

How Do You Know if You're a True Christian?

Do you ever wonder if you are a Christian? Many people have asked that question.

There are some pat answers such as “pray the sinner’s prayer” or “accept Jesus into your heart” or “believe and be saved.” If you believe you have done these things, and yet are deeply troubled over the assurance of your salvation, these answers may seem to fall short.

The reality is that no man can assure another of salvation, for assurance of salvation is God’s work and not the work of man. “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*” (Romans 8:16-17). So the one whose soul is in turmoil should determine to go to God and seek both salvation and assurance from Him and not man.

God’s Word gives us tests to take so that we may know if we are in Christ or not. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to reflect upon their lives to see if they are Christians: “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). So because we are exhorted to test ourselves to see if we are in Christ, the Word of God provides the tests we are to take.

The first test is based upon relationship. Do we have a relationship with Jesus Christ?

We may not know and understand all the deep theological truths of Scripture, and we may not understand all the workings of God in providence, but we do know whom we have believed. All

true Christians have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

We know Him because we live in a relationship with Him where He communicates to us, we hear His Word and follow Him, and we communicate with Him in prayer. It is a love relationship that we have, for when He speaks to us our hearts burn within us and we experience love for God.

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

Some people say, “I pray all the time, I tell God all about my day, and I am always talking to God” but they do not speak of how God has changed their lives by the power of His Word. They do not speak of relationship with Christ or what they are learning from Him.

This evidences a heart that does not know God in relationship, for relationship is not one-sided but rather it is interactive, talking and listening, hearing and communicating. Relationship with Christ is based on His forgiveness extended to repenting sinners:

“For this is the covenant that I will make the House of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more”(Hebrews 8:10-12, NASB).

Sin separates us from God, and we can only have a relationship with Christ when we come to God as a sinner in need of His salvation, confessing our sins and turning from them to Jesus Christ.

People can know a lot about God and yet not know God. Knowing

God comes from repentance of sin and receiving forgiveness and grace. It is walking with God daily in relationship, based upon His redemption.

Micah 6:8 is a well known passage of Scripture that details God's requirements in our lives:

"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God"

This "walking humbly with your God" speaks of relationship, of friendship, of interaction and fellowship.

Many people know Micah 6:8, but it's important to understand that we are only able to do justice, love kindness, and walk with God in daily relationship if we have been redeemed from habitual sin and made new creations in Christ. That is why Micah 6:8 follows Micah 6:4: "Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt And ransomed you from the house of slavery, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam."

Micah 6:4 provides the foundation for Micah 6:8. It is only those who have been "brought up" and "ransomed from the house of slavery" that can "walk humbly" with God. A relationship with Jesus Christ is built upon His work of redeeming love where He paid the price for our sin on the cross and purchased us out of the slave market of sin. If we are living in habitual sin we are not walking humbly with God.

So having a relationship with Christ is the first test to determine whether we are a Christian or not.

Next, the books of First and Second John provide additional tests to take to help us determine whether we are in Christ or not. There are four specific tests mentioned. They are:

- Doctrine
- Deeds

- Devotion
- Disciples

Let's look at the Scriptures that will help to explain these four tests.

The first test in First John is doctrine. What do we believe about the Person of Jesus Christ?

"Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also." (1 John 2:23)

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1 John 4:1-3 NASB)

Christians are those who believe that Jesus Christ is fully God Who came in the flesh to redeem sinful man and give him eternal life. Jesus Christ is the Almighty God, the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, the Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man and to deny either His Godhead or His perfect Manhood is to evidence that we are not Christians. Doctrine is important when examining whether or not we are truly believers.

We must see Jesus as bearing our sin in His own body on the tree, as becoming a curse for us in order to remove our curse of sin, and as paying the full penalty for our sins, which is death, that we might have eternal life.

We must believe in our hearts that this Jesus Who died for our sins is Lord of all, and begin to confess Him with our mouths to others. For it is with our hearts that we believe and are counted as righteous and with our mouths we confess Him and

are saved.

As we have come to the cross for salvation we can receive freely of the grace of God, knowing that the justice of God is fully satisfied in the death of Jesus on our behalf, and that we can be satisfied in His forgiveness of our sins.

We now have new life in Christ. We become new creations in Him where the old is gone and the new is come. So it is important to examine our lives continually to see if the old really is gone.

Grace triumphs over sin and makes us more than conquerors in Him so there should be a progressive overcoming of sin and a progressing on toward perfection. Stumbles are inevitable, but because grace is stronger than sin those stumbles become shorter lived and less frequent.

Because grace turns our weaknesses into strengths we can begin to discover that not only are we experiencing victory where once we lived in defeat, but we also find that temptation's power over us is broken and sin's hold on us is released.

How do we know if we are Christians or not? We examine our lives in the light of God's Word and see if the fruit from our life-tree indicates a righteous tree or a sinful tree.

"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29).

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