

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

In 2015, about 31% of the world would identify themselves as Christians, which stands at 2.3 billion people (Pew Research Center). This makes up the percentage of people in the entire world that hold to any type of religion, lifestyle, or belief system. However, what does that actually mean? Does that mean all 2.3 billion people who claim to be Christians, ARE Christians? We know from Matthew 7:23 that this is not the case. In response to that, we sometimes need to take a look at a simple question we might all think we know the answer to: what is a Christian?

ACTS 11:19-26 - THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

The Church in Antioch was the first place that we know of where the followers of Christ were actually called Christians (vs. 26). How was it that they gained this title? Well, if we look at today's passage, we can get a glimpse of what it was they the followers of Christ were doing in order to be identified as Christians. A great many people were being saved in Antioch (vs. 21), so Barnabas was sent to see exactly what was going on there. While Barnabas was there, he told his fellow followers of Christ to remain faithful to their beliefs (vs.23), showed his own faith and trust in the Holy Spirit (vs. 24), and continued to teach the people in Antioch more about Jesus (vs. 26). So, what exactly were Barnabas and the other Christians doing? They preached the gospel message, bringing many people to repentance and faith. They encouraged each other in love. Once in the faith, they gathered together and continued to grow in wisdom and knowledge of their Lord. It was these things that showed their faith to the gentiles around them. There was a true change in the people who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

JESUS AS LORD

Many people claim faith in Jesus today, but what does that actually mean? Jesus is not a way for people to just gain access to heaven. He is not "hell insurance." Some people claim Jesus to be their savior, yet do nothing about it. They continue to live in their sin, showing no change of heart in their conversion. This is what Dietrich Bonhoffer would call "cheap grace". This cheap grace is a means to live out our human desires in sin, while still claiming the name of Jesus. Living this way cheapens Jesus's sacrifice for us as a mentality of, "my sin is paid for anyways." However, on the other hand, there is costly grace. Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, and in response, we give Him our everything. We spend the rest of our days as living sacrifices in order to humble ourselves to our Lord (Romans 12:1). That is what Jesus needs to be. Our Lord. In the center of our very being, getting all the glory that He rightfully deserves. Everything we do must be for the Glory of God, and for the glory of God alone (1 Corinthians 10:31). If Jesus is not the sole Lord of your life, then you ultimately are not a Christian. If this is true for you, ask for prayer from trusted friends and family. Allow your pride to be broken down and ask for guidance from those who know Jesus as Lord. However, for those who are the true sons and daughters of the One most High, may we continue to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Allow the Holy Spirit to work through you and continue to dive deep into God's Word, seeking truth in every aspect of your life.

REFLECTION

1. Read Romans 12:1 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Does this reflect your life? In what ways can you allow the Lord to show you where He wants to do a work in you?
2. Pray for those around you. Both Christians and non-Christians alike. Ask the Lord to open their hearts to truth, and show them who He is in a deep way.