

# What Does It Mean To Be A Christian ?

**Christians are people united with other people by Jesus Christ being their Saviour.**

**Galatians 3:26-28** [Living Bible] *“For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we have been baptised into union with Christ and enveloped [clothed] by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same, we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ.”*

Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, in God’s Eyes all the various distinctions that cause divisions are evaporated, there is no place for discrimination, racism or even gender differences.

**We are all of equal value to God.**

**Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing why.**

Most people exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God’s purpose for their lives.

The most basic questions a person can ask is *“what is the meaning of my life?”* or *“How can I live a fulfilled life?”*

**Everyone wants a happy life.**

People try many ways to obtain that happiness.

Some look for happiness by acquiring possessions.

Some look for happiness by experiencing pleasure.

Some look for happiness by gaining prestige and power.

**John 10:10** [Amplified] *“...I [Jesus Christ] came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance, to the full, till it overflows.”*

**God wants us to have a happy and fulfilled life.**

**But real happiness only comes from understanding our reason for existing, why we have life!**

**Why are we here ?**

Satan is real and God has allowed him to deceive and blind the whole world to knowing the reason for our existence.

**Revelation 12:9** [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

**2 Corinthians 4:4** [NIV] *“The god of this age has **blinded the minds of unbelievers**, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

Note that Paul mentions the words “*image of God*” referring specifically to Jesus Christ in this case, but such words have also been applied to God’s desire for human beings.

**Genesis 1:26** [NIV] “*Then God said, “Let us make man **in our image, in our likeness**, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*”

**Every human being bears the “*image*” of God, that is a being with intellect and the ability to make decisions.**

But there is a second part to God’s purpose and that is “*His likeness*”.

**Genesis 1:27** [NIV] “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*”

Note at the beginning humans were only made in the “*image*” **not** “*both image and likeness*”.

The Hebrew word translated “*image*” is used to describe “*a shadow resemblance*”, something that is **not the real thing** but a temporary shape of the final reality.

The Hebrew word translated “*likeness*” is used to describe “*model*”, “*son*” or “*manner*”, that is **character**.

**How is such an additional part of the completed “*model of God*” to be brought about?**

When we discover the answer to this question we will then know the reason for our existence.

### **1. Pause for Reflection**

What one thing would bring unity to all humans whatever their race or culture?

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Why is it that most people do not know why they were born?

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Why have we all as humans been given a limited period of physical existence?

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The key to understanding this process of character building is found within the Old Covenant and magnified by Jesus Christ in His conditional terms for the New Covenant.

**Exodus 20:1-6** [NIV] *“And God spoke all these words: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. **You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them;** for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*”

The central purpose of this command is that we are to acknowledge the God of the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life, as the one and only God and to worship only Him.

**What is stated is “we exist to worship the one Creator God, the God of The Christian Bible.”**

## **God made us to love us!**

**Jeremiah 31:3** [NIV] *“The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “**I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.**”*”

**Ephesians 1:4-5** [Good News Bible] *“Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ, so that we would be Holy and without fault before Him. **Because of His Love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His sons, this was His pleasure and purpose.**”*

## **We were created to enjoy a personal relationship with God and to manage all of the rest of God’s Creation! This makes each of us very special!**

**Genesis 1:27-28** [Good News Bible] *“So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself ... He blessed them and said ... live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge...”*

**1 Timothy 6:17** [Good News Bible] *“... God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment.”*

God has made mankind stewards of all the rest of His creation on this earth and as a result of good management we will enjoy all He has created.

Jesus told His disciples.

**John 10:10** [Good News Bible] *“I have come in order that you might have life, life in all its fullness!”*

**Christ didn’t come to give us religion or rules and restrictions but to give us joy-filled lives with an inner peace of mind.**

This means we are **not** really living until we know Jesus, we are only existing!

Why?

**Because we were created to be loved by God and to love Him, an intimate relationship.**

We were created to know and worship God and be known by Him.

## 2. Pause for Reflection

What is the key knowledge that unlocks our understanding of why we have life?

