

What Does a Christian Look Like?

Pastor Tim Dodson at
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In the very earliest days of the faith in the book of Acts, the believers were first called 'christian.' (Acts 11:26) It seems however that in those days the designation was meant to be far from flattering, even though unbeknownst to those doing the taunting it was indeed something to aspire to. For the title meant "little Christ."

Today the name "christian" is so common, over-used, and 'claimed' that it has lost nearly all of its impact and meaning. The mormons, the catholics and the JW's claim they are christian. In fact, 75 to 80 percent of all Americans claim to Christian, although new stats that take a real hard look using some basic criteria, give a percentage of more like 8%, not 80%. That's a vast chasm between those two numbers! What then IS the criteria? What truly and biblically determines the basis of just what a Christian really is?

Firstly, I think we would all agree...*and the bible is emphatic on this one*, that in order to really BE a Christian, we must *become* a Christian, as no one is 'born' a Christian. I have heard people say "I have always been a Christian." No, *you haven't*. And if that is your thinking you best have a real 'sit down' conversation with yourself! Because the bible says that all men are born sinners and born "lost." You may not remember exactly when, (I don't) but there must be a definable moment in time that a person is "reborn." A lot of folks and even a lot of churches (and I use the term loosely) do not like that term, and yet their problem is with the very Word of God not with contrary believing Christians and churches! For Jesus Himself said in John 3:3 "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." He made sure we 'got it' too, in that he repeated Himself in verse 7... "So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'"

So if you have not concretely been 'born again' then you have a problem.

Scripture is also clear in the fact that we are saved by God's gift, not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 says "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." Good behavior cannot earn us salvation. Righteous work cannot save us. So does that stuff not even matter? Once again, what does a Christian therefore look like?

Well certainly however, some truth must be given to the idea that "*If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck...it's a duck.*" However, I know that I can dress up like a duck, walk around then like a duck walks and all the while make quacking noises, but I assure you...*and I think you will agree*, that such does not make me a duck! People can feign allegiance for a time, but inevitable cracks start to appear in the foundation...usually precipitating a wholesale collapse in the near future.

According to scripture...*and that's where the 'buck stops' unless we are just going to make this all up as we go along*, we, as Christians, are called to "live for Christ, not for ourselves." ([2 Corinthians 5:15](#)). So right out of the gate, such a concept "culls the herd" dramatically.

It's here that I usually hear the squeals of denial and rejection: "*But the Bible says I just have to believe and I'm good to go!*" John 3:16 says "believe *in* Him..." and Acts 16:31 says "believe *on* Him..." but nowhere does it say just believe *of* Him. Just because we have a belief *of* Christ does not make you a Christian! James 2:19 says "*You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.*"

The proper vernacular is "belief *in* Christ." And that little word changes everything. For if I believe *IN* you, such automatically encompasses facets of trust and confidence in your words, actions, council and directions, as well as invites a certain 'allegiance.' To believe *in* Christ, quite naturally leads us to live *for* Christ. To live "for" Christ...*and Paul goes on to make it clear...and not "for ourselves,"* means He is allowed the "Lord" position of our lives. He's the boss, the dreamer, the artist, the author, the supervisor, the director, the 'final word' of our lives and the living of it out. All of this is not merely to be obedient...to fulfill our "marching orders," but because we more than trust, we desire and seek after this personal involvement, oversight and plan!

One of the last things that Jesus told his disciples to do was to teach people "to obey everything I have commanded you" ([Matthew 28:20](#)). Jesus gave commands, and as his disciples, we also teach commands and obedience, and are expected *within our changed reborn persona*, to seek in obedient living to "be holy as He is holy." (1 Peter 1:16) So we cannot rule out of hand the idea that a duck does indeed look like, walks like, and sounds like a duck. And a "little Christ Christian" *looks* like, *walks* like, and *sounds* a lot like Christ. But not because of some outward persona, change of clothes, or google sight they read. But because they are now possessed by Christ.

Such a review is not ever meant to be a tool for judgment and condemnation, but undoubtedly are given to us as a personal spiritual litmus test, and more, a barometer of growth, maturity, and the presence of "fruit" in our new lives. Often we can be guilty of getting lost in the volumes of directions, incidentals and 'dress codes' and attempt to methodically work our way down the seemingly endless list, instead of simply embracing salvation and Christ presence in which would naturally bring all those things to us through the singular desire to be like Jesus.

A few years back there was the modern culture craz that popularized the phrase "what would Jesus do." Nice sentiment, but few real takers. Because the real idea of basing our living on Jesus as a model is simply unrealistic to most folks. Sounds nice, but seriously? The discrepancy in adherents is about...oh, 72% of the population. Those that *say* they are of the 80% Christians and the 8% that really are. Because the fact is, a true Christian is indeed a "little Christ," albeit an imperfect one. Not living in an attempt to merely mimic the attributes of a living human embodied deity, but rather manifesting those natural attributes, desires, priorities, and actions, of who and what we are now in this new 'reborn' redeemed state. A farmer farms, a carpenter builds, a delivery guy drives, a salesman sells, a Christian...well, is *like Christ*. It's not a matter of trying to be like Christ so we can then claim the moniker "christian." No, it is being reborn and surrendering the control of one's life to Him...to live for Him...and we *become like Him naturally*.

Such is in no way an allusion that one must not be participatory. This is not a "sit back on the couch and let it happen" kind of thing. This is not an idea in which I become a welder by practicing welding. It is rather I am granted the designation of welder...having maybe never even picked up a welder in my life, and then having a great desire to weld things and an instructor who stands right beside me all day giving instruction!

In the case of faith, no one is ever changed from the outside in. I cannot "teach you" how to be a Christian. Only God makes Christians..again, by His grace and mercy as a free gift. We are only changed from the inside out. New passions change my living. New priorities change my giving of time, finances, and service. New love changes my decisions. New calling changes my interests and involvements. Often we can be guilty of trying to figure out how to successfully fly off of a building without falling like a rock under the influence of gravity, instead of allowing God to transform us through metamorphosis...like a caterpillar to a butterfly and simply flying away because we can now fly quite naturally.

My job is to teach you about Jesus, his attributes and instructions, and pray that your rebirth is genuine and you can actually grasp what I teach and can live it all out through the manifest of this new life that Christ has brought us. But this thing we do in church *can* never and frankly *will* never be some sort of classroom where I can teach you spiritual theorems to apply to difficult life equations.

What does a Christian look like? Like Jesus. Not robes and sandals, but peace and power. Not long hair and deep comments, but holiness and faithfulness. I become holy because holy is living inside me. I become faithful because faithful is dwelling within. We all tend to try to look like a Christian by buying the uniform and taking a tech class, instead of falling in love and metamorphosing through possession and proximity. Let me give you an example:

Over the nearly 35 years of marriage to Sharon, we have become alot like each other. We both have developed a love for travel, leather bags, wood construction and crazy architecture, motorcycles, the smell of spring, Indian food, camping, etc etc...the list goes on and on. Now either we were really really lucky to have bumped into each other, or we grew to love the same things because we grew in love for each other.

What's my part? To love Him, seek every day after Him, to talk to Him, to learn of Him (not just as a model if instruction, but to cause us to worship Him and draw near to Him in wonder.) As I grow in love with Him, I will invariably become like Him. I will naturally immolate His ways, and manifest His character. I will look like Him, a "little Christ."