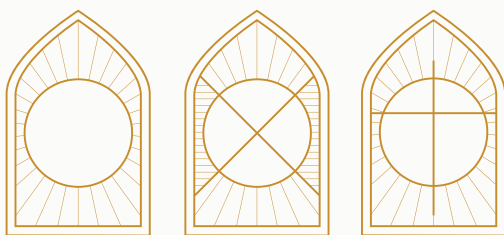


WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?



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Introduction

What is a Christian?

What is a Christian?

It sounds like one of those questions that should be simple to answer.

After all, Christianity is the world's biggest religion. Over 2 billion people on the planet identify themselves as Christians. It's possible that you've had some kind of encounter with the Christian faith; through going to church or interacting with Christians at school or work. Christianity is often spoken about in movies and media and in our society.

Defining what a Christian is should be a simple matter. Yet many people find defining a Christian actually more difficult than they first considered.

A Christian is...

How would you finish that sentence?

Often people say something like this;

A Christian is someone who...

goes to church.

believes in God.

tries to be a good person.

has faith.

There's always a contrast in the answers.

Why do you think that is?

Why is there so much disparity in how to define the core beliefs of the biggest religion in the world?

We have no problem defining other things.

Someone who dances is a...dancer.

Someone born in Samoa to Samoan parents is...Samoan.

Someone who teaches mathematics to teenage students in a school is a...teacher.

So why is defining what a Christian is so difficult?

Perspective

The answer is found in the word perspective.

Perspective means how we see things.

It's possible in life to be so shaped by your perspective that it makes seeing what's true very difficult. The mother who can't believe that their child could do the wrong thing, even when all the evidence points to exactly that. The fan who swears black and blue that their team is the best team even though they never win.

Because we all have our own experiences, interactions and exposure to Christian things, it can make what should be simple very complicated. We can be convinced we know what it's all about, when in reality what we know is simply the product of the way our perspective is shaping us.

So is it possible to work out what Christianity's about?

Yes, we can.

There is a perspective available which we can trust to be telling the truth.

As the name suggests, Christianity is all about Jesus Christ.

Jesus was a real person who truly lived 2000 years ago.

Most of what we know about Jesus comes from eyewitness testimony contained in the Bible. Whilst this provides the majority of information, it may be helpful to know there are also other non-biblical accounts of Jesus and Christianity that verify his existence and the historical reliability of the biblical records.

For most of his life Jesus did nothing of any particular interest. He worked as a carpenter in rural Israel. However at some point in his early 30s he entered into the world around him as a religious teacher.

He grew popular with the common people, but it didn't last. Around 3 years later he was betrayed, abandoned, arrested, tortured and killed.

He didn't write a book, no one painted a picture of him when he was alive, he didn't fight any battles and he didn't travel very far. He did none of the things we normally associate with influence or importance.

So what makes his perspective so trustworthy?

To answer this question, we need to consider who Jesus really is. Understanding his real identity helps us work out whether he's someone we need to listen to.

Who is Jesus?

So who is Jesus?

On one level you could identify Jesus by saying he is a carpenter, a Jew, a religious teacher, and a victim of an unjust execution. All of those things would be true.

But how does Jesus identify himself?

“I and the Father are one.”

John 10:30

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 1:8

Jesus says he's not another religious teacher, or spiritual expert, or life coach.

He says he is God; God's eternal son.

It's what he says and does as God that forms the core of the Christian faith.

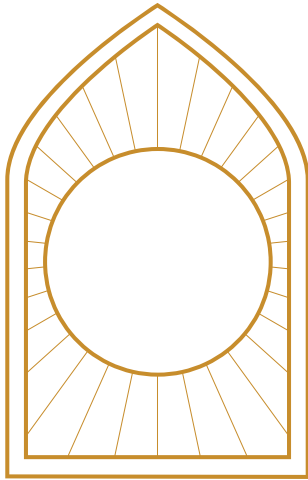
This means two things:

1. We don't determine what a Christian is: Jesus does.
2. His perspective isn't just another opinion, but the word of God Himself.

To find the truth, all we need to do is listen to what Jesus says.
So what does he say?
The answer is both the worst, and the best news you will ever hear.

Part 1

God made it



Chapter 1

What kind of life do you want to live?

Let's start with the end in mind.

Imagine that you have a time machine and you're able to go forward in time all the way to the end: to your funeral.

You slip in the back unnoticed and take a seat. After a few minutes, the eulogies begin. Different friends and family members are eulogizing you, talking about the path you chose, your work, your relationships, your qualities, your choices.

What would you like them to say about you? How would you want to be remembered?

Now; think about it in reverse.

What would you not like them to say about you? How would you not want to be remembered?

You've only got one life. You don't get to do it again. It's important that you don't waste it. It's crucial that you live your life focused on things that matter.

But how can you do that?

There's no shortage of opinions, philosophies and ideas available for us to listen to. People have been discussing the meaning of life for as long as people have been discussing anything. Finding the truth can appear difficult.

Yet it doesn't have to be. If you're actually interested in finding out the truth about life and its meaning, you don't need to look all over the place to find what you're looking for. It's not a mystery for you to piece together.