

What Is a Christian?

by Greg Laurie

Greg Laurie's sermon explores the true meaning of being a Christian and the importance of genuine faith over mere appearances.

Duration: 46:23

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew 21:1-11, John 3:16, John 14:6, Acts 9:3-6, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:18

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon entitled 'What is a Christian?' by Pastor Greg Lloyd, he emphasizes the importance of being a true Christian. He uses the story of a man who dressed up as a gorilla in a zoo to illustrate the need for genuine transformation in one's life. Pastor Lloyd highlights five key aspects of being a Christian: having open eyes, turning from darkness to light, breaking free from the power of Satan, receiving forgiveness of sins, and living a life that makes a difference for the kingdom of God. He encourages listeners to make a commitment to God, turn away from sin, and put God first in their lives in order to receive the forgiveness and transformation that only God can provide.

Transcript

G619 by Pastor Greg Lloyd, with a message entitled, What is a Christian? I told you the story before of this guy who was looking for a job. He was desperate for work, and he heard that the local zoo might have a position open as a zookeeper. And so he went down there and sat down with the manager there at the zoo and said, I'd like to get a job, you know, doing whatever, helping out, cleaning the pens.

And the manager said, sir, I'm really sorry, but we don't have any positions available right now. But the manager looked at the size of this guy. He's a big, beefy, burly, muscular kind of a guy.

And the manager said, now, buddy, this is going to sound crazy, but I'm going to ask it anyway. Our gorilla just died the other day, and would you be open? I know this is crazy, but would you be open to maybe taking his place? And I'm going to explain. We'd have a gorilla suit, custom-made to fit you.

You'd look like a gorilla. All you'd have to do is go to his cage, pretend you're a gorilla until we can get a real one in. The guy thought, well, that's crazy.

Then the manager told him how much money there was in it, and the guy quickly agreed. So the next day, he got his new gorilla suit, and he went over to the cage and, you know, didn't know what to do, beat his

chest a little bit, and a little crowd began to gather. And then the next day, he started to loosen up a little bit more, and he started to swing back and forth, and the vine and the crowds were getting bigger.

Well, by the third day, he was fully into it. He was beating his chest, swinging, carrying on. Huge crowds were gathering.

This guy was really starting to like it. By the fourth day, he was really swinging far and wide in that great cage, and then he sort of lost his way and slipped over into the cage next to it, which was the lion's cage, and landed right in the middle of it. And all of a sudden, the crowd ran over to that side to see what would happen.

The lion, with a very hungry look in his face, began to approach this guy in the gorilla suit. So he backed up in a corner. He didn't know what to do.

Because if he cried out, help, everyone was going to know he was a fraud and was a pretender and was not a gorilla at all. But if he didn't say anything, he was going to be lunch for Leo. So what's he going to do? Well, finally, he can't contain himself any longer, and he screams out, help! And the lion says back, shut up, stupid, or you'll get us both fired.

You see, things are not always as they appear, right? And just like this guy pretended to be something he was not, there are a lot of people today going to church, carrying Bibles, saying they are Christians that really are not. You know, in some ways, it almost seems like America is experiencing a spiritual revival. Because you'll read about these polls that are being taken, where more Americans believe in God than just about any other time that we can remember.

More Americans read the Bible, etc. But then you look at the moral state of our culture, and you have to wonder if people really know what it means to be a Christian. For instance, a poll was taken by George Magazine toward the end of last year, or a couple of years ago, I should say, rather.

And it revealed that 86% of Americans believe in God. That's a lot. 75% believe in life after death.

86% believe in heaven. 77% believe in hell. This is interesting.

51% don't believe that humans evolved from lower life forms. So you would think that everyone believes in evolution. It's not the case.

51% of the people polled did not believe in evolution. But this poll also revealed that 10% of Americans think Elvis is still alive. So it's not as good as it seems.

U.S. News and World Report did an article called Spiritual America, and it revealed that 60% of Americans say they attend religious services on a regular basis. More than 80%, including 71% of college graduates, believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God. That surprised me.

And then George Gallup has come out with a brand new book that I just looked at yesterday. It's called The Next American Spirituality, subtitled Finding God in the 21st Century. And he pointed out that the percentage of Americans who completely agree that prayer is an important part of their daily life rose from 41% in 1987 to 53% in 1997.