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**When we know, worship and love God, and live in harmony with Him and fulfil the purpose of our calling, tremendous benefits are produced in our lives.**

### A clear conscience

**Romans 8:1** [NIV] *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,...”*

### Life and peace of mind

**Romans 8:6** [NIV] *“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;”*

### Help with our needs and weaknesses

**Romans 8:26** [NIV] *“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”*

### A goal and purpose in our lives

**Romans 8:28** [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

### Confidence

**Romans 8:31** [NIV] *“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

### Security

**Romans 8:39** [NIV] *“neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

### All the power and strength we could ever need

**Philippians 4:13** [NIV] *“I can do everything through him [Jesus Christ] who gives me strength.”*

### Fulfilment of all our needs, physical and spiritual

**Philippians 4:19** [NIV] *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*

**True freedom from lies and deception**

**John 8:32, 36** [NIV] *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ... “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

**This is the kind of lifestyle God wants to enjoy living.**

**3. Pause for Reflection**

What are the benefits of knowing why we have been given life and applying this understanding to our lives?

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**Why then aren't most people really happy as described in the above scriptures ?**

Man has a natural desire to do his own thing and to ignore God's principles for living.

How often do we hear or read statements like below:-

*“Look out for number one”*

*“Do your own thing”*

*“If it feels good to you, do it”*

*“It's my life”*

*“I'll do what pleases me”*

**We all want to be masters of our own lives, we don't want God to tell us how we should live our lives.**

The Bible calls this attitude SIN.

When we look at the word SIN we see that the central part of that word is the letter 'I'.

"I" want to do my own thing.

"I" want to be my own boss.

"I" want to live my life the way that pleases me.

We all have had this attitude.

**Isaiah 53:6** [NIV] *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him [Jesus Christ] the iniquity of us all."*

**1 John 1:8** [Living Bible] *"If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refusing to accept the truth."*

**The sad thing is that SIN breaks our close relationship with God.**

Sin causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside of His Will.

**It is amazing how most people are afraid of God.**

Have you noticed this?

If you are talking to a group of friends and you bring up the subject of God's viewpoint, they freeze up; in fact they get nervous.

**Why are people afraid of God?**

Because they want to be their own boss.

Such people may **not** understand that the relationship between them and God is broken but they feel it.

**Isaiah 59:1-2** [Living Bible] *"Listen now! The Lord is not too weak to save you. And He isn't getting deaf! He can hear you when you call! **But the trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God. Because of SIN He has turned His face away from you and will not listen anymore.**"*

**Romans 3:23** [Living Bible] *"Yes, **all** have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal."*

When it says "all" what does it mean ?

Does it mean people like:-

Billy Graham?	Yes!
The Pope?	Yes!
Mother Theresa?	Yes!
Everyone in the world?	Yes!

**There are no perfect people in the world.**

#### **4. Pause for Reflection**

Why are most people **not** really happy and contented with their lives?

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Why are most people afraid to even talk about God?

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**When this relationship which we were meant to have with God is broken by sins, which we may not even recognise as sin, there is an empty space in our lives that needs to be filled.**

**Recognising this empty space in their lives people will try many things to fill that space.**

Some try alcohol to fill that empty space.

Some try to fill it by taking drugs.

Some may try an illicit relationship to fill the need.

Others may try therapy, or a pursuit of pleasure.

All these will **not** fill that empty space permanently, only for a brief moment, for what they need, although they may not know it, is for God to fill that emptiness in their lives.

**When our relationship with God is not right, it causes us to have many other relationship problems in our lives.**

In our marriage, our family, our career, our workplace, and our finances, etc.

When people experience such problems, they often try many different ways to try to solve them before they turn to God.

**Proverbs 16:25 [NIV] “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”**

**Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know Him and building that relationship which will fill that void in our lives.**

We may make the following assumptions and feel them to be the way to reconciliation with our Creator.

- (a) “My mother was a Christian so I must be a Christian.”
- (b) “It doesn’t matter what you believe, just be sincere.”
- (c) “I’ll give up all my bad habits.”

(d) "I'll work real hard and earn it."

(e) "I'll be religious and go to church."

**There are many myths about what makes a person a Christian:-**

*"I'm an Englishman and England is a Christian country so I'm a Christian!"*

*"I joined the church therefore I'm a Christian!" If you join the Lions Club, does that make you a lion?*

*"I was born into a Christian family, so I'm a Christian!"* Well, if you were born in a car would it make you a spare tyre?

*"I got baptised, so I'm a Christian!"* You can be baptised in the sea so many times that all the fish call you by your first name and still not be a Christian!

**It takes more than knowing about God to become a Christian!**

**James 2:19** [NIV] *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder."*

**Satan and his demons know God but they are far from being Christians!**

**5. Pause for Reflection**

If you feel you have an empty space in your life how are you trying to fill it?

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If you believe you are already a Christian, on what do you base this belief?

