

WHO IS IN CHARGE OF YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE?

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Have you ever asked yourself the question, “what does it mean to be a Christian?” You can talk to a variety of people from all walks of life and every denomination in the world and you will receive a wide variety of responses. Who is right? As a young person I grew up in an Evangelical Baptist Church. I was certain that we had the answers to the basic questions about being a Christian. Later I attended Bethel College which was operated by the Missionary Church USA. I was astounded to learn that they took a somewhat different view of the Bible than I had been taught. Following graduation from Bethel College I attended a Mennonite Seminary and obtained 2 different graduate degrees. I was now wondering what the real truth is. I then attended a Catholic University and came into contact with an entirely different view of Christianity. If that was not confusion enough I attended Grace Theological Seminary for an additional year of Theological Education. From there I went to a Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. My final degree was obtained from Andrews University which is associated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church. I was introduced to six different concepts of God and the Church. Which group had **the truth**?

Thus my initial question became what is the real truth about being a Christian? When we hear all the different voices how do we know what is real and what is some ones theory? Who then is Jesus Christ? Does Jesus Christ make any difference in our lives? How do we know what truth is? Does it make any difference? Does it make any difference who is in control of our life directions? Can we learn to focus our attention on the future and reach forward to successful living in our daily lives? Where do we find the strength to overcome the obstacles that are placed in our pathway every day? What is our role in the process of growing in our Christian faith? Can other people determine our thinking and our behaviors? What is the role of personal decision making in your own life? Think about this question – Can you change another persons behavior or is that a personal choice?

THINK YOUR WAY THROUGH THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE!

You might want to find a Dictionary or a Bible dictionary and look up some of the key words in each of these verses. Following verse 6 is a series of statements that may help you define the important words and concepts.

Ephesians 4:1

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

1. A Christian is one who lives a life worthy of the calling you have received
 - a. completely humble
 - b. completely gentle
 - c. completely patient
 - d. completely treating each other in love
 - e. keep the unity of the Holy Spirit in your lives
 - f. live in a bond of peace
 - g. you have one hope
 - h. you have one faith
 - i. you have one baptism
 - j. you have one God and Father who is over all, through all and in all

2. The non-Christian is who is living as children of darkness - living like the Gentiles (sinners)
 - k. in futility of their minds
 - l. darkened (self-centered) in their understanding
 - m. being separated from God because of their ignorance = the hardening of their hearts
 - n. having lost their sensitivity
 - o. have given themselves over to sensuality
 - p. indulging in every kind of impurity
 - q. continual lust for more

3. You are not to live like this because (Note the contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian)
 - r. you know Christ
 - s. you heard of him and have been taught in him
 - t. you have put off your old self
 - u. you have a new life
 - v. you have new attitudes of your mind
 - w. you have put on your new self
 - x. you are created to be like God in true righteousness
 - y. you are to speak truthfully to your neighbors
 - z. we are all members of the same body
 - aa. we are to walk in righteousness and holiness
 - bb. we are to avoid being angry
 - cc. we are not to give the devil a foothold
 - dd. we are to work and do something useful with our hands
 - ee. we are to say only those things that will be helpful to others
 - ff. we are to be kind and compassionate
 - gg. we are forgiving of one another
 - hh. we behave as Christ would behave to the other person

When you look at this section and the three different lists where do you find yourself? You may want to check those that you feel comfortable with and then look at the other factors and ask yourself what you need to do to bring your life in line with the expectations of the Bible.

4. Here are 10 words that are imperative in having a good marriage. Rank them in order of importance to you. Rank them as follows: 1 = Never important, 2 = Some what important, 3 = Medium importance, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very important.

- a. ___ Gentle
- b. ___ Kind
- c. ___ Patient
- d. ___ Accepting the other person as they are
- e. ___ Accurately listening to what is being said
- f. ___ Forgiving
- g. ___ Compassionate
- h. ___ Helpful
- i. ___ Looking for the best in the other person
- j. ___ Positive attitude

Select the three that are of most importance to you. Write these down and explain how you are going to practice them in your relationship on a daily basis. It takes 5 to 7 weeks to develop a new life pattern or habit.

1. -

2.

3.

There are three absolute rules you must learn to follow if you are going to have successful relationships in your daily life as an individual and in other significant relationships including your marriage.

1. Never say anything that is unkind and or will hurt the other person.
2. Never do anything that is unkind and or will hurt the other person.
3. Never destroy anything that belongs to another person.

Are you willing to make the following pledge in your own life?