That is a rise of 12 percentage points. And he went on to point out that those who completely agree that they have never doubted the existence of God rose 11 points in the same 10 years. And 46% of

Americans who were polled described themselves as born again.

Check this one out. Seven out of every eight Americans polled said they were affiliated with or identified with a Christian denomination. And this caused New York Magazine to do a lead story that was entitled Religion Makes a Comeback.

And they said, among other things, America has outgrown its old take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward religion. Now people, even without faith, are looking for God, end quote. Now that sounds pretty encouraging, doesn't it? But needless to say, a lot of people don't understand what it is to know the Lord.

George Barnett did an article about the minimal impact that Christianity is making in our culture today. And he said, and I quote, Christianity is having a minimal influence on thoughts, words, and deeds in the lives of people under the age of 40. His examination of 100 indicators of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior showed that Christians are very similar to non-Christians in their everyday behavior.

Now why is that? How is it that spirituality could be at an all-time high, but the practical impact of Christianity would be at an all-time low? Answer. There just has to be a lot of people out there who think they are Christians, but really are not. I heard a statistic a while back that said 50% of all born-again Christians, in quotes I would think, don't have the assurance of salvation.

Now it may be that of those people who are born again, they just haven't read what the Bible has to say about the assurance of one standing before God. But it may be because some of those people don't know Christ. And that's why they don't have the assurance of salvation.

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian, any more than going to a donut shop makes you a cop. Now a cop told me that joke, so don't get all upset. But it's true.

Just because you say you believe certain things, just because you've been raised in a Christian home, just because you've read the Bible from your youth, doesn't necessarily mean that you are a genuine Christian, that you really know the Lord. For instance, of those that were polled who said they were Christians, they found of those that read the Bible on a regular basis, they were uncertain about its features. Half of them could not name any of the four Gospels of the New Testament.

These are those that supposedly read the Bible regularly. The other half could not name at least one. Fewer than half knew who delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

Hint, he was born in Bethlehem. He died on a cross and he rose from the dead. Eighty percent of Americans who attended church last Easter, of them, one-fourth of them could not tell you what the purpose of Easter was.

Reminds me of a story I heard of a group of four-year-olds in Sunday school and the teacher asked them the question, can anyone tell me what today is? It happened to be Palm Sunday. Little girl raises up her hand. Teacher, yes, she said.

Today is Palm Sunday. Teacher said, that's very good. And what is the purpose of Palm Sunday? Well, remembering that day when Jesus rode on that donkey into Jerusalem.

Very good. The teacher said, now can anyone tell me what next Sunday is? Same little girl shoved her hand up again. Yes, what is next Sunday? Next Sunday, she said, is Easter Sunday.

The teacher said, that is very good. And can anyone tell me what the purpose of Easter Sunday is? The little girl said, yes, it's Easter because Jesus rose from the grave. And where the teacher could congratulate her, the little girl continued, but if he sees his shadow, he has to go back in the ground for seven weeks.

That would be Easter Groundhog Day there. You see, it's clear that a lot of people don't know what a Christian really is. Do you? Are you one? Are you sure? What exactly is a Christian? Are you born that way? And if not, how can you become one? What are the requirements? Here's what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 13 5, check up on yourselves.

Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when you really aren't at all? Do you pass the test? I'll tell you what a litmus test of a Christian is in a few moments, but we all have to do a little fruit inspection in life, you see. Because Jesus said, buy their fruits, you shall know them. And there's people running around saying, oh, I'm a Christian, oh, I love the Lord.

Well, we need to find some evidence in your life that would indicate that you really have made a commitment to Christ. And when you see someone who alleges to be a Christian and you say, excuse me, are you a Christian? Oh, yeah. Yes, I am, praise God, I love the Lord.

Well, if you're a Christian, how come you're, you know, still doing drugs? If you're a Christian, how come you're out partying and getting drunk? If you're a Christian, how come you're living with your boyfriend or your girlfriend? You know what their next statement's going to be, don't you? Hey, man, don't judge me, okay? Well, if you don't mind, I think I will judge you. Well, Greg, you can't say that. Jesus said, judge not lest you be judged.

True. But what did He mean when He said that? Did He mean that I'm never to make any evaluation about any person's life or about anything else for that matter? Absolutely not. Because in the same sermon that that came from, the Sermon on the Mount, that was delivered by Jesus.

