Christian is one that repents of his sins (**Acts 3:19**). Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin with a view to amend one’s life. Jesus said, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (**Luke 13:3**). Yet it includes more.

A Christian is one that confesses Christ (**Romans 10:10**). Jesus said, “Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven” (**Matthew 10:32**). But there is more.

A Christian is one who has been baptized into Christ (**Galatians 3:27**). One cannot become a Christian without having sins forgiven, by baptism (**Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16**). Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (**John 3:5**). But there is more.

A Christian is one whose life harmonizes with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (**John 8:12**). John writes, “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son” (**John 9**). Now we are getting the idea that there is more to being a Christian than being a good person. A Christian is one who is a disciple (learner) of Christ (**Acts 11:26**); he is an obedient child (**1 Peter 1:13-16**). He is holy (**1 Peter 1:16**), whose life is a sermon (**1 Peter 2:11**). A Christian is one who resists the devil (**1 Peter 5:8-9**) and holds fast that which is good and abstains from every form of evil (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**); he hates

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sin (**Psalm 1:1**). He is one who fears God (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**), he is upright (**Psalm 106:3**).

What is a Christian? He lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (**Matthew 4:4**).

Leading By Example

By Jeff S. Smith, www.electronicgospel.com

Jesus Christ set the standard for authority and leadership in becoming the Chief Shepherd of his flock – what we usually call the church.

The Holy Spirit says that he “loved the church and gave himself up for her,” even though he was her head and master (see **Ephesians 5:25, 1:22**). Authority, especially in the home and the church of Christ, is not a matter of selfish ambition, self-promotion or self-service, but one of selflessness and service to others. So many generations of men abused their scriptural headship in the home so that they could domineer their wives and intimidate their children, but a closer reading of the text reveals a much more emotional attachment. Headship was not to be about power, but about promoting the spiritual and physical welfare of those in one’s charge. Husbands were admonished to love and cherish their wives, to nurture and admonish their children, being careful not to alienate their affections or provoke them to wrath (see **Ephesians 5:22-6:4**).

The same principle holds true as it concerns the oversight of local congregations. Men are appointed as pastors of the flock according to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit so that they might shepherd the congregation, “not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (**First Peter 5:3**).

Hypocrisy is the white noise that drowns out the pious sounds of an insincere teacher.

Clinton Hamilton comments upon the verse: “Elders in the discharge of their duties in relation to the brethren are not to be autocratic or ‘bossy.’ There could well be the tendency of elders to want to dominate or control with ‘an iron hand’” (*Truth Commentaries: First Peter*, 294).

In his seminal work on the office, *Scriptural Elders and Deacons*, H.E. Phillips wrote, “A shepherd sets the example for the sheep to follow. He goes before them and leads rather than drives” (193). He references the words of Jesus in **John 10:4**: “When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” Phillips continues, “The elders are not to be ‘lords’ in their rule, as a dictator or pope” and later writes, “The most effective way of leading people is to be an example to them. That was the course that Christ and his apostles took. Example has a powerful drawing element” (194).

Surely the same is true in the home, especially when parents are heard to command one of their children while personally exhibiting the opposite behavior. A parent who counsels against smoking, drinking, gossiping, laziness and anything else will find his teaching severely muted if he should practice those very things himself. Children, though in subjection, are too smart to be fooled for very long by parents who do not practice what they preach. Hypocrisy is the white noise that drowns out the pious sounds of an insincere teacher.

Fathers who rule the roost with an iron fist sometimes are rewarded with compliance, but later discover that it is only temporary and far from genuine. When their charges gain enough maturity or independence to rebel, their rebellion is thorough and dramatic. That is why the New Testament solemnly warns “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” When discipline is arbitrary, self-serving or vindictive, a child is discouraged by an apparent lack of paternal love and reason.

Lording it over the flock at home is no more effective than lording oneself over a local church. The apostle John rebuked one Diotrefes who loved to have preeminence among the church, and so refused the authority of the apostles with malicious words and a refusal to accept anyone who might prove to be a rival for power (see **Third John 9-11**).

