

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “BELIEVE?”**

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An ABC news poll found that 83 percent of Americans identified with Christianity (<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=90356&page=1>). According to Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, a Christian is someone who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ. This is a very important statement because if one professes belief in Christ they will; of course, want to be obedient to His teachings.

There are organizations that claim this belief that we would not consider to be obedient to the teachings of Christ. Without trying to single out any specific group, we can mention some of their beliefs. Some claim that Christ is not deity, but that He was created by God. Some claim that they were given additional scripture by the hand of angels, yet these teachings quite openly contradict New Testament teachings. There are religious organizations that revere their leaders as if they were God themselves and they will refer to him as Christ’s vicar on earth (a vicar serves as a substitute for Christ on earth). There are groups of people that claim today that they can perform the same miracles that we read of in the New Testament, yet they choose not to raise the dead, heal one with a missing or withered limb, or feed thousands with just a few fish.

Recognizing these false beliefs, it would be a fair question to ask these individuals, “Do you really believe in Christ while teaching things that He never did teach?” John recorded Jesus saying, “**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**” (Jn. 15:14). As people who want to be followers of Christ and obedient to His wishes, we have to be obedient to His commandments. If we are not obedient to His commandments, one could fairly ask, “Are you a true believer?”

Abraham was called the friend of God because he did all that God commanded him to do (2 Chron. 20:7). James said that Abraham believed God (Js. 2:23) and his belief led him to obey God and do what he was commanded to do (Heb. 11:8-10). If Abraham had claimed a belief in God yet did not leave Ur to go to the land to which God would guide him, it could not be said that he was the friend of God.

Likewise, if we claim a belief in Jesus Christ yet we will not do the things that He has taught us to do, it cannot be said that we are His friend (Jn. 15:14). If we will submit to His will and do the things that He asks us to do, then we can truly claim a friendship and a fellowship with the Son of God and be considered faithful in His sight. In our actions, one will be able to see our obedience to Him as we fulfill the duties He has given all Christians!

The secular definition of Christian simply states that a Christian is one that claims a belief in Jesus. The Biblical definition of a Christian is much different. According to the scripture, a Christian is a “follower” of Christ. Being a follower of Christ entails certain things which include obedience to Him initially and continued obedience throughout life.

Christ taught faith (Jn. 8:24), repentance (Mt. 8:24), confession (Mt. 10:32-33), baptism (Mk. 16:16), and faithful living (Mt. 24:13; Rev. 2:10). Without the fulfillment of these commandments, we cannot properly say we believe! If we fail Him in any of these areas, it could be asked, “Do we really believe?” There is no reason to lose out on eternal life because of a refusal to do something that is so easy to accomplish. Christ has not asked us to do anything that is impossible to complete.

Let each of us ask ourselves, “Do I really believe?” Let us examine the things that we have done and compare them to the teachings of Jesus that we find in the New Testament. If we have done the things we read, then let us continue in them, but if we are lacking in some area, let us change those things and become the friend of Jesus through obedience to His gospel plan of salvation and faithful living.

Always compare what anyone teaches with what Christ and His apostles have taught us through the New Testament. Never take the word of a mere man or woman over the word of Christ and the inspired writers of the Bible, who were led by the Holy Spirit.