He said, don't cast your pearls before a swine and beware of false prophets. Now, how on earth am I going to know who a false prophet is if I don't make some evaluation about what that person is saying? And how am I going to know who the swine are, King James' word for pigs, unless I make some evaluation of their stand before God? The point of that is, don't take the holy truths of God and offer them to someone who has no interest in them whatsoever. How am I going to do that without judging, without evaluating, without discerning? Now, you might say, but Greg, Jesus said, judge not lest you be judged.

You know, a better way to probably translate that statement of our Lord would be, condemn not lest you be condemned. Because that's what he meant. He wasn't saying, don't ever make an evaluation, don't ever try to discern something.

He was saying, you are not in the position to pass final judgment. See, because I'm not God, I can't see your heart, so I don't know. So someone might say to me, Greg, you think that person's a Christian? I would say, well, I don't know.

I haven't seen any indicator that would say they are. I've seen no fruit in their life. There's nothing that I see in them that would cause me to believe that.

Then you might say, well, what about that person over there? Well, as a matter of fact, I think they are because I have seen evidence. I've seen some results. I think that person probably is a Christian.

Only God can make that ultimate determination. But I am to make some kind of judgment. And in the same way, the Bible says we need to look at our own lives and decide, are we really Christians? Do we really know the Lord? Because, you see, it's possible to say certain things and not really know the Lord.

For instance, you could have people that say, well, I am a surfer because I own a surfboard. Owning a surfboard doesn't make you a surfer. Yeah, but I have a wetsuit too.

Okay, good. But that doesn't make you a surfer. Yeah, but I have wax.

Okay, good, you have wax. And I have apparel. I have all the right logos and designs on my shirts.

Well, that's good, but that doesn't make you a surfer. Or you might say, I'm a computer whiz because I own a computer. No, that doesn't make you a computer whiz.

That just means you own a computer. You see, to be a surfer, you need to surf. To be a computer whiz, you have to hang out at Fry's for hours and eat junk food.

You see, you have to do what it is that you do. You have to apply it in everyday life. And to be a Christian, you need to walk with God.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that X amount of good works will make you a Christian because all of the good works on earth will not save you because the Bible says it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy that He has saved us. In fact, that is one of the primary distinctions of the Christian faith in contrast to the other world religions today because all the other religions of our world would essentially say, Do this and you'll reach a state of nirvana.

Do this and you will have good karma. Do this and you'll reach paradise. Do this and maybe you'll get into heaven.

Do, do, do. Christianity says, done. At the cross, as BTR was singing, of Calvary, our Savior bled and died for me.

It is there at Calvary that Christ died for you and said, It is finished. It is done. So it's not about what I do for God.

It's all about what God has done for me now. If I know anything of what He has done for me and if I have truly put my faith in Jesus Christ, I will now want to do, not to earn His approval, but in recognition that I've already found it because of what Jesus did at the cross. So if you're really a Christian, there will be evidence in your life.

Works don't save you, but they're a good evidence that a person is saved. It comes down to this. The outward change is often without the inward, but the inward change is never without the outward.

Are you a Christian or are you just pretending to be one when you really aren't at all? Do you pass the test? Do we really know the Lord? Now, let me share some ideas with you that might be surprising. Let's say we went out on the street right now and asked just people walking by, What do you need to do to be a Christian? We'd probably hear things like, well, to be a good Christian, you need to believe in the Bible. Someone else might say, well, to be a Christian, you need to live a good life.

Another might say, well, to be a Christian, you need to believe in heaven and miracles and believe that there's a hell. Another might say, well, to be a Christian, you need to go to church, pray, read the Bible, keep the Ten Commandments, perhaps be baptized, and then have a change in your lifestyle. Now I'm going to make a shocking statement.

Did you know that it's possible to do all the things that I just mentioned and not necessarily be a Christian? Let me backtrack for a moment. If you're a Christian, you should do all of the things I mentioned, but just because you've done those things doesn't necessarily mean you're a Christian. Well, you're losing me now, bald guy.

What are you saying? I'm saying you can pray and not necessarily be a Christian. Surveys have revealed that 9 out of every 10 Americans pray. 76% of Americans believe God is a Heavenly Father who can be reached by prayers, but that doesn't necessarily mean you're a true believer.

There's a story in the Bible, in the book of Jonah, who was the original chicken of the sea. By the way, if you laughed at that, it means you're old, because I'm referring to a StarKiss commercial. Remember Charlie Tuna, Chicken of the Sea? You got that joke, you're old or jock, whatever, okay? Never mind.