I pledge myself to abide by these regulations and precepts putting them into practice immediately. I will keep a diary of my behavior at the end of each day to keep track of my improved determination to follow Jesus Christ in everything I do and say and to make certain I am living by the three basic rules stated above.

I will share my diary with the counselor/friend each week at noting both the successes and the failures. I will admit my mistakes and state in writing what I am trying to do to change all of my behaviors in keeping with my Christian faith.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says:

*"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men."*

(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare

God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

NIV

QUESTIONS: write out your answers for your own benefit. If you want to discuss your answers with me feel free to contact me: jmartin@thechapel.net

1. Are you as a Christian?
2. What does it mean to be a prisoner of the Lord?
3. If you are a Christian can you be a prisoner to anyone or anything other than God?
4. Who determines the choices you make related to who you are serving?
5. How can you focus on the positive aspects of your Christian Faith?
6. What is the calling you have received?
7. What does it mean to be "completely humble"?
8. What does it mean to be gentle?
9. What does it mean to be patient?
10. What does it mean to bear with another person in love?
11. How do we keep unity of the Spirit?
12. What is the bond of peace?
13. What does it mean to be called to "one hope"?
14. What does it mean to be called to "one Lord"?
15. What does it mean to be called to "one faith"?
16. What does it mean to be called to "one baptism"?
17. Who is the "one God and Father of all"?

Following is a study provided for you information. It is taken from Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary – (Biblesoft – PC Bible Study) Ephesians 4:1-:6; NOTE THE PRIMARY WORDS ARE DIFFERENT BECAUSE IT IS TAKEN FROM THE KING JAMES VERSION OF THE BIBLE.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

The practical portion begins here. Greek order, 'I exhort [parakaloo] you, therefore (seeing that such is your calling of grace, Ephesians 1; 2; 3:1, 14); I, the prisoner in the Lord' (i.e., imprisoned in the Lord's cause: in Ephesians 3:1, "the prisoner of Jesus," the imprisonment is attributed to Him as its author; but here, to union with Him). What the

world counted ignominy, he counts honor, glorying in his bonds for Christ more than a king in his diadem (Theodoret). His bonds enforce his exhortation. **Vocation** - translate '**calling**,' to accord with "called" (Romans 8:28, 30; Ephesians 1:18; 5:4). Colossians 3:15 similarly grounds Christian duties on our "calling." The exhortations in this part of the letter rest on realization of the privileges in the former part. Compare Ephesians 4:32 with Ephesians 1:7; 5:1 with 1:5; 4:30 with 1:13; 5:15 with 1:8.

Ephesians 4:2 and 3

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
Lowliness, [in classic Greek, tapeinophrosunee is meanness of spirit: the Gospel elevated the word to express a Christian grace] - namely, esteeming ourselves small, as we are so; the thinking truly, and therefore lowly, of ourselves (Trench).

Meekness, [prautes] - that spirit in which we accept God's dealings without disputing; also the injuries done by men, patiently, out of the thought that they are permitted by God for the purifying of His people (2 Samuel 16:11: cf. Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25; Titus 3:2). A sense of dependence on God is the groundwork (Matthew 11:29). It is only the lowly heart that is also meek (Colossians 3:12-13). As "lowliness and meekness" answer to "forbearing one another in love" (cf. "love," Ephesians 4:15-16), so "long-suffering" ("slow to wrath," James 1:19; forbearance; not immediately punishing a fault) answers to (Ephesians 4:4) "endeavoring [spoudazontes], 'zealously giving diligence;' for it needs pains to check the inward feelings when provoked] to keep (maintain) the unity of the Spirit (the unity between men of different tempers, which flows from their having the Spirit, who is Himself "one," Ephesians 4:4) in (united in) the bond of peace" (the "bond" by which "peace" is maintained-namely, "love," Colossians 3:14-15) (Bengel); or, "peace" itself is the "bond" uniting the Church members: the element in which the unity is maintained (Ellicott).

Ephesians 4:4

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
In the Apostles' creed the article as to THE CHURCH follows that as to THE HOLY SPIRIT. To the Trinity naturally is annexed the Church, as the house to its tenant, to God His temple, the state to its founder (Augustine). There is yet to be a Church, not merely potentially, but actually Catholic: then the Church and the world will be co-extensive. Rome sets up a mere man as a visible head, antedating that consummation which Christ, the true visible Head, at His appearing shall first realize. As the "SPIRIT" is here, so the "LORD" (Jesus), Ephesians 4:5, "GOD the Father," Ephesians 4:6. The Trinity is again set forth.

