

Pastors Perspective, Loon Lake Times

Another name for “Christian”?

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I thought last month’s question was difficult, but then I received the question for March. The core question was, “The title ‘Christian’ has become tainted with politics and associated with hate. Is there an alternative name for the few who believe in the Jesus of the Bible...?” As a “Christian,” I understand the concern, and I have spent a lot of time considering this question.

The title “Christian” has endured for centuries (being adopted by the Church in the second century). So, what does it mean to be a “Christian”? And then, who gets to decide what it means to be a Christian? Furthermore, how do we keep from making ourselves the example instead of Christ when determining who is and who is not a Christian?

Out of curiosity, I searched a non-religious dictionary website for adjectives connected to “Christian,” and I found hundreds and hundreds of them, all that reflected the high moral character and ethical standards of behavior. I discovered that the secular world has a good definition of “Christian” already. This discovery supported something I have been mulling over. Let me illustrate.

Think of a favorite dessert that you have always enjoyed. For you to enjoy that dessert as you have in the past, it must be made only with specific ingredients, in exact quantities, then mixed in the proper order, and cooked just so long. If someone deviates from the recipe, even though it may look the same when finished, the litmus test is always that first bite.

My point (besides making you and me hungry) is that I believe those of us who claim to be Christians (literally, Christ Followers) need to get back and read Jesus’ “recipe” about how we are to live out the salvation we have received “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8-9). A great place to start would be the first four books of the New Testament, noting the teachings and practices of Jesus.

Every political party has a “Platform” in which is recorded their stated beliefs, values, and policies. The conflict arises when those who claim to be part of the political party fail to support, promote, vote, and live consistent with the respective “platform.” These individuals within the Republican party are called “RINOs” (Republicans In Name Only).

Moreover, when the topic is about being a Christian, the conversation becomes something far more significant – even eternal – than someone’s political party affiliation. Yes, there are religious “RINOs” in the Church that tarnish the title “Christian.” So, what is the best

way to respond? May I suggest the first question each self-proclaimed Christian must ask is not, “Where are they?” but instead, “Am I one of them?”

Jesus told His disciples that they could distinguish between true and false Christ-followers by the fruit of their lives just as a “tree is known by its fruit” (Matt. 12:33). However, He also warned them that on the final day, many who thought they were a Christian will hear Jesus say to them, “Depart from me, for I never knew you” (Matt. 7:23). Therefore, which “Christian” should concern us the most? The ones sitting in the pews, or the one looking back at us in the mirror?

Let us not forget that Christians are humans whom God has forgiven in response to their repentance. Christians are not wing-less angels who don’t have any variety of past issues still impacting their current walk in the Christian faith. Learning and growing as a Christian is a marathon, not a sprint. Years ago, at Bill Gothard’s seminars, they would give you a pin with these letters: PBPGINFWMY, which stood for “Please Be Patient, God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.” After 49 years as a Christian, I am still a work in progress, and I suspect I am not alone.

What if sincere Christ-followers (who are working on themselves first of all) responded to the reality of Church “RINOs” by genuinely praying for them to know the life-transforming love, forgiveness, and mercy of God? Moreover, what if this prayer expanded to a heartfelt petition to a loving heavenly Father to revive His Church and bring us ALL back to His “original recipe”? I suspect our attitudes towards one another may change for the better, and God just might respond by doing “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20).

If not “Christian,” then I like something closer to: “Holy Ghost-filled, Jesus-loving, Bible-believing, demon-stomping, soul-saving, truth-proclaiming, fire-baptized, Heaven-bound Child of the Living God.” That may not fit too well on a business card or Facebook profile page, but it is more definitive.