If you didn't get the joke, you're still young, there's hope, okay. I say he was the chicken of the sea because he was running from God. God told him to go and preach to the Ninevites, and Jonah said no, went in the opposite direction.

He got on board a ship and was going in the opposite direction, and the Lord caused a great storm to come, and everyone on this little boat began to call on their God. All of the sailors called on God, but the storm raged on. They said, well, where's that Hebrew God? Well, he's sleeping in the lower deck.

Well, wake him up and tell him to call on his God. I guess they figured someone's got to have the right God here. If we all call on whatever God we believe in, hopefully we'll reach the right one.

Well, as a matter of fact, Jonah did have the right God, and for that matter, the only God, and he finally admitted that he was running from the Lord, and they couldn't understand why anyone would run from a God that's powerful enough to send a storm. But the point is, everybody called on God when the chips are down, and as they say, there are no atheists in foxholes. When you're in trouble, you pray, big deal.

You can pray and not know God. I remember before I was a Christian, I prayed on occasion whenever I was in trouble. I mean, if my life was in danger, or I was going to get nailed for something I'd done, I'd say, oh, God, please help me, get me out of this.

I promise if you get me out of this, I'll serve you, I'll do anything. And God always came through for me, you know that? And I would essentially say, thanks, God, see you next crisis. That was the extent of my prayer life.

You see, it's possible to pray and not know God. You can offer your prayers to the Lord, but they never reach heaven, because the Bible says if you cling to iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you. So you can pray eloquently and beautifully, and yet never have your prayers go any higher than the ceiling, because your sin is separating you from God.

It's not enough to just pray. You can pray and not necessarily be a Christian. Number two, a person can make some visible changes in their life and not necessarily be a Christian.

The Bible tells a story in the book of Acts of a guy named Simon the sorcerer. He had the whole city basically eating out of the palm of his hand with his occultism and magic tricks and such. One day, God's man showed up, Philip, and began to preach the gospel, and miracles were done through his hand, and demons were coming out of people, and others were being healed, and everyone turned away from Simon the sorcerer and began to follow the God that Philip was preaching.

Simon knew this was bad for business, and he needed to do something quick, so he faked a conversion, and he pretended to be a believer. He was even baptized, but a little bit later in the story, you realize that he never was a believer at all. My point is, here was a guy who appeared to be a believer.

He was even baptized, but there was no change in his life. And then you can read about Herod the king, who was influenced by the bold preaching of John the Baptist, but he was even more influenced by the wicked advice of his wife Herodias, who hated John because he exposed the sin of her and her husband, and so she wanted John put to death, and that's exactly what Herod did. He executed John, but the point is, prior to that, a few changes took place in his life, but there was no real change, no conversion, so it could be possible for someone to come here on a Monday night, and I give an invitation, and they walk down that aisle, and they stand here, and they pray, and they go up into that mysterious room over there, which is just a gym, and we share a few things with them about what it means to follow Christ.

We pray for them. We send them some materials in the mail to help them in their faith, and then you might see them for the next few Monday nights. They go out and get their own Bible, and they're talking about God, and all of a sudden, they stop smoking, and they stop partying, and they're not drinking anymore, and you go, whoa, that's an intense conversion.

Then you just stop seeing them, and they just fade away. Well, what happened? Well, just because they made a few changes doesn't necessarily mean they're a Christian. See, time will tell if the conversions are real.

That's why when people come forward at Harvest Crusades, we don't call them conversions. We say professions of faith. Time will tell if they're conversions.

Walking down these aisles will not make you a Christian. And by the way, you don't need to keep walking down every Monday night. I'm going to get saved again.

I'm going to get born again, again, and again, and again. Some of you don't need to come forward. You need to go forward spiritually.

That's what needs to happen in your life. Or you may live a good life to the best of your ability, even try to keep the Ten Commandments and not necessarily be a Christian. There's a story in the Gospels of a man identified as a rich young ruler who came to Jesus and said, Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said, I'll tell you what.

You need to keep the commandments. And he listed a few of them. And the rich young ruler said, I've kept these since I've been a little kid.

And Jesus said, oh, is that so? He said, I'll tell you what. I want you to sell everything that you have. Give the money away and come and follow me.

