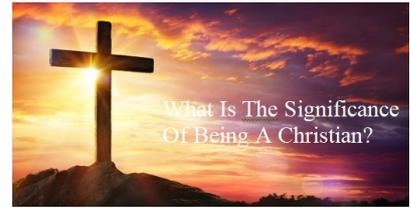


# 7

## POTENT TRUTHS THAT WILL HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING A CHRISTIAN



### Introduction

1. It is always exciting to see someone obey the gospel (Luke 15:7) and walking in the truth (3 John 1:4).
2. Sometimes, though, the significance of becoming a Christian is missed and, consequently, people fail to grow as they ought (cp. Hebrews 5:12-13).
3. The aim of this lesson is to highlight several things that will help us to comprehend the significance of being a Christian, and that by these we will be motivated to pursue growth (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:8).

### 7 Potent Truths That Will Help Us To Understand The Significance Of Being A Christian

1. You are a person reborn (1 Peter 1:22-25).
2. You belong to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
3. You live by faith (Galatians 2:20).
4. You are consecrated to God (1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:14).
5. You are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:3-5).
6. You have been saved to serve (Philippians 2:5-8).
7. You are connected to other Christians (Acts 2:42-47).

### 7 Potent Truths That Will Help Us To Understand The Significance Of Being A Christian

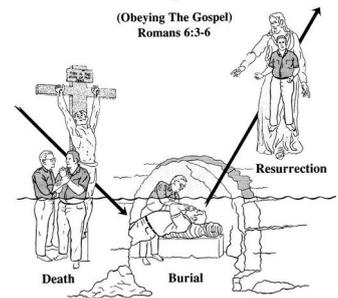
#### I. YOU ARE A PERSON REBORN (1 Peter 1:22-25)

A Christian is one that has been reborn; having become a new creation, having embarked on a new life, and having a new loyalty.

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever [Isaiah 40:6-8]. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:22-25).

#### the Gospel re-enacted in Baptism

(Obeying The Gospel)  
Romans 6:3-6



#### A. A new creation.

Anyone that has been baptized into Christ is a new creation.

1. A Christian is a “new creation”. When we obeyed the gospel, we were “buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Indeed, “he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).
2. This new creation is made possible by virtue of the new birth, which is the result of obeying the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22-23) “from the heart” (Romans 6:17). This new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5-7).
3. As a new creation in Christ, one embarks on a life of *daily* renewal (2 Corinthians 4:16), which takes place through the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23) as we grow in knowledge (Colossians 3:10). This knowledge and growth occurs as we study and apply the scriptures (1 Peter 2:1-3; James 1:22).

## B. A new life.

It is because this new creation that has occurred and the continuing daily renewal taking place that one can be said to have a new life.

1. A Christian has passed from death to life (**John 5:24-25**). We were “dead in trespasses and sins” but He has now “made us alive together with Christ” (**Ephesians 2:1-5**) in having forgiven us of *all* our sins (**Colossians 2:12-13**), and having the promise of eternal life in His Son (**1 John 5:11-13**).
2. A Christian has passed from darkness to light. (i) Jesus sent Paul to the Gentiles “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (**Acts 26:18**).
3. Indeed, we are God’s special people that have been “called out of darkness into His marvelous light” (**1 Peter 2:9**). (ii) Though we once walked in darkness, we now walk in the light (**Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5**). Note: the metaphor of light represents goodness, righteousness, and truth (**Ephesians 5:9**) for which we should ever be thankful (**cp. Colossians 1:12-13**).

“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).

## C. A new loyalty.

What makes such a new creation and a new life a reality is obedience that is the result of a new loyalty.

1. A Christian is a “converted” person. A Christian is one that has turned from serving idols (this includes idols made with men’s hands and whatever occupies first place in the heart other than Christ) “to serve the living and true God” (**1 Thessalonians 1:9**). Conversion inherently involves change, particularly a change of loyalties, i.e., from serving idols to serving God (**1 Thessalonians 1:9**) and from serving sin to serving God (**Romans 6:16-18**).
2. A Christian is converted to Jesus Christ (**Acts 3:19-21**). This involves acknowledging the Lordship of Christ Jesus (**cp. Acts 2:36; 1 Peter 3:15**) above all others (**cp. Matthew 10:37-39**). For a converted person, Christ is the focus of his life (**Galatians 2:20**).
3. A Christian’s loyalty to Christ results in a new life. It is a life of blessing through Christ (**Ephesians 1:3-14; e.g., Philippians 4:6-7**), and it is in Christ one finds strength to live the new life (**Philippians 4:13**).

