

Just Curious...about Christian Faith

4. Show me a real Christian.

In week 1 we looked at the character of God and saw that God is :

A God of LOVE ; A HOLY God ; A JUST God

In week 2 we looked at the person of Jesus and asked the question :

Was he Mad, Bad or God? – He claimed to be God & this is what Christians believe.

In week 3 we looked at the death of Jesus and examined the Christian belief :

Jesus really died – Jesus really rose from the dead (and, therefore, IS ALIVE!)

The notes from sessions 1 & 2 are available from Tim Coad or at www.mscch.org.uk

For this final session (in this series – watch for advertising for a follow-up!) we are going to ask what we mean, at Main Street Community Church, when we talk about becoming a Christian.

Some might say,

- o “I was born in a Christian country. Doesn’t that make me a Christian?”

Or

- o “I was christened (or dedicated) in a church. Doesn’t that make me a Christian?”

Or

- o “My parents were Christians. Doesn’t that make me a Christian?”

But....if you were born in a garage, it wouldn’t make you a car!

Aren’t we all God’s Children?

In a sense – yes!

Genesis 1 v 26 “And God said, “Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, ...”

Psalms 139 v 13 (I suggest you find a Bible and read the whole of this Psalm!)

“For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

V.16 All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be”

- God made us – God made me – God made you!
- God knew all about our characters, talents, abilities before our birth. Each individual is special to God.
- God loves us personally & individually.

“For God so loved (replace “the world” with your name!) that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” John 3 v 16

So, in this very general sense, we are all “God’s children” – or, at least, God’s special creation.

So what makes you think I might not be God’s child?

The Bible, in Genesis, teaches that, when God made the world,

“God saw that it was good”

But....things didn’t stay that way. Adam & Eve, our first ancestors, disobeyed God. Because God is totally Holy (remember week 1) he cannot relate to people who are not so we cannot truly be God’s child unless we are completely Holy. What does this mean?

What does God expect of me if I was to be his child?

The answer is perfection! In the Old Testament (Exodus chapter 20) God set out his standards. Often called the Ten Commandments. But, can we keep these?

Jesus, in the New Testament, showed that they go deeper than they may appear on the surface! For example, Jesus equated lustful thoughts with adultery.

Matthew 18 v 18 – 22

Jesus is approached by a ruler (identified elsewhere as a rich man, probably a young man) who asks him how he may inherit eternal life. Jesus points him to the 10 commandments. The young man claims to have kept them all. Jesus, however, points the man to the attitude of his heart, linked to his wealth. It says the man went away sad. It seems he wasn't ready to face up to the implications of what Jesus had said.

So, can keeping rules get me into relationship with God – to be a (real) Christian?

The Bible says No!

The letter Paul wrote to the Romans (5th book in the New Testament) tells us that:

- Rules (10 commandments) only serve to set out the standards
- We, as ordinary humans, cannot keep God's laws – we've all failed.

Romans 3 v 23 “..all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God”

The Bible talks about being “justified” or “made righteous” – that is, put right with God so we can become his children. It makes it clear that we can't achieve this by rule keeping.

So, how can I become a (real) Christian? – a true child of God?

Romans 3 v 23 goes on... “...and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ”

The word “redemption” means “bought back”

So, we become Christians, in the Biblical sense of the word, by the work of Jesus Christ!

- Men & women have all failed to meet God's standards
- Jesus, however, met those standards but died for our sins, our failures to meet the standards
- Accepting, believing in Jesus is the way to become a child of God – a real Christian!

John 1 v 12 : “..to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”

The Bible calls this being born-again. (John 3 v 3 onwards)

The same writer, John the disciple of Jesus, wrote in a letter in the New Testament : 1 John 3 v 1 “How great is the love the Father lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God”

So, to become a true Christian we need to be “born-again”.

Clearly this is not physical! It is a spiritual new birth that comes when we believe what the Bible says about Jesus and what he has done on the cross.

In Acts of the Apostles 2 v 37 – 39 Peter speaks to a crowd on the day of Pentecost.

- ❖ Peter speaks to them about the death & resurrection of Jesus Christ
- ❖ The people ask Peter, “what shall we do?”
- ❖ Peter's reply is “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins” [Baptism is a way of publicly confessing my faith which we can deal with in a follow-up series]

Romans 10 v 9

“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”

So, to become a Christian, I need to :

- **Repent** : that means to turn away from what is wrong (before God) in my life
- **Accept** : that Jesus Christ died for me on the cross and believe in him.

On the third page of these notes is a suggested prayer & pointers as to how you might take this step in your life.

Alternatively, you can speak privately to Tim or any of the leaders of Main Street Community Church or a Christian in the congregation.

Remember – being a (real) Christian is not about keeping the rules, it's about belief (faith) in Jesus. However, knowing him WILL change your life!

A suggested prayer you might use to express your belief in Jesus Christ and accept him into your life:

“Lord Jesus, I recognise that I am separated from you because of the things that are wrong in my life and I have failed to keep your standards.

I believe that you died for me on the cross and that you are alive today.

I ask you to come into my life from this moment on and make one of your children”

- Once you have prayed a prayer like this (use your own words if you prefer!) Jesus Christ promises to come into your life for ever.
- He also promises that the Holy Spirit will come into your life to be in you forever and to give you the strength to live a Christian life.
- NOW... you should tell someone what you have done. It could be anyone but it would be great to tell a leader or member of our church!
- NOW...you are part not only of God's family but of the Christian church worldwide which crosses all barriers of denomination!
- It would help you to adopt the following things as part of your life:
 - Join a local church where you can learn more about Christian faith & living
 - Start to read a little bit of the Bible. A small amount every day is a good idea.
 - Pray regularly – talk to God out loud or in your mind. Try and take a few minutes each day to ask him for help and to help others you know. When you wake up is a very good time to do this!

Thank you for coming to “Just Curious”

Watch out for

“Just a bit more Curious”

....could be coming this way soon! [This one will be 5 weeks!]