Well, the rich young ruler went away sorrowful because he was so possessed by his possessions. It's interesting that Jesus never said that to any other person, only to this man. And basically because Jesus being God could see in this guy's heart, he saw that things were more important to him than God.

They were an idol. He said, get rid of that stuff and follow me. To another, he might say, hey, you know what? You need to put your surfboard away and follow me.

To another, he might say, you need to unplug your computer and follow me. To another, he might say, you need to stop worshiping your body and follow me. To another, he might say, you need to stop putting your career above everything else and follow me.

To another, he might say, break up with your boyfriend or your girlfriend and follow me. It's whatever would keep you from God. It could change from person to person, you see.

But this man had kept the commandments to a certain degree. He had lived a good and moral life, but yet he stopped short of Jesus. And did you know that religion probably in the end will keep more people out of heaven than all of the other sins put together? You might say, what? I thought this was religion.

I thought you guys were really, really religious. I mean, going to church on Monday night, that's weird. Sunday morning, okay, I can see that.

Sunday night, kind of odd. Monday night, that's psycho, okay. No one goes to church Monday night.

You're really religious. No, we're not religious. This isn't about religion.

This is about a relationship with Jesus Christ. And there's a big difference. Now, why do I say religion will keep people away? Because you'll talk to people and you'll say, hey, have you ever received Christ into your life? Well, I'm a Catholic.

Uh-huh, interesting. Now, have you ever asked Christ to come into your life? Well, I'm a Presbyterian. Oh, that's fascinating.

Have you ever asked Christ to come into your life? Another might say, well, I'm a Baptist. Okay. Another, have you asked Christ, and you're like, well, I'm an Episcopalian, but I used to be a Pentecostal.

I think I'm an Episcopal, I'm not sure. Who cares? Who cares? Let's drop the labels. Do you know Christ? Have you asked Jesus to come into your life? Well, I was baptized.

Well, I received communion. Well, this or that. You see, you point to a ritual.

You point to the fact that you were raised in a certain church. That's religion. Instead of saying, oh, yes, I love Jesus.

He's coming into my life. Oh, by the way, I happen to go to this church. No, that's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about a person that would put the label before anything else, and it's that very religion that could keep you from God. You're sitting there thinking, well, I don't need to get right with God because all my life I've been raised in a certain church. But don't you see what I'm trying to say to you? That doesn't necessarily mean that you are a Christian.

You need to be born again, which means there has to come a moment in your life where you realize you're a sinner, and you turn from that sin and put your complete faith in Jesus Christ to save you. Have you done that yet? Your parents can't do that for you. The person who brought you here tonight can't do it for you.

You need to make the decision yourself. You see, my point is these people came so close, but yet they were so far. Think of Judas Iscariot.

Here was a guy who saw miracles. He saw Lazarus raised from the dead. He heard with his own ears the Sermon on the Mount.

He saw Jesus walk on the water. He saw miracle after miracle, her teaching after teaching, yet he died as he had lived, hardened in his sin. So my point is you can pray, believe in miracles, and not necessarily be a Christian.

You can hear the gospel and even in premise believe it and still not be a Christian. You can live a good life and be religious and to a certain degree keep the commandments but not be a Christian. You can be in church with other believers, hear the same messages, and not necessarily be a Christian.

You say, well, I don't get it. What do you need to do? Well, some steps need to be taken because in all of these instances that I've referred to, they got the cart before the horse. In other words, they did things, but they didn't do the most important thing.

What you need to do is first put your faith in Christ and then good works will follow. Then you'll want to go to church. Then you'll want to pray.

Then you'll want to read the Bible. Then you'll want to obey God. It has to start with you coming to Jesus.

Now let's read a passage of scripture that tells us what real conversion is. It's the story of the apostle Paul standing before the Roman governor Agrippa. He's describing his own personal conversion story.

He's mid-stream in his story as we pick it up in Acts 26, verse 15. Paul's talking about how the Lord came to him on the Damascus Road when he was still running from God as Saul of Tarsus. So I said, Paul speaking, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

But rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness of the things which you have seen and the things that I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you. Now verse 18, it's very important, to open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light from the power of Satan the God that they might receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Five things I want to bring to your attention. Number one, to be a Christian, your eyes need to be open. Number two, you need to turn from darkness to light.