## Summary

1. A significant thing about a Christian is in having experienced becoming a new creation; enjoying a new life, and entertaining a new loyalty. This describes a person that has been reborn.
2. But not all professing Christians show evidence of this rebirth. (i) It may be because, though having believed the gospel, they have not obeyed the gospel (**Mark 16:16; cp. Acts 6:7**). If God’s power is to be at work in us, it is essential to submit to His will in faith (**Colossians 2:12-13**). (ii) It may be because, though having been reborn and embarked on a new life, they have fallen into sin - Hardened by sin's deceitfulness, they have departed from God (**cp. Hebrews 3:12-13**); having been entangled once again by the pollutions of the world (**cp. 2 Peter 2:20**). Whatever the case, their loyalty is not where it ought to be!
3. **May the promise of a new creation and a new life in Christ remind us of the significance of being a Christian, and challenge us to examine our loyalties if we do not see in our lives the evidence of a person reborn.**

## II. YOU BELONG TO THE LORD (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Belonging to the Lord has many connotations attached to it: a Christian is God’s special person, God’s beloved child, and God’s heavenly pilgrim.

### A. God's special person.

Every person that belongs to God is a special person with special responsibilities. Yet we must always be careful to maintain our faith lest we fail to enter into that heavenly rest.

1. Christians are now God's own special people: “a chosen generation” (**cp. Deuteronomy 10:15**), “a royal priesthood” (**cp. Exodus 19:5a**), “a holy nation” (**cp. Exodus 19:5b**), and “His own special people” (**cp. Deuteronomy 7:6**) (**1 Peter 2:9-10**). What had once been limited to physical Israel is now possible to all those who are in Christ, as promised to Abraham (**cp. Galatians 3:8-9, 28-29**).
2. A special people, with special responsibilities: To proclaim the praises of God (**1 Peter 2:9-10**) and to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (**2 Peter 1:8-11**).
3. From the example of physical Israel, let us beware of becoming hardened and not lose faith, or we will not enter the heavenly rest that awaits us (**Hebrews 3:12-4:2, 11**).



## B. God's beloved child.

A Christian is truly a special person because he belongs to the Lord. He can rejoice in knowing that he is one of God's "beloved" (**Romans 1:7**). God's love for the Christian is made even more evident when we note that he is also God's beloved child.

1. Christians are blessed to be children of God. We are children because (i) of our faith, and having put on Christ in baptism (**Galatians 3:26-27**), (ii) we have been redeemed and adopted by God (**Ephesians 1:5**), and have received His Spirit into our hearts (**Galatians 4:4-6**), and because we do the Father's will, Jesus considers us His family (**Matthew 12:48-50**). We ought to be touched by this expression of God's love (**1 John 3:1-2**).  

2. As God's children, we have blessings and responsibilities. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (**Galatians 4:7; Romans 8:16-17**), which is according to the promise of God (**Galatians 3:29**); it is an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade, and is reserved for us in heaven (**1 Peter 1:4**). As heirs we have many responsibilities, including:
  - a. Being thankful for the inheritance we have (**Colossians 1:12**).
  - b. Abstaining from the works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-21**).
  - c. Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (**2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1; Hebrews 12:14**).
3. If we wish to receive the promised blessings, we need to patiently carry out our responsibilities with an enduring faith (**Hebrews 10:35-39**).

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him" (**1 John 3:1**).

## C. God's heavenly pilgrim.

Besides being God's special person and God's child, a Christian who "belongs to the Lord" also has a special relationship to the world in which they live.

1. Christians are in the world, but not of the world (**John 17:15-16**).
  - a. We are sojourners or pilgrims (**Hebrews 11:13; 13:14; 1 Peter 1:1**).
  - b. We are fellow citizens with members of God's family (**Ephesians 2:19**). As such, our true citizenship lies in heaven, not here on earth (**Philippians 3:20**).
2. As pilgrims, we have several obligations:
  - a. To conduct our sojourn on earth with fear (**1 Peter 1:17; cp. Philippians 2:12**).
  - b. To abstain from worldly lusts (**1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:15-17**). "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (**Galatians 5:19-21**).
  - c. To keep our conduct honorable, filled with good works (**1 Peter 2:12; Titus 3:8**).
  - d. To obey the laws, and respect the leaders, of the countries in which we sojourn (**1 Peter 2:13-17**).

