

God's Definition of a "Christian" (2)

Acts 11:26

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Introduction:

- I. We are seeking to find God's definition of a Christian according to the scriptures.
 1. It is essential that we see who God consider to be a Christian. As we discussed in the first lesson, this word is so misunderstood and abused in our time that even those true Christians sometimes fail to properly understand the word.
 2. Already we have seen that a true Christian is one who:
 - a. Hears the Gospel, believes it, and turns to God in immersion (11:19-20).
 - b. Feels a great debt to mankind (11:20).
 - c. Speaks the Word to those he comes in contact with (11:19).
 - d. Is not concerned about who gets credit for a job well done (11:19-20).
 - e. Never quits (11:19).
 - f. Is IN the Lord's Church (11:26,24)

- II. Every point we considered last lesson is essential for one to be a true Christian, but I would like to give further consideration to the last point – One must be **IN the LORD'S CHURCH** to be a Christian!

1. The Lord's church is not a denomination. God's Word condemns denominationalism as a source of division and the instrument of Satan (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Galatians 5:19-20).

The Lord's Church is Non-Denominational!

Modern denominations are characterized by human names, creeds, headquarters, and worship. In contrast, the church is to wear the divine name of Christ (Acts 4:12); believe in Christ and His Book, the New Testament, as sufficient creed; maintain citizenship in truth (Jn 4:24). The first century church – continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42). On the first day of the week, Christians made financial contributions (I Corinthians 16:2) and observed the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) to commemorate Christ's death in anticipation of His coming again (I Corinthians 11:23-29). Paul speaks of "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). Sincere attention must be paid to praising God in song. We learn from the parable of the Sower that the seed is God's Word (Lk 8:11). One who accepts this Word and allows it to mold his thoughts and action can be undenominational in

thought and acts. He will wear a divine name, believe in a divine creed, recognize his heavenly citizenship, and worship in spirit and in truth (From: *The Church of Christ*, by Norman Hogan, p. 4).

2. The Lord's Church is visible and can be recognized by distinguishing traits.
3. What was true in Antioch is equally true today – only those in the Lord's Church are recognized as true Christians!
4. To some this may appear harsh and arbitrary, but it is the simple Truth taught by God.
5. Too often a "Christian" is viewed as one who is "sincere," "devout," and "God-fearing," but such a person may not be saved and thus not a "Christian"! (Acts 10:2; 11:14)
6. We need to realize that no other religious body, belief, or organization can save a person and make him a "Christian" – only the blood-bought institution (church) can do this!
7. Thus, if we are to be Christians, it is essential for us to be members of the Lord's Church!

IV. Notice further the following characteristics of a Christian as God defines him for us in our text.

Body:

- I. A "Christian" is one who wants (desires) to share the Gospel with others (Acts 11:20).
 - A. Within the context there is a contrast of attitudes presented.
 1. Verse 19 – Spoke only to the Jews
 2. Verse 20 – Spoke to both Jews and Gentiles
 3. There was hesitancy on the part of some, and willingness on the part of others.
 - B. One who wants to teach others about Christ and His Church is showing a definite characteristic of Christianity!
 1. As servants of God we are obligated to do His work on earth.
 2. One who is not interested in sharing the Gospel with others cannot be a proper Christian as defined by God!
 3. A multitude of verses could illustrate, but notice one – Ezekiel 3:16-19.
- II. A "Christian" is one with a supreme purpose in life (Acts 11:23).
 - A. If I were to ask you today what your purpose in life's existence is, what

would you say? A part of the message of Barnabas was that they should "cleave to the purpose of their heart in the Lord."

1. Barnabas realized that a Christian should understand that Jesus Christ and His work is the supreme purpose in our life's existence (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
2. A person cannot be a Christian without this supreme purpose.

B. There are millions today who wander aimlessly through life without any purpose at all.

1. The Christian has power in his supreme purpose – one who feels purpose will do everything to see that purpose fulfilled (Philippians 1:9-11).
2. The Christian's purpose is summed up:
 - a. John 4:34 – To accomplish God's work.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 2:2; Colossians 1:18b – To give Christ first place.
3. To the true Christian, Jesus Christ is the radiating center of life. Can you say this today?
4. Let us be as those in Acts 11, and let not worries and concerns take the place of Jesus Christ!

III. A "Christian" is one in whom the grace of God can be seen (Acts 11:23).

A. "Grace" – Used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. Here it is used to designate the results of God's grace (Gal 5:22-26).

1. Barnabas was able to see the results of salvation in these people (2 Corinthians 8:1).
2. Are people able to see God's grace in your life? (Galatians 5:22-26)

B. It appears that a proper Christian is one who conducts himself in a proper manner. Let us equal this challenge in our lives as well!

IV. A "Christian" is one who assembles (Acts 11:26).

A. After these were "added" (v. 24), they assembled at every opportunity.

B. A proper Christian will not willingly absent (forsake) the assembly, whether as worship or Bible study.

1. A "Christian" is one whose supreme purpose in life is to do the will of God – will he/she be a proper Christian if he/she allows other activities to interfere with the worship of God? (Acts 11:23 – "cleave" to the Lord).
2. I am often at a loss to explain the absence of one who willingly misses

the services.

- a. One hurts the church, his family and himself. He fails to serve the eldership watching over him.
- b. Only those who are physically or mentally unable to attend will be excused by God (Hebrews 10:25-26).

C. One who will not assemble on a regular basis at every opportunity, cannot be a proper Christian!

V. There are three more characteristics which time will not permit discussion, but quickly notice and consider their value:

A. A "Christian" is one who cleaves to the Lord (Acts 11:23) "cleave" to continue with, indicating persistent loyalty. A Christian must be loyal to Christ first, over family, friends, and jobs.

B. A "Christian" is one who is a good person (Acts 11:24) – Again an outward display of ourselves to others that God may receive glory!

C. A "Christian" is one who accepts responsibility (Acts 11:29) – When we are immersed we are given responsibilities, whether we like it or not!

Conclusion:

I. Altogether we have noticed 13 characteristics of a true Christian. Only those who possess these characteristics can be properly called a Christian according to God's definition!

1. Heard the Gospel, believed it, and turned to God (21).
2. Indebted to others (19-20).
3. Desires to share the Word with others (20).
4. Speaks the Word (19).
5. Isn't concerned with who gets the credit (19-20).
6. Does not quit (19).
7. Has a supreme purpose in life (23).
8. Cleaves to the Lord (23).
9. The grace of God can be seen in them (23).
10. A good person (24).
11. One who assembles (26).
12. One who accepts responsibility (29).
13. One who is IN the LORD'S CHURCH (26, 24).

II. Friend, if you consider yourself a Christian, seriously evaluate yourself in

light of our lesson – Are you a "Christian" in God's opinion?