Number three, from the power of Satan the God and as a result of that commitment, number four, you will receive the forgiveness of sins and fifth and lastly, you'll receive an inheritance among those that are sanctified. Every conversion begins with having your eyes open because there is a spiritual blindness in all of us prior to us knowing Christ. Second Corinthians 4.4 says, Satan the God of this evil world has blinded the eyes of those who don't believe so they're unable to see the glorious light of the good news that is

shining upon them.

Your eyes are blinded. There's nothing that I can do to make you believe. There's nothing that I can say that will convince you.

I just know it has to be a work of the Holy Spirit but at the same time, I believe as I shared God's word with you tonight that he's going to open some of your eyes and I think some of you had it happen a lot earlier, even long before I got up here. Maybe when you just came into the church and you sat down and you looked around and you thought, wow, look at this. This is something.

Your eyes are beginning to be open. Look at these people. They're different than I am.

They seem to be happy. They seem to have a joy that I don't have. And then the worship began.

You thought, wow, people singing about God. This is different. Never seen anything quite like this before.

And then the band came out. Wow, I like this. Oh, I like what they're singing about.

And then I came out and you thought, well, it's falling apart now but he'll be done soon. But you know, something has gotten hold of you. You're thinking, this could be true.

Maybe this is what I've been looking for. Your eyes are being open and that's a wonderful thing. But don't you know that it's possible to have your eyes open but you're not quite there because you need to turn from darkness to light.

I've met people that would intellectually agree with what I'm saying. They would say, you know what, Greg? I don't disagree with you on premise. I agree with you when you say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

I believe he died on the cross. I believe he rose from the dead. I believe he's coming to your life.

I believe he could come into my life. I believe he's coming back to this earth again. I believe there's a heaven and I believe there's a hell.

I believe all of it. But I'm just not ready yet. You ever heard that before? You see, in a sense, their eyes are open.

They're in a different place than the full-blown atheist who says, I don't believe that there's a God. But yet they're not quite there. And the sad thing is, even though their eyes are open, they're not necessarily that much closer unless they act on it.

You see, your eyes need to be open, but then you need to turn from darkness to light. Satan loves darkness. The period in history when most people or many people didn't worship God is fittingly called the Dark Ages.

The Bible refers to hell as outer darkness. Satan lives in the realm of darkness. But God wants you to turn from darkness to light where there will be a change in your life.

Ephesians 5.8 says, you who are sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord. So walk as children of the light. Awake you that sleeps and Christ will give you life.

See, the problem is there's a lot of people today who are trying to live in two worlds. They want to, you know, walk in the light on Sunday and then live in darkness the other six days of the week. They want to know they're going to heaven, but they want to live like hell.

And it doesn't work. You can't live between or live in two worlds. Here's what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6.14. Don't team up with those who are unbelievers.

How can goodness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? And what union can be between God's temple and idols? For you are the temple of the living God. And He has said, I'll walk among them and I'll be their God and they will be my people. Therefore God says, come out from among them and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord.

Don't touch their filthy things and I will welcome you. Are you trying to live in two worlds? You see, you need to have your eyes open. You need to turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God, as the text says.

Having seen your need to come to Christ and your spiritual eyes are open, you now need to put your faith and trust in Him and begin to follow Him. I wish that most Christians would serve the Lord with as much passion as they used to serve the devil with. I mean, we all know people that used to just be so wicked, getting into all kinds of trouble.

And then they were converted and you never hear from them again. They just disappear. They're just like not on a pew somewhere.

But I like it when I hear of people that used to make trouble for the devil and now they're making trouble for the kingdom of God. You know what I'm saying? Take Raul Reis, for instance. And this is the guy that used to make trouble.

And by the way, Raul does a Bible study here on Thursday nights. Did you know that? You ought to come hear him. Raul's a good preacher.

And you'd be blessed to come out and hear him on Thursday nights as he brings the Word of God. Just don't ditch Monday. I want to see you in both, okay? But Raul was a notorious sinner.

I mean, we've all heard his testimony. He was over there in Vietnam. And he was a part of that squad where he was the point man and his job was to kind of go ahead and draw any fire in ahead of the others.

And he talks about how he would kill people. He became a killing machine. And they sent him back to the United States and he had mastered martial arts and Raul got off on hurting people.

He liked to cause pain. While others were doing drugs and getting drunk, Raul was hurting people. That was his drug of choice, you might say.

But of course, Raul was converted watching Chuck Smith on television. His life was turned around and now he's a preacher who loves God and is making trouble for the Kingdom of God. That's a man who was serving the Lord with as much passion as he used to serve the devil with.

