



# Spirit of Grace Herald

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## Spirit of Grace Ministries

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## What is a Christian?

Early in my Christian days I was trying to witness to someone who did not appear to know Jesus, and he asked me, "What would you say is the definition of a Christian?" This was a good question, and I struggled a bit to try to explain it to him. Today, some fifty years later, I think I can answer that question better. Let us consider some of the Bible expressions for the experience of becoming a follower of Jesus.



The first expression comes from the mouth of Jesus. In the third chapter of John Jesus told a man named Nicodemus, "**Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" (John 3:3). So here is an expression of what it means to becoming a child of God coming directly from the mouth of Jesus – to be **born again**. Jesus tells us that this is a must; unless you are born again, you will never see the kingdom of God, in other words, you will never go to heaven.

When I was younger, I made it a practice to go out every week, knock on doors, give out Christian literature, and ask people if they were a Christian. But I soon found out that in Texas, nearly everybody would answer "yes" to that question. Today, I don't think that would be the case, even in Texas, but in those days it was rare to have someone tell me, "No, I am not a Christian." So I changed my tactics a bit and started asking people if they had been born again. Suddenly the percentage of people responding positively dropped significantly. Many either did not know what it meant to be born again or felt that this experience had never happened to them.

Another word that the Bible uses for being a genuine Christian is the simple word **saved**. This was the most common expres-

sion used among evangelicals in my childhood and youth. Instead of asking people if they were Christians, people would ask, "Have you been saved?"

This idea of being saved comes straight from the Scriptures. When the angel appeared to Joseph, informing him that Mary's pregnancy was of the Holy Spirit, he went on to say that the baby who would be born

would "**save His people from their sins.**" The apostle Paul wrote: "**If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**" (Romans 10:9).

This, of course, infers that without Christ we are not saved; we are lost and in spiritual peril. The apostles once asked Jesus, "**Lord, are there few who are saved?**" (Luke 13:23). Jesus informed them that there were more who were unsaved than saved, saying, "**Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**" (Luke 13:24).

# What is a Christian?

In addition to "born again," and "saved," another Biblical term for being transformed from darkness to light is simply to **receive Jesus**. John writes: **"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."** (John 1:12). We are spiritually transformed and become children of God when we receive Jesus. The concept of receiving indicates that there is a submission of the heart and of the will involved with the act of putting our faith in Jesus. We do not reject Him, deny Him, or oppose Jesus; we *receive* Jesus, and we do this by putting our faith in Him, in an act which opens our heart, our life, and our will to Him.

Yet another Biblical term for the experience of salvation in Jesus is the word "**conversion**." Jesus once called a little child to Him as an object lesson, and told the crowds that surrounded Him, **"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."** (Matthew 18:3). Unchanged people who go through their lives without a radical conversion to Christ are in a godless, hopeless state.

This experience of being transformed and repositioned from darkness to light, from death to life, is entirely linked with Jesus Christ. You will never experience this by reading philosophy books or trying to be the nicest person in your neighborhood or turning over a dozen new leaves. It happens when people hear about the Lord Jesus Christ: who He is, what He said, taught, and did, His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection three days later. The repentance and faith that arises in the heart after learning about Jesus, created by the Holy Spirit working on and in our hearts, brings about this amazing experience the Bible calls being born again, being saved, receiving Jesus, being converted, or simply believing on Jesus. It is to be followed by baptism and then a lifelong commitment to be a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ. And the end result is eternal life. **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans 6:23).

## This Month!! Our First "Jesus Conference" in Africa



### AFRICAN PASTORS:

- They Love Jesus!
- They are Dynamic Preachers!
- They have almost no Bible training.

The sad truth is that very few African pastors have systematic Bible training. They begin their ministries with a lot of zeal but little Bible knowledge. We are attempting to remedy this by our "Jesus

Conference for Church Leaders." We plan to send teams throughout Kenya to share videos we have produced which will give them Biblical keys that can greatly enhance their ministries. We have purchased a large, flat-screen television for our team and have scheduled our first conference this month. Please pray for and support this important new ministry.