### Christian Pilgrimage

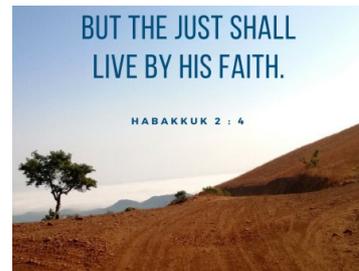
- **1 Pet. 2:11: As sojourners and pilgrims**
  - We are strangers on the earth, not citizens of the world.
  - "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through."
  - We use whatever we are given in this life to get by (i.e. safe passage), but we do not live as though we belong here.

## Summary

1. We have seen that a Christian is a person who belongs to the Lord; one who is God's special person, God's child, and God's pilgrim.
2. The more we understand the significance of such privileges, the greater our gratitude and sense of humility. Indeed, we ought to be moved to become the kind of people God intends.
3. Are we living and conducting ourselves as those who belong to the Lord? Are we behaving like a special people? Do we live like a child of God should? Is our life truly a sojourn, or are we living like we want to make this earth our permanent home?
4. **May the significance of belonging to God prompt us to always glorify God in our bodies and our spirits.**

### III. YOU LIVE BY FAITH (Galatians 2:20)

Faith is the underlying principle of all a Christian's conduct: it is fundamental to our salvation in Christ (Romans 1:16-17) and central to the life we now live in Christ (Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:7). As we continue to examine the significance of being a Christian, we want to emphasize that being a Christian means living by faith!



#### A. The meaning of faith.

Faith involves belief, confidence, and fidelity.

1. Faith involves belief, which is the certainty or conviction that one has in some truth or proposition. In a Christian's case believing in things concerning Jesus and His kingdom (Acts 8:12). Faith or conviction comes from the word of God (Romans 10:17; cp. John 20:30-31).
2. Faith involves confidence, which is the willingness to place one's trust and reliance on someone else. In the case of a Christian it is placing our trust in God (Proverbs 3:5; Psalms 64:10); believing that He is reliable (Romans 4:3, 20-22). Let us be sure to commit our souls to our faithful creator (1 Peter 4:19).
3. Faith involves fidelity, which is being loyal, committed, and trustworthy. All Christians are stewards and ought to be faithful and reliable (1 Corinthians 4:2). It is essential that we remain faithful unto to death (Revelation 2:10, 13).

#### B. The life of faith.

The life of faith involves confessing our faith, living by faith, benefitting by faith, and maintaining our faith.

1. The life of faith involves confessing our faith, which is acknowledging our belief in Jesus Christ before others at the beginning of our faith (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37) and that continues throughout our lives (Matthew 10:32-33; 1 John 4:15). The life of faith is never ashamed to admit that one believes in Jesus Christ.
2. The life of faith involves living by faith, which is (i) conducting one's life with trust in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:20), (ii) trusting in the works of Jesus, not our own; that His death was truly for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-3; Titus 3:5-7), (iii) trusting in the words of Jesus, and living accordingly (e.g., Matthew 6:33-34; Luke 6:46-48). The life of faith is one that seeks to live in harmony with the teaching of Jesus (Ephesians 4:17-24).
3. The life of faith involves benefitting by faith, which is enjoying the blessings that come from a life of faith, e.g., joy and peace, hope and power (Romans 15:13). Indeed, all blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 3:12; Philippians 4:6-7, 13). The life of faith does not go unrewarded in this life, even though its primary concern is the life to come.
4. The life of faith involves maintaining our faith, which is remaining steadfast in the faith. If we are negligent, we will surely fall into unbelief (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Hebrews 3:12-19; 4:1-2, 11). To maintain faith, we must add to it other things such as virtue, knowledge, self-control, etc. (2 Peter 1:5-11; 3:17-18).

#### C. The proof of genuine faith.

The life of faith cannot be lived in solitude because it was designed to overflow into the lives of others (James 2:14-17).

