

Becoming a Christian

“A Disciple of Jesus”

I’ve been asked how I would answer a person who said, “How do I become a Christian?” Or, what did I think a person should believe before being baptized?

I replied that there are some basic things that a person should believe, but there are ALSO some things that a person must DO, and that if at the start, we do not tell people to do them, we risk starting them off on a wide path that leads to destruction. Please see Matthew 7:13-14 regarding the narrow and wide paths.

Things that a person must BELIEVE to be true - the message of the Gospel:

- There is a loving God of the Bible
- Jesus Christ is the Son of God
- He came to earth as a man
- Lived a sinless life
- Died on the cross for the sins of the world –a savior.
- God brought Him back to life from death

This is the minimum that I would expect someone to believe.

Things that a person must DO:

- Repent of and forsake every known sin. This means you regret any sin you’ve ever done, and henceforth you don’t want to do anything contrary to His will.
- Trust that by the death of Jesus Christ, God reconciles you to Himself. He forgives your sin and accepts you into fellowship. (Trusting is believing – faith.)
- Make an unconditional surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This means giving Him rule over your life, acknowledging that He owns you and everything you have. You submit to His will and purpose to obey him in everything.
- Begin trusting Him to work salvation out in your life as you trust and obey Him.

This then is what I would expect a person to do before being baptized or considering themselves a Christian.

Believing the Gospel and obeying it begins a life of following Jesus Christ as His disciple:

A walk with the Lord starts when one begins trusting and obeying God. Here’s a description of that walk on the narrow path as a disciple of Jesus.

- A humble walk of trusting and loving God, loving your neighbor, doing good deeds
- Trusting the Holy Spirit to lead you and to empower you to live this walk
- A walk of obedience
- A holy walk
- It is a deliverance from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of God

The basic disciplines of this walk are:

- Prayer
- Reading and studying the Bible
- Fellowship

This is my understanding of what the Bible teaches as the *beginning* and *the way* of salvation.

Remarks:

1. Much instruction stops at the first point, “Do you believe the gospel to be TRUE?” People are then asked if they want to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and if they say yes, they are declared a Christian— on their way to Heaven. This is inadequate.
2. I would not encourage anyone to hope that they are a Christian, or otherwise “right with God”, if they have not repented, surrendered, and begun trusting God. Besides, it is not my place to give assurance of salvation – that is the work of the Holy Spirit. We should have assurance in proportion to the degree that we are living consistent with the teachings of Scripture.
3. There is too much effort to get people to “respond”, or “accept”, when they have not understood or accepted the terms of salvation. Hence many make a false start, or begin down the wide path where obedience is optional.
4. A common view of salvation teaches **the opposite of what I have presented here**. Those holding that view say that *you don't need to DO anything for salvation except believe certain things ABOUT Jesus to be true*. To that I ask:
 - Is repentance something you don't need to do? Is it optional?
 - Is a person who does not love his neighbor, on the path of salvation, on the way of deliverance?
 - What about someone who is still committed to sinning – someone who is still in disobedience?
 - Is loving God something you don't need to do? Is that optional?

The scriptures tell us not to be deceived in this matter. Unfortunately a great many professing Christians are on the wide path to destruction and do not know it.

5. There are numerous passages that are used in the debate about believing and doing. I address them in another article. I will offer one verse here:

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36

“Believe” and “not obey” are presented as opposites in their outcome. To believe means you obey. If you do not obey you are not believing.

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