The qualities enumerated twice by Paul in his discussion of the eldership are not only minimum requirements for the job, but they are prominent areas in which officeholders must already be examples to others. As preacher, Timothy had a leadership role in the church at Ephesus, especially before bishops were ordained. Paul told him to “set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (**First Timothy 4:12**). **Titus**, also charged with appointing elders on Crete, was reminded to “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned” (**2:7-8**).

Christians occasionally find themselves in other positions of authority as well – in the military, on the job, in school clubs or organizations like the football team and band. The principles of leadership embodied in **First Peter 5** and **John 10** are equally useful outside the home and church as well. Leadership that is dictatorial or appears to exist for the sole purpose of consolidating power will only produce shallow and temporary loyalty. Even slave masters were told to “stop your threatening” (**Ephesians 6:9**) and to treat those in subjection “justly and fairly” (**Colossians 4:1**). If such was true of first century slaves and masters, how much more should it be true of twenty-first century heads and subjects in whatever their setting?

Fathers, elders, governors and supervisors must all seek to exercise their authority as good stewards of that blessing from God (see **Romans 13:1**). God intends for leaders to promote the well-being of the led, not their own ambition, pride or sensation of power. It is very wise to consult the led rather than to rely on the false notion that perfect maturity and insight rest only in the few. Just as King Rehoboam could have averted division and disaster in Israel by heeding the sage advice of his counselors, so today’s leaders are well-served by hearing out the thoughts, ideas and concerns of the people they lead – their children, the congregation, the team.

Leadership succeeds when it engenders trust, cooperative participation and loyalty. As Phillips suggested, people are more likely to follow if they feel they are being led rather than driven.

Taming the Tongue By Chuck Bartlett

Peter wrote, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (**1 Peter 3:10**).

The tongue is one of the hardest members of the body to tame. **James** says, "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (**3:8**). This makes it clear as to the trouble the tongue can cause. The tongue can be, and often is, used for destruction; yet, it can also be used for edification. Saints sing to admonish each other (**Colossians 3:16**), give words to console (**Galatians 6:2**), exhibit words of joy to share in the rejoicing of others (**Romans 12:15**), etc.

There is no doubt that the tongue can hurt and scare people. It is used for lying, slander, gossip, swearing, sarcasm, jesting, self-adoration, complaining, criticizing, arguing, putting down, bitterness, accusing, abusing, and assuming, etc. It is easy to say words that fall into one of the above categories. Every effort must be used to control our speech. Paul said, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of

edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (**Ephesians 4:29**).

So often the lesson of the tongue centers on the speaker. Yet, consider the hearer. Even if we are not the one doing the talking, we may be all ears and guilty of encouraging the speaker to go on, thus we become partakers of his evil deeds (**2 John 11**).

Corrupt speech can come from lack of thought before one talks, listening to corrupt speech, speaking too soon, evil desires, and a lack of self-control. Magazines thrive on the evils of half-truths and lies. Moviemakers incorporate foul speech to satisfy the "audience." Many songwriters use lyrics that are unbecoming for any Christian to utter.

The question is, are we generating a proper example of speech or do we fit right in with the world? Let us conclude this article with some straightforward words taken from James the third chapter. "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (**James 3:5-6**). *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com*

Human Philosophy

Author unknown

The members of a congregation were gathered together to discuss whether a certain preacher should be asked to come and work with them. "I like his preaching," said one member, "he preaches straight from the word of God." "That may be true," noted another member, "but he seems awfully negative in his preaching. You can't just come right out and tell people they're sinners and expect them to respond favorably. We need someone who will present the gospel in a positive and encouraging light, not simply condemn people." A third member spoke up. "I agree—we don't need a preacher who comes across as judgmental or negative. I suggest that we consider some other preachers." After further discussion, it was decided that one of the members would draft a letter to Simon Peter and tell him that he just wasn't the right man for their congregation.

NOTE: Now read **Acts 2:36-41; Acts 3:14-4:4; Acts 5:30; Acts 8:18-24; 1st and 2nd Peter!** *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com*

Think About it!

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord: he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. "By their fruits ye shall know them," (**Matthew 7:20**).

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - **Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3**

Believe - **Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24**

Repent - **Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30**

Confess the Lord - **Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21**

Be Baptized - **Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - **Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**