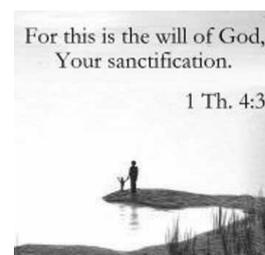
1. One's craving for the milk of the word is revealed in our diligent reading and studying of the scriptures (1 Peter 2:1-3), and it is by this that our faith will grow (Romans 10:17).
2. It is putting the word into practice – applying it in our daily lives – that reveals the genuineness of our faith (James 1:22; Romans 2:13).
3. There was a man that had been living in the same house for over 25 years and had never made any attempt to share the gospel with his neighbors. I told him that “a sincere Christian will share their faith with others” and he said, “So what scripture says that?” So now he was seeking to justify his lack of faith and cover his shame. The truth is that a sincere believer doesn't need to have a scriptural argument set before him because he will not be able to keep the good news to himself. “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4; cp. Hebrews 5:12).

## Summary

1. As Christians we must take our faith very seriously: it is essential to salvation (both being saved and remaining saved), and it is essential to life (to receive blessings now, and in the life to come).
2. Are you living by Faith?
  - a. Do you believe what has been revealed about Jesus Christ?
  - b. Do you have confidence in Him that He can deliver on what He promises?
  - c. Are you a trustworthy disciple of Jesus; someone He can count on to be faithful?
  - d. Are you sharing the gospel with your neighbors?
3. Unless we can answer in the affirmative to the above questions, then we have yet to appreciate that the significance of being a Christian includes living by faith.

## IV. YOU ARE CONSECRATED TO GOD (1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:14)

Another significant fact about being a Christian involves the concept of *sanctification*. The words “sanctify” and “sanctification” are translated from the Greek word “hagiazō” and it means to make holy, to set apart for a special purpose; related words include holiness, *consecration*, saint. As we shall see, this pertains to both our **standing** before God and our **conduct** before God.



### A. The progress of sanctification.

A Christian has been sanctified and is also being sanctified.

1. All Christians have *been* sanctified (note the past tense). This pertains to our **standing** before God; we are blessed to be considered His holy people.
  - a. The church at Corinth consisted of people that were “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:2; cp. 6:11). Yet many of these people were still “babes in Christ” and “carnal” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3); they were filled with envy, strife and divisions; they were acting carnally, like mere men.
  - b. While Christians may not be perfect, they are still called “saints”. Note the use of the word “saint” in addressing all Christians (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2). Because they had been “set apart” to be “God's holy people” it was appropriate to be called “saints” (cp. 1 Peter 2:9).
2. All Christians are also *being* sanctified. This pertains to **our conduct** before God, our responsibility to live holy lives. Sanctification is an on-going process; those in Christ are “being sanctified” (Hebrews 2:11). The process of sanctification begins at conversion, and continues as we grow in the faith. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians: “May the God of peace Himself **sanctify you completely**” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
  - a. Christians are to *pursue* sanctification (holiness) (Hebrews 12:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1). It is because God is holy that we are to be holy in all our conduct (1 Peter 1:15-16).
  - b. God has therefore called Christians to be holy, set apart, sanctified. In obeying the gospel we have been sanctified; but if we are truly consecrated to God, then we will *pursue* and perfect our holiness (i.e., our consecration). Those that don't know *how* to pursue holiness are not pursuing holiness, and those that are not pursuing holiness will not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”  
(2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

### B. The process of sanctification.

A Christian is sanctified by the Holy Spirit through the word that He has revealed.

1. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit:
  - a. The following scriptures show that sanctification is tied to the work of the Holy Spirit:

“That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, **sanctified by the Holy Spirit**” (Romans 15:16).

“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were **sanctified**, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and **by the Spirit of our God**” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through **sanctification by the Spirit** and belief in the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in **sanctification of the Spirit**, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace be multiplied” (1 Peter 1:2).

- b. The Holy Spirit naturally has an important role in our on-going sanctification: He was instrumental in our spiritual regeneration (cp. Titus 3:5-6) and our bodies serve as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and He is the instrumental agent by which God strengthens the inner man (Ephesians 3:16).

