

## SESSION 1

# WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A CHRISTIAN?

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Does being a churchgoer make you a Christian? What about making sure that you keep the Ten Commandments? This session will take you through two of the fundamental principles of Christianity:

1. Salvation
2. Baptism

## True Salvation

When someone becomes a Christian, they are saying 'not I, but Christ in me'. Christ comes before all other things in your life, He is first! Whether it is your career, education or family, a true Christian understands that if we go to Christ and seek His plans then we will have the best life possible. The Bible describes this as dying to yourself but living for Christ.

*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*  
(Galatians 2:20, NLT)

Becoming a Christian means we understand that:

- we are sinners and that this sin has separated us from God
- we cannot save ourselves but need a saviour (Hebrews 11:6)
- Christ is sinless and His death on a cross paid the price for our sin
- true salvation brings eternal life (John 3:16)
- true salvation comes when we repent and surrender our lives to Christ

Repentance is when we turn away from our old lives and determine to live according to God's will and with His strength.

*'The time promised by God has come at last!' he announced. 'The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!'*  
(Mark 1:15, NLT)

Christians are called to live sacrificially, putting Christ before all else. In the Bible it is compared to the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross.

*We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.* (Romans 6:6-7, NLT)

We can look at this from two perspectives:

1. Historically – Jesus died on the cross around 2000 years ago. At His death He cried out, 'It is finished'. The price for our sin has been paid by His sacrifice.
2. Daily – We are called to live according to godly principles every day. This means we sacrifice our own desires and prefer Christ above everything else.

*Then he said to the crowd, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.'*  
(Luke 9:23, NLT)

## A Changed Life

When we become Christians, our lives change. We begin to actively trust God. In every area of life and every day, we identify with Him. We learn to totally depend on Christ and we become active members of a local church.

*For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. (Hebrews 3:14, NLT)*

*So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20b, NLT)*

*And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25, NLT)*

*Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. (Hebrews 13:17, NLT)*

## Baptism

The word 'baptise' is translated from the Greek word *baptiso*, which means to dip, overwhelm, plunge or submerge. Being baptised means being fully immersed in water; it is not just a sprinkling or pouring of water on the head.

Water baptism is a normal part of the believer's life. Being baptised after becoming a Christian is a symbolic act of washing away the old self, of our sins being washed away, and being born again as a believer in Christ, looking forward to everything that God has for you (Acts 22:16).

*Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by*

*the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. (Romans 6:1-7, NLT)*

Since we have been united with Christ in His death, we will also be raised to life as He was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin, for when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

*When you came to Christ, you were 'circumcised,' but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12, NLT)*

## The Meaning of Baptism

When a Christian is baptised, they are showing the world that they identify with Christ, declaring to all whose side they are on (Galatians 3:28). Before they were believers, their priorities were determined by influences other than God. Believers choose to cut off anything in their old lives which is incompatible with their new life, making a stand to walk away from Satan's rule (1 Corinthians 10:1-2; Colossians 2:12).

Baptism shows a commitment to obey God's Word, following the example of Jesus, who was baptised by John. It is a public witness to the fact that they have turned away from their old life towards Christ, and it shows a level of maturity and willingness to follow Him (Matthew 3:13-17). Because of this obedience, we open the door to God's blessing (Acts 10:48, 2:38; Mark 16:16; Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 15-19).

*They had disobeyed God while Noah was building the boat, but God had been patient with them. Eight people went into that boat and were brought safely through the flood. (1 Peter 3:20-21, CEV)*

Those flood waters were like the baptism that now saves you. But baptism is more than just washing your body. It means turning to God with a clear conscience, because Jesus Christ was raised from death.