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**What is the solution?**

**God is perfect [Holy] and only perfect people can have a relationship with Him.**

Well, we may say as none of us are perfect it is impossible for us to have this relationship with God.

Yes, you're right.

**So what is the way we can have the relationship God desires we have with Him?**

**John 14:6** [NIV] *"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

**We have to rely on someone else to bridge this gap between us and the perfect God, that someone is Jesus Christ who was, and is, perfect.**

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself.

If any other way could have worked Christ would **not** have had to come.

**The way back to God is a person!**

That person is Jesus Christ.

Jesus has already taken care of our sin problem.

**Romans 6:23** [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

God gave us the gift of Jesus Christ because He loves us and wants us to know Him.

**Romans 5:8** [NIV] *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, [separated from God by sin] Christ died for us.”*

**Being a Christian means putting our faith in Jesus Christ, and what God has done for us through Him.**

**1 Timothy 2:5** [Living Bible] *“... God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind.”*

God is now waiting on us to accept what He has already done for us to bring about the reconciliation and loving relationship He desires to have with us.

## **What does God want us to do ?**

**Admit that God has not been first place in our lives and ask Him to forgive us for our sins.**

**1 John 1:9** [NIV] *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

**Believe that Jesus Christ died to pay for our sins, that He rose from the dead and now is at God’s right hand in Heaven as our High Priest.**

**Romans 10:9** [NIV] *“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you **will be** saved.”*

Note it said “*will be*” **not** “*may be*” saved.

Many Christians go through their lives unsure that they will be saved, doubt their salvation over and over again.

**God does not lie; it doesn’t matter how we feel, for feelings come and go.**

One day I stood before a group of people and said two words “*I do*”.

It was when I married my wife Sylvia.

One person came up to me after the ceremony and said, “do you know what you have taken on in Sylvia?” and I had to admit I did not really know, **but I had made a commitment.**

As Sylvia and I drove off on our honeymoon, I confessed that “*I didn’t feel any different, I didn’t feel married.*”

Sylvia’s reply was “*It doesn’t matter what you feel, I can assure you dear you are well and truly married!*”

The rest of my married life I have been working out the implications of those two words, “*I do*”.

The same applies to our being saved Christians.

There are some days I don’t feel saved.

Feelings come and go, **what matters is God’s promise** “*I will save you, if you invite me into your life as first place in your life.*”

## **Accept God’s free gift of salvation, don’t try to earn it!**

**Ephesians 2:8-10** [NIV] “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*”

**If we could earn our way into the Kingdom of God, [the created family of God] imagine what it would be like with everyone proudly bragging about what they did to get there.**

## **We are not saved by works but for works.**

The good works God expects us to do in our lives come as a result of the love that is generated in our lives by our close relationship with Jesus Christ our God and Master.

**Our relationship with God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus Christ has already done for us.**

## **Invite Jesus Christ to come into our lives and be the Lord [Director] of our lives.**

**John 1:12-13** [Living Bible] “*... to all who received Him. He gave the right to become the children of God. All they needed to do was to trust Him to save them. All those who believe this are re-born, not a physical re-birth, resulting from human passion or plan, but from the will of God.*”

Have you seen those signs in a shop that say “*under new management*”?

Well, this is exactly what happens to us when we become a Christian.

A new Manager takes over the running of our life on a day-to-day basis.

**No longer am I making the decisions that direct the path my life should take, I ask and rely on Christ to show me.**

**Isaiah 6:8** [NIV] *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*”

When we read this verse in context we see this was the response from Isaiah after God had revealed His Holiness to him and Isaiah had repented and been cleansed by a live coal taken from the sacrificial altar before God’s Throne, symbolic of the future sacrifice to be made by Jesus Christ.

**God had become the director of Isaiah’s life and commissioned him to do a job, the fruits of which he would not see in his physical lifetime.**

**I am one of the fruits of Isaiah’s decision,** for his words are a key factor that have directed my life since accepting Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for my salvation.

*“Here am I, send me.”*

I encourage you to make it a prayer and practice for your life also.

**Revelation 3:20** [NIV] *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”*

In the famous artist’s impression of this statement, just after its first viewing, some remarked that the artist had made a mistake by not putting a handle on the door beside which Jesus Christ was waiting to pass through.

The artist’s reply was, *“No mistake has been made, for the only side this door can be opened is from the inside, our side.”*

**God will not force His way into our lives, His entry has to be at our invitation.**

## **6. Pause for Reflection**

How can we then become a Christian and be sure that we are one?

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What does God expect of all humans?

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