## 2. Sanctification is also the work of the word of God:

- a. Note that sanctification is also said to be tied in with the Word of God: Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17; cp. Ephesians 5:26). Since the Word of God is said to be “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17), the Word is evidently the instrument used by the Spirit to help bring about our sanctification.
- b. When we set our minds on “the things of the Spirit” (the Word of God), we are then able to “live according to the Spirit” (cp. Romans 8:5). Thus led by the Spirit through the Word of God, we will then produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, instead of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-23).
- c. If we desire to live holy, sanctified lives, we must allow the Spirit to do His work through the Word of God.

## C. Pursuing sanctification.

1. Actually there are several things that Christians ought to pursue: (i) the things which make for peace, (ii) the things by which one may edify another (Romans 14:19), (iii) what is good for both yourselves and for all (1 Thessalonians 5:15), (iv) righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11), and (v) *holiness* (Hebrews 12:14).
2. In order to pursue holiness (or any of these things) you need a motive. Two motives to pursue holiness: (i) “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy [Leviticus 11:44-45]” (1 Peter 1:15-16). (ii) “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).
3. If we truly desire to be like God, and if we truly have a desire to see the Lord, then we will be diligent to *understand* what it means to be holy and find out *how* we are to pursue it.

## Summary

1. When we understand that we are people who have been reborn, belong to the Lord, and are living by faith, then we shall also see that we are consecrated to God.
2. Do we appreciate the privilege of being consecrated to God, that God has blessed us to be part of a holy nation, that God has called us to holiness because He is holy, that having sanctified us He desires to sanctify us completely, and that He does this because He desires to dwell among us (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)?
3. If we do understand all these things, then we will take to heart the admonition of Paul: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Are we perfecting holiness in the fear of God?

## V. YOU ARE GUARDED BY THE POWER OF GOD (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The Christian life is not easy because there are powerful forces that are bent on our spiritual destruction (1 Peter 5:8), which is true of everyone regardless of their beliefs. But the significance of being a Christian includes help that others do not have – Peter says we are “kept by the power of God through faith...” (1 Peter 1:5).



### A. Satan's goal is our destruction.

In order to appreciate our need for God's protection, let us first consider Satan's objective.

1. Satan, like a roaring lion, is always seeking someone whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). He does not present himself as a roaring lion, but often as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14); working through his ministers (2 Corinthians 11:15) to mislead people through false doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

#### 2. A Christian, then, needs to beware!

- a. Some say there is no need to be concerned, teaching that once a person is saved, he is always saved, and that it is impossible for a saved person to fall away (these are the teachings of Calvin that are widely accepted among many denominations).
- b. The scriptures, though, warn us of the danger of becoming hardened through “the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-14). Indeed, Paul warned of a great future apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). And if we will do all in our power to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7), then the God of all grace will assist us (1 Peter 5:10).

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”  
(1 Corinthians 10:12).

### B. God's provision: our safekeeping

God has not left us to fight the devil out of our own resources, but has Himself provided for us.

#### 1. God is our helper...

- a. He appointed Christ Jesus as our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and Advocate (1 John 2:1-2). Jesus is our merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17-18) whose blood cleanses us from our sins (1 John 1:7-10).
- b. He provides other blessings designed to guard our souls: communion with Himself through prayer (Philippians 4:6-7) and studying the scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the public assemblies and mutual edification (Hebrews 10:24-25), and daily mutual edification (Hebrews 3:12-13).
- c. He therefore provides a way of escape: in some cases to avoid temptation altogether (Matthew 6:13; 26:41) and in other cases to bear up and overcome the temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

#### 2. God is our victory...

- a. Our confidence comes from God's power, not our own (Philippians 4:13).
- b. He provides power that is greater than Satan (Ephesians 3:16, 20; 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4).
- c. Yes, it is God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). By His grace we are guarded by the power of God. But that such grace might not be received in vain (cp. 2 Corinthians 6:1), we need to remember our responsibilities.

### C. Our responsibility: remain faithful

While it is true that we are secure in Christ, it is also true that we must remain faithful unto death.

#### 1. The Christian's security:

- a. The Bible teaches that a believer is secure in Christ: a believer is safe in Jesus' hand (John 10:28-29), and nothing can separate a believer from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39). Such are the promises for the one that continues in his belief: (i) Preservation - kept by the power of God (ii) Means - through faith (iii) Purpose - for salvation (1 Peter 1:5).

