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What is Needed to Be a Christian?

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What It Means to Be a Christian

One can understand the things that are essential for Christian faith and life and still remain apart from them. In order to know God's love for you, you need to know and love Jesus Christ, and commit yourself to him as his lifelong disciple in his community, the Church.

Whether or not you were raised in the Church, to be a Christian requires a deliberate, personal commitment to Jesus Christ, much like the commitment a person makes in marriage. Being a Christian is a process of continuing forward in faithfulness to Jesus from that point on. In order to make this commitment to Jesus, you need to know the essentials about who he is and what he has done for you. This is the Gospel ("good news") of Jesus Christ.

God created the world and made us to be in loving relationship with him. Though created good, human nature became fatally flawed, and we are now all out of step with God. In Bible language, we are sinners, guilty before God and separated from him. The good news of the Gospel is that God took loving action in Jesus Christ to save us from this dire situation. The key facts of this divine remedy are these: God the Father sent his eternal

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Son into this world to reconcile us to himself, to free us to love and serve him, and to prepare us to share his glory in the life to come. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose bodily from the dead to restore us to God. Given authority by his Father, Jesus now rules in heaven as King over all things, advancing God's kingdom throughout the world. In the fullness of time, Jesus will return to establish his kingdom in its glory on earth, and all things will be renewed.

Reigning in heaven over all things, Jesus Christ continues to draw sinners to himself. He enables us by his Holy Spirit to turn wholeheartedly from our sinful and self-centered ways (repentance), and to entrust ourselves to him to live in union and communion with him (faith). In spiritual terms, sin is the way of death, and fellowship with Christ is the way of life.

Turning to Christ

Turning to Christ brings us into fellowship with God. Baptism, which is the rite of entry into the Church's fellowship, marks the beginning of this new life in Christ. The apostle Peter, proclaiming the Gospel, said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 2:38](#)).

Through faith, repentance, and Baptism we are spiritually united to Jesus and become children of God the Father. Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" ([John 14:6](#)). As we come to the Father through Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds and hearts to know him, and we are born again spiritually to new life. To continue to live faithfully as Christians, we must rely upon the power and gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to God's people.

When the disciple Thomas encountered the risen Jesus, he acknowledged him by saying, "My Lord and my God!" ([John 20:28](#)). To be a Christian you must, like Thomas, wholeheartedly submit to the living Christ as your Lord and God. Knowing the Lord Jesus means personally believing in him, surrendering your life to him through repentance and Baptism, and living as one of his joyful followers.

A clear way to make this commitment of faith and repentance is to offer to God a prayer in which you

- confess your sins to God, being as specific as possible, and repent by turning from them;

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- thank God for his mercy and forgiveness given to you in Jesus Christ;
- promise to follow and obey Jesus as your Lord;
- ask the Holy Spirit to help you be faithful to Jesus as you grow into spiritual maturity.

One example of such a prayer is the following:

Almighty Father, I confess that I have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions (especially ____). I am truly sorry and humbly repent. Thank you for forgiving my sins through the death of your Son, Jesus. I turn to you and give you my life. Fill and strengthen me with your Holy Spirit to love you, to follow Jesus as my Lord in the fellowship of his Church, and to become more like him each day. Amen.

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Next Steps

To be a Christian is to be included in God's family, the Church. No one should try to be a Christian alone. If you are making this commitment for the first time—or have not been a practicing Christian for some time—here are some further steps to take:

- Share your commitment as soon as possible with one or more Christians and with an ordained minister, so they can pray for you.
- If you are not connected with a church, join a biblically faithful one. If you are connected but not involved, look for ways to deepen your participation.
- If you are now becoming a follower of Jesus Christ and have never been baptized, it is important that you speak with a minister about preparing for Baptism. It is also important to pray for God's help and spiritual protection.
- If you are a baptized Christian but have not been living out your faith, it is appropriate for you to confess your sins and reaffirm your faith in the presence of a minister.
- In order to grow in your new life in Christ, it is vitally important that you be involved in regular worship, Bible study, prayer, and Christian fellowship.

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Coming to personal faith in Christ is a momentous decision that is often not made quickly. If you are not yet ready to take this step, but you continue to seek after God, you may want to pray a prayer like the following:

O God, please reveal yourself to me. Draw near to me as I seek you. Open my eyes to see your truth. Show me those things in my mind and heart that keep me from faith in you. Help me to know and trust Jesus Christ. And lead me to those people who can help me as I seek to know you.

God will always answer such prayers made with patience, persistence, and humility. As you go forward, continue to pray that you will come to know God more fully.

This article is adapted from [To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism](#) edited by J. I. Packer and Joel Scandrett.



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© Crossway, December 12, 2021. Retrieved February 21, 2022.

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