And Paul the Apostle was the same way. Prior to his conversion, he was the wicked, notorious, feared Saul of Tarsus. But after his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road, he became the powerful Paul

the Apostle.

And he made trouble for the Kingdom. Are you making any trouble? Or are you just sitting around over on the sidelines? You need to get up and make a difference. You need to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God.

And what happens if you do these things? Number four, you will receive the forgiveness of sin. So if you'll say, OK, I realize I'm a sinner. I've broken God's commandments.

I'm going to turn from that sin. I'm not going to live in immorality anymore. I'm not going to do drugs anymore.

I'm not going to live this way just for myself anymore. I'm going to put God first. I'm going to receive Christ into my life.

God says, I'll forgive you of all of your sins. That's a wonderful promise. Only God can do this.

Our God has a big eraser. And think of all the things that you've done that you're ashamed of tonight. You wish you could turn back the clock.

You wish you could go back in time and not do the thing that you did, but you can't. But the good news is, God can forgive you of your sins. And the Bible says in 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So you need to admit it and say, Lord, I'm sorry, and turn from it. You may try to drown your sorrows with drinking, but you're going to have to sober up and face the music. You may try to mask your symptoms with prescription drugs or illegal ones.

Maybe you're always having the TV on, the radio on, noise on, because you don't want to sit down and listen to what's going on inside of you because there is this emptiness and this big hole that you've tried to fill with so many things. God is saying, I want to forgive you. I want to get to the source of your problems.

And not only that, but He promises He'll give you an inheritance. There is a reward waiting for every Christian in heaven. The good news is that when you put your faith in Christ, you don't have to be afraid to die because you know you'll go to heaven.

I told you a while back that I spoke at a funeral service for the crew of that Alaska air flight that recently went down. And there in our church in Riverside we had some 2,000 people from Alaska Airlines. Pilots, ground crew, and flight attendants.

Most of them in uniform. And I got up to speak and I could tell that they weren't real excited about me doing that at that moment. But I felt I had to give them a message.

And I used an analogy they might be somewhat familiar with. And I said, you know when you fly, you have to have a ticket if you're a passenger. You can't just get on a plane and go wherever that plane is going without a ticket because sooner or later a flight attendant is going to come over and say, sir, I think you're in the wrong seat because someone else says they're supposed to be sitting there.

Can I see your ticket stuff? I don't have a ticket, you would say. Well, sir, then you cannot fly. Well, I want to fly.

Sir, you cannot fly without a ticket. But I live a good life. It's interesting, sir, but you can't fly in this way.

But I'm sincere. That's nice, sir, but you need a ticket. And I asked them the question, do you have your ticket for heaven? Because it was bought for you at the cross by Jesus.

After that service was over, one of the non-believing captains said to one of the Christian flight attendants, you know, before I heard that message, I thought it was ten feet tall and bulletproof. But now I realize I don't have my ticket. See, it sort of woke him up a little bit.

Do you have your ticket? What if you died? Maybe you thought I'm ten feet tall and bulletproof. No one can stop me. You know, I've got the world on a string sitting on a rainbow.

And then something maybe happens and you don't have the world on a string anymore. You have problems. And it's causing you to turn to God.

And you're seeing your need for Him. I don't know what's happened in your life recently. Maybe something's shaken it up and you've begun to think about the big questions in life, such as why am I here? What is the meaning of life? And what is going to happen to me when I die? Listen, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you don't have to be afraid to die.

That doesn't mean we Christians run around saying, man, I hope I die today. Wouldn't that be cool to die? Yeah! No, come on, that's not what we're like. We love life.

No one loves life more than the Christian. I don't think. We thank God for each day that He gives us.

But then we know if this is our last day, we're going to go into His presence. Now do you have that hope? Well, yes, I do. Based on what? Based on the fact that I'm a good person.

Oh, are you? Yes, I am. Are you perfect? Who is? No one. Well, are you perfect? No.

Well, then okay, we're all right. I think God grades on the curve. I've heard that somewhere.

No. This isn't about how many good deeds you do. This is about, if you know Jesus.

And that final day, it's not going to be a sin question. It's going to be a son question. S-O-N.

The question God's going to ask of you is, what did you do with my son Jesus? What did you do with my offer of eternal life? Did you receive it? Well, I know, but I believed in my own way. God didn't say believe in your own way. He sent His Son, who said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And no man comes to the Father but by me. What did you do about that? Well, I contemplated it, and I believed it was true and premised. That's not enough.