- b. The Bible also teaches a believer may develop “an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (**Hebrews 3:12**). When a believer departs from God, then the promises of security for the believer are no longer applicable.
  - c. This explains the many warnings in the Scriptures to remain faithful (e.g., **Revelation 2:10**).
2. The Christian’s responsibility...
- a. Take to heart the many admonitions in Scripture to take heed (**1 Corinthians 10:12**), gird up the loins of your mind (**1 Peter 1:13**), discipline yourself (**1 Corinthians 9:27**), root yourself in Christ and His love (**Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 2:7**), put on the armor of God, that you might stand (**Ephesians 6:10-18**), be strong in the grace of the Lord (**2 Timothy 2:1**), stand fast in the faith (**1 Corinthians 16:13**), and resist the devil (**James. 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9**).
  - b. Take advantage of activities conducive to remaining faithful: daily prayer (**Colossians 4:2**), daily Bible study (**1 Peter 2:2; Acts 17:11**), frequent association with fellow Christians (**Acts 2:44-47**), attendance at the congregational assemblies (**1 Corinthians 14:26**), development of personal usefulness to the Lord (**2 Timothy 2:20**), involvement in the work of the Lord (**1 Corinthians 15:58**), and acceptance of correction, and repentance as necessary (**1 Corinthians 5:1-5 < 2 Corinthians 2:5-8**).
  - c. As soon as we cease to maintain our faith, we cease to have the promise of God’s protection. We are kept by the power of God **through faith** (**1 Peter 1:5**).

### Summary

1. The significance of being a Christian is that one is guarded by the power of God. In the spiritual warfare that we face we can stand strong “in the power of His might” (**Ephesians 6:10-13**), and in resisting the devil, God will “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle” us (**1 Peter 5:9-10**).
2. But never lose sight of the importance of our faith: our resistance must be “steadfast in the faith” (**1 Peter 5:9**) because we are “kept by the power of God THROUGH FAITH” (**1 Peter 1:5**).
3. If we seek to continue being guarded by the power of God, then let us not forget the admonition of our glorified Lord: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (**Revelation 2:10**). Are you remaining faithful to the Lord?

### VI. YOU ARE SAVED TO SERVE (**Philippians 2:5-8**)

With all the blessings we have in Christ come responsibilities and duties; we have been saved to serve (cp. **Hebrews 9:14; 12:28**). Indeed, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service (**Romans 12:1**). Each person has a ministry (service) we are expected to fulfill (**Colossians 4:17; 2 Timothy 4:5**). Thus the concept of “servitude” or “servanthood” is a significant part of what it means to be a Christian.

#### A. The greatness of servanthood.

Worldly people certainly doesn’t covet the title “servant”, but for those in the kingdom of God it is a great honor and worn with pride.

1. Being a servant of God is a great honor.
  - a. The title of “servant” was worn by many great men of the Old Testament: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (**Deuteronomy 9:27**), Moses (**1 Kings 8:53**), Joshua (**Joshua 24:29**), Caleb (**Numbers 14:24**), Job (**Job 1:8**), Isaiah (**Isaiah 20:3**), and the prophets (**Jeremiah 7:25**).
  - b. New Testament writers referred to themselves as “servants”: James (**James 1:1**), Paul (**Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1**), Peter (**2 Peter 1:1**), Jude (**Jude 1:1**), and John (**Revelation 1:1**).
2. Jesus came to serve...
  - a. He was foretold to come as the “Suffering Servant” (**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**).
  - b. He “did not come to be served, but to serve” (**Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:7**).
  - c. Even as our Lord and Master, He exemplified the servitude He desires of His disciples (**John 13:12-17**).



## **B. The concepts of servanthood.**

What an honor, if God were to look upon us as “His servants” as He did these great men, including His own Son, Jesus Christ! He will, if we put into practice the concept of servanthood.

