

“Christianity Explained: The Crux of Christianity”

Being a Christian means being a “little Christ.” (see Acts 11:26) When you spend time with Jesus and follow Him, He starts to rub off on you, and you become more and more like Him as He fills your life with more and more of His presence. A Christian must *believe* certain things, and there are *behaviors* that should characterize the lives of those who follow Jesus. Christianity has nothing to do with your best efforts, but it has everything to do with what Jesus Christ has done for us.

God created the heavens and the earth. He created vegetation/plants/trees, all living creatures, and human beings. God placed the first human beings, Adam and Eve in a perfect, earthly Paradise called The Garden of Eden. This is a picture of how God intended things to be. But when Adam and Eve’s free-will was tested, they chose to believe Satan’s lies rather than trust in what God’s words and promises. What a price they paid. Paradise was lost; sin now separated them from God; pain, suffering and death would now result. The Bible also reveals a picture of Paradise Restored, or God’s Heaven. God’s heaven is a place of perfection, peace and life for all eternity. There’s nothing bad or sad in heaven, where God rules on the throne. Those who believe in God on His terms will be face-to-face with God and dwell with Him forevermore in perfect communion in the heavenly city where paradise is restored.

In between these two pictures is *life*, or *the valley of decision*. It’s on every person’s journey through life that the decision is made as to where they will spend eternity. Those who believe in Jesus and follow Him on earth will be with God forever in heaven. Those who reject Jesus as Savior and Lord on earth will be away from God for all eternity in hell, where they will experience eternal death. If Adam and Eve couldn’t keep the one rule God established for them with a perfect nature, then those who tried to keep all the laws in the Old Testament would certainly fall short with a sinful nature. So, in “*the fullness of time... God sent forth His Son.*” (see Galatians 4:4) This is the Good News of the message of Christianity! Jesus faced the same temptations we face, but He overcame every one and lived a perfect life. When He willingly laid down His life, He was not dying for His own sins (because He had none), but He was dying for the sins of the whole world as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (see John 1:29) God accepted the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. God’s righteous requirements were satisfied through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus has done, those who *believe in* Him and *accept* the sacrifice of Christ for their own sins are forgiven and saved! We are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way that sinful people can be brought back into fellowship with a holy God.

No person can get to God on their own, regardless of how good or bad they are. The only way a human being could bridge the vast gap between sinful people and a holy God is through perfection. Since we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s righteous standards, every human is disqualified. Except One—the God/Man—Jesus! Believing in what Jesus did on the cross is the only way to salvation. Now, here’s what we must do: *believe in* Jesus Christ and go the way of Christ. As Christ’s followers we will strive to obey His commandments; not to earn our way to heaven (because that’s impossible), but because we love Him, and we want to become more and more like Jesus. This is the crux of Christianity.

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. Are you a Christian? Are you a “little Christ?”
2. I invite you to proclaim “I believe” to these six questions:
 - a. Do you *believe* that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and that no one can come to the Father except through Him? (see John 14:6) **SAY: “I BELIEVE”**
 - b. Do you *believe* that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and that by believing in Him you shall not perish but have everlasting life? (see John 3:16) **SAY: “I BELIEVE”**
 - c. Do you *believe* that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? (see John 1:29) **SAY: “I BELIEVE”**
 - d. Do you *believe* that Jesus Christ is our great God and Savior, and that He is coming again? (see Titus 2:13) **SAY: “I BELIEVE”**
 - e. Do you *believe* that Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven by which people must be saved? (see Acts 4:12) **SAY: “I BELIEVE”**
 - f. Have you *confessed* with your mouth that “Jesus Christ is Lord?” Have you *believed* in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead? Do you *believe* that by confessing and believing this you will be saved? (see Romans 10:9-10) **SAY: “I BELIEVE”**
3. I invite you to say this prayer if you need/want to become a Christian: *“Dear God, I believe in You and in Your Son, Jesus Christ. I confess that I am a sinner, and that I cannot save myself. I have fallen way short of Your perfect standards, God. I need a Savior; and I believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world. I put my faith in Jesus Christ for the eternal salvation of my soul. I believe that Jesus came from heaven, and lived a perfect life on earth, and died on the cross as an acceptable sacrifice for my sins. I open my heart and receive You, Jesus, as my Lord and Savior. I give you my life, my heart, my all. My life is no longer my own, now I belong to You. I will follow You, and serve You, and obey Your commandments. Thank You for forgiving my sins, and for making me a new creation. Thank You for reconciling me to God. I will no longer live for myself, but now I will live for the One who died for me (that’s You, Jesus). I can truly say, ‘I love You, Lord;’ and I look forward walking with You all the days of my life here on earth, and for all eternity. Amen.”*