Hope - associated with "the Spirit," the "earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14). As "faith" is mentioned, Ephesians 4:5, so "hope" here, and "love," Ephesians 4:2. The Holy Spirit, as the common principle of life (Ephesians 2:18, 22), gives to the Church its true unity (1 Corinthians 12:13). Outward uniformity is as yet unattainable; but beginning by having one mind, we shall hereafter have "one body." The true "body" of Christ (all

believers of every age) is already "one," as joined to the one Head (Romans 12:5; Colossians 1:24). But its unity is not yet visible, as the Head is not visible; but it shall appear when He shall appear (John 17:21-23; Colossians 3:4). Meanwhile the rule is, 'In essentials, unity; in doubtful questions, liberty; in all things, charity.' There is real unity where both go to heaven under different names; none, when with the same name one goes to heaven, the other to hell. Truth is first: those who reach it will reach unity, because truth is one. Those who seek unity at first may purchase it at the sacrifice of truth, and so of the soul itself.

Of your calling. The one "hope" flowing from our "calling" is the element "IN" which we were "called." The oneness of the Spirit in the Church-the "one body" - is shown by the oneness of our hope. Instead of privileged classes, as under the law a unity of dispensation is the common privilege of Jew and Gentile alike. Spirituality, universality, and unity were designed to characterize the Church: it shall be so at last (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:9, 13; Zephaniah 3:9; Zech 14:9).

Ephesians 4:5

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Similarly "faith" and "baptism" (the sacramental seal of faith) are connected (Mark 16:16; Colossians 2:12). "Faith" is not here that, which we believe, but the act of believing, the one mean by which all believers in common apprehend the "one Lord." "Baptism" is the one and only visible sacrament whereby we are once for all united to "one Lord" (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), and incorporated into the "one body." Not the Lord's supper, which implies the matured communion of those already incorporate. Baptism, by its single celebration and individual reference, symbolizes unity; the Lord's supper union (Ellicott). In 1 Corinthians 10:17, where a breach of union was in question, the latter forms the rallying-point (Alford). There is not added, 'One Pope, one council, one form of government.' The Church is one in unity of faith (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3), of origination (Ephesians 2:19-21), of sacraments (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:5), of "hope" (Titus 1:2; 5:4), of charity (Ephesians 4:3); unity (not uniformity) of discipline and government: for where there is no order-no ministry with Christ as the Head-there is no Church (Pearson).

Ephesians 4:6

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Above, [epi] - 'over all' (Romans 9:5). The 'one God over all' (in His sovereignty and His grace) is the crowning apex of unity (Ephesians 2:19, end). 'Over, through, in' express God's threefold relation to his creatures.

Through all - by the mediation of Christ, who 'fillet all things' (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:20-21; 5:10), and is "a propitiation" for all men (1 John 2:2).

In you all - by His Spirit. 'Aleph (') A B C, Coptic, omit "you." D G f g, Vulgate, both Syriac versions, read 'in us all.' The pronoun must be understood (either from the "ye," Ephesians 4:4, or from the "us," Ephesians 4:7); for Scripture proves that the Spirit is not

'in all' men, but only in believers (Romans 8:9, 14). God is "Father" both by generation (as Creator) and regeneration (Ephesians 2:10; James 1:17-18; 1 John 5:1).

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CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:11-14

Pressing toward the Goal

12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. 13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.

What does Paul mean by saying that he has not already achieved his goal?

Who is doing the work to achieve that goal?

Why is he focusing his energy to forget the past?

Why is it that when you focus on forgetting the past you are then able to look toward the future?

What does it mean when he says I am straining to reach the end of the race (goal)?

What is the ultimate prize?

SUMMARY: One of the basic concepts we encounter in our daily lives is we are responsible for our own thinking and doing. We cannot blame anyone or anything else for our life choices. If we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, then we have been purchased by His shed blood on Calvary. Our salvation is then completed. We do not have to do anything to make certain we are saved. Our salvation has been sealed by His work on Calvary and no one can take it away from us.

Psalm 103:11-12

“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us”? NIV

Philippians 4:1

“Therefore, my brothers (sisters), you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!”

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight”.

NIV

Each of us has a choice when it comes to living our lives as Christians in our world today. To become a Christian is simple. You just ask Jesus Christ to come into your life. The rest of the journey is where the problems begin. What does it mean to live as a Christian? You alone can make the final decision. It is after all your choice!

Remember:

“ONLY ONE LIFE IT WILL SOON BE PAST, ONLY WHAT IS DONE FOR CHRIST WILL LAST!”

Author Unknown

THIS IS YOUR CHOICE. ONLY YOU AND YOU ALONE CAN MAKE THIS DECISION!!!

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