1. It involves absolute obedience:
  - a. In a slave-master relationship the slave knows no law but his master's word, has no rights of his own, is the absolute possession of his master, and is bound to give his master unquestioning obedience.
  - b. This ought to describe our relationship to Christ since “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own” and “you were bought at a price” (1 **Corinthians 6:19-20**). We have to come to Jesus on HIS terms, not our own (**Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21**).
2. It involves absolute humility:
  - a. Otherwise, absolute obedience is not possible. When we have a humble opinion of ourselves, we are receptive to the idea of complete obedience. For example, consider Paul's self-estimation (1 **Corinthians 15:9-10; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15**).
  - b. This ought to describe our relationship to Christ and His will. Jesus said it should (**Luke 17:10**). But if we murmur and complain in His service, can we really be considered servants?
3. It involves absolute loyalty:
  - a. Since we become servants willingly, then our first loyalty is to Him alone (cp. **Galatians 1:10**). If we call Jesus “Lord”, then we must do what He says (**Luke 6:46**).
  - b. Yet some behave as though they are being forced against their own will! We don't “have to” serve the Lord, but, of course, the alternative is not very inviting. If we don't serve Jesus, then by default we serve Satan, and are destined for destruction (**Matthew 12:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:9**).

## **C. Hindrances to servanthood.**

In order that we are not negligent in our service to the Lord, we ought to be aware of some of the hindrances to servanthood.

1. Serving the wrong master. We cannot serve both God and Mammon (**Matthew 6:24; Luke 8:14**). Paul wrote, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (**Romans 6:16**).
2. Placing limitations on our service. (i) Some limit how, where, and when they will serve, like Moses (**Exodus 3:10-11**). Some will serve God, but only when convenient. (ii) Some limit who they will serve, like Jonah (**Jonah 1:1-3**). Some will serve God, but not when it means serving others (especially people they don't like).
3. Possessing certain bad attitudes: (i) sluggishness and laziness (cp. **Hebrews 6:11-12; Matthew 25:26**), (ii) ingratitude (cp. **2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-7**), which often comes when we forget how graciously we have been served, (iii) pride or self-centeredness; as when self-pity affected Elijah (**1 Kings 19:13-18**), and as when some preached Christ out of envy (**Philippians 1:15-18**), and as when some seek for recognition, and praise (**Matthew 6:1-4**). Humility and unselfishness are basic prerequisites for servanthood (**Acts 20:19; Philippians 2:3-4**).

## **Summary**

1. Christians have been saved to serve: we have been called to serve God and Christ, called to serve our brethren, and called to serve those in the world. It is a noble calling, one that we should accept with humility and gratitude.
2. If one chooses not to serve God, then they remain a slave to sin (**Romans 6:16a**), and the end of such slavery is eternal death (**Romans 6:16b**). But when one chooses to serve God their servitude leads to righteousness (**Romans 6:16c**), and the end of such service is eternal life (**Romans 6:22**).
3. Paul wrote, “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (**Romans 6:17-18**). May this be true of all of us, today.
4. Have you been set free from sin, that you might serve Jesus Christ (cp. **Romans 6:1-7**)?

## VII. YOU ARE CONNECTED TO OTHER CHRISTIANS (Acts 2:42-47)

Christianity involves activity, and some of that activity involves working together with other Christians; each Christian needs to understand the importance of our collective work. The consequences of “solo Christianity” are inactivity, unhappiness, spiritual stagnation, etc.



### A. The “together” aspect of life in Christ.

One significance of being a Christian is that we are connected to other Christians.

#### 1. Illustrations of togetherness...

a. One illustration is that of “fellowship” (cp. Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3, 7).

1) Christians are “fellows”: “Fellow citizens” (Ephesians 2:11-22), “Fellow heirs” (Ephesians 3:6), “Fellow workers” (Philippians 4:3), “Fellow servants” (Colossians 1:7), and “Fellow soldiers” (Philippians 2:25).

2) We work together as we extend “the right hand of fellowship” (cp. Galatians 2:9). The idea is that we share together in the work and rewards of Christian life.

b. Another illustration is that of “brotherhood” (1 Peter 2:17). In Christ, we enjoy a family relationship (cp. Mark 3:31-35). We are the “house” or “family” of God (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15). A Christian needs to have a “family” consciousness about other Christians.

c. One more illustration is that of “membership” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

1) The church is Christ's “body” (Ephesians 1:22-23). Christians are “members of one another” (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25). As members of the body, there are “corporate” responsibilities.

2) Body members are functionally interdependent (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Not all members have the same function (Romans 12:3-8). If the body is to grow, each member must contribute (Ephesians 4:16).

3) There are not “vestigial” organs or “decorative” parts, i.e., no useless or unimportant members.

#### 2. The concept of local church “membership”.

a. The “local” church is different from the “universal” church

1) “The church” of Christ universally is the sum of all the saved (cp. Matthew 16:18).

2) “A church” of Christ locally is a specific group of Christians who function together as a congregation (cp. Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 16:16).

b. One is “added” by the Lord to the “universal” church upon obedience to the gospel (Acts 2:41, 47).

c. One should then “join” himself to a “local” church (cp. Acts 9:26-28). The mere provision of local churches in God's Word implies a divine purpose for the local church and a corresponding responsibility of Christians to avail themselves of it. The idea of becoming a Christian and never being a part of a local congregation is foreign to the Scriptures.

d. Christians are obligated to participate in the life of a faithful congregation, whenever possible.

1) The command to withdraw from certain ones implies that participation in the fellowship with other Christians is not optional (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).

2) Much of what a Christian must do is “for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

### B. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHER CHRISTIANS

As Christians we have responsibilities to other Christians; in Christ we are truly connected to other Christians”. Therefore let us consider some of our specific responsibilities to our brethren.

1. Attitudes to maintain: (i) Concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25-26), (ii) Humility, lowliness of mind (Philippians 2:3), (iii) A peaceable spirit (Romans 14:17-19), (iv) Appreciation for others and their work (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3), (v) Willingness to cooperate, work together (1 Corinthians 12:21), (vi) Friendliness, warmth (cp. Philemon 1:7), (vii) Gentleness, meekness (Galatians 6:1), (viii) Forbearance, longsuffering, patience (Colossians 3:12-13), (ix) Forgiveness (Colossians 3:13), (x) Love (John 13:34-35).

2. Things to do. Identify as a member of a faithful congregation<sup>1</sup> (place membership - cp. Acts 9:26; 1 Peter 5:1-4). One places membership with the intent of being an actual, functioning member - not a mere appendage to the body. Let each one find an individual role and fill it (Colossians 4:17; 2 Timothy 4:5):
  - a. Pray for other Christians, especially those of one's own congregation (Philippians 1:9-11).
  - b. Submit to the congregation's elders/leadership (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17).
  - c. Attend and participate in the assemblies of the congregation (Hebrews 10:24-25). Every aspect of our assemblies are vital to a Christian: (i) The Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34), (ii) Praying (Acts 2:42; 4:23-31; 12:12), (iii) Singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), (iv) Preaching and teaching (Acts 20:7), (v) Giving as we have been prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15).
  - d. Engage personally and directly in the work of the congregation: Evangelism (e.g., Acts 8:4), Edification (Romans 14:19), Benevolence (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35).
  - e. Help maintain unity in the congregation (John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:1-3).
  - f. Participate in the discipline of the congregation, both instructive as well as corrective (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 6:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).
  - g. Extend courtesy and hospitality (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9).

### Summary

1. Much of the joy in Christ comes from our relationships with other Christians. John was filled with joy when he heard others walking in the truth (3 John 1:3-4), and Paul was filled with joy as he remembered his fellowship with brethren (Philippians 1:3-5). We can see, then, the importance of being connected to other Christians.
2. This connection with our brethren is not only crucial to having joy, but to remaining faithful to the Lord. Experiencing all of the blessings the Lord provides for His servants and encouraged by others to be diligent in fulfilling our responsibilities as Christians.
3. We have certainly not exhausted what it means to be a Christian, but we do pray that you have been encouraged and exhorted to greater faithfulness and fruitfulness in the service of our Lord. In summarizing some of the significant things of being a Christian, we have seen that it involves both blessings and responsibilities.
  - a. A person reborn provides the blessing of living in newness of life.
  - b. Belonging to the Lord requires we live up to the calling of being God's special child.
  - c. Living by faith demands that we continue to trust in God and His Word.
  - d. Consecrated to God presumes that we pursue holiness in the fear of the Lord.
  - e. Guarded by the power of God calls for us to stand strong in the power of His might.
  - f. Saved to serve implies that we work together with other Christians.
  - g. Christianity involves activity, some of that activity involves working together with other Christians; each Christian needs to understand the importance of our collective work.

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<sup>1</sup> Some brethren deny that placing membership with a local church is necessary, but they are mistaken! The proof that one ought to do so is beyond denial, but it is not within the scope of this lesson to discuss it here.