Did you act on it? Have you turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God? You need to do that. And if you haven't done it, you can do it tonight. Again, the Bible says, check up on yourselves.

Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when you actually aren't at all? Don't be like the guy in the gorilla suit pretending to be something you aren't. Maybe you've been putting on a good act. Everyone thinks you're a Christian.

You've got the Bible. You've got the phrases down. Praise the Lord.

Hallelujah. God bless you. It's all going to burn.

Wow. They must be a Christian. But you know if you're living some double life.

You know if you leave this place and you're doing something you know you shouldn't be doing. You think you're pulling the wool over God's eyes? You think He doesn't see? You can fool all of the people some of the time. You can fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool God any of the time.

He sees and He knows. And I ask you, are you a Christian? Let me tell you something in closing. It's not such a good idea to pretend to be something you aren't.

I actually have more respect for a person who would say, Greg, I'm not a Christian. I don't plan on becoming a Christian. I have no interest in it whatsoever.

I am your basic heathen dog. Thank you very much. Now I'm going to pray for that person and I want them to come to Christ, but I respect them in that they're honest.

They might be closer to coming to God than the person that says, well no, I'm a Christian. I believe. But they're playing some little religious game.

You see, at least the person who knows they're a non-believer may one day realize they need to put their faith in Christ. But the person that's playing the religious game, that's putting on an act, their heart is going to get harder and harder as they're exposed to the truths of God, and yet they don't do anything about them. Because the same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay.

Do you understand that? The same message that transformed one's life, or one person's life, will harden another. Because if you sit here and listen to what I'm saying, or anybody else from this pulpit, from the Word of God, and you respond to it, it can change your life. Because it's not our words, it's the words of God.

But if you hear these same truths and say, yeah, well, I'm going to pretend to be something I'm not, and go further into sin, you're gambling with your soul. It's time to get serious. It's time to stop playing games.

It's time to be real. Are you really a Christian? Maybe a lot of you have come to this service before, but for the first time have realized, well, maybe I'm not a Christian. Maybe some of you have been raised in a Christian home, but you're discovering for the first time you're really not a Christian.

Maybe some of you walked with the Lord at one time, but you've fallen away, and you need to come back to Him tonight. I'm going to give you, all of you, an opportunity to do that. In a moment we're going to pray, and I'm going to lay down a little ground rule, that I hope you'll all follow.

And the ground rule is simply this. While we're praying, and inviting people to Christ, I don't want anybody getting up and leaving early. And let me tell you why.

It's rude. And it's distracting. I want you to pray.

I want you to pray for these that are going to make the most important decision of their entire lives. Because in a moment, I'm going to invite people to come to Christ, and there's going to be some people

that will respond, because God's Word will not return void. And let's be praying they make the right decision.

Okay? Let's all pray. Lord, we ask you to speak to the hearts of these that do not yet know you. Lord, would you help them to see their need for you, and would you help them to come to you tonight? Open their eyes, Lord.

Help them to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to you. Now while our heads are bowed, and our eyes are closed, and we're praying. How many of you would say tonight, Greg, would you pray for me? I want to become a Christian.

I want to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ is living inside of me. I want to know that when I die, I will go to heaven. I don't want to play any religious game.

I'm serious. I'm ready to say yes to Jesus. Pray for me.

If that's your desire, wherever you're sitting, would you lift your hand up? If you want Christ to come into your life, if you want him to forgive you of your sin, if you want to know that you'll go to heaven when you die, lift your hand up right now, and let me pray for you. God bless you, and you. God bless you.

Yes, down to the front over here on the side. God bless you too, there in the back. God bless you.

Anybody else? God bless you. You want Christ to come into your life. In the very back, God bless you.

Over here in the corner. How about down here on the floor? You want Christ to come into your life tonight? Lift your hand up. Let me pray for you.

God bless you over here on the side. While our heads are still bowed, maybe some of you would say, pray for me. I want to come back to the Lord tonight.

I knew him at one time, but I've gone astray. I've been a prodigal son or daughter, but I'm ready to come home again. Pray for me tonight.

If that's your desire, would you lift your hand up? Let me pray for you. God bless you, and you over here on the side. God bless.

God bless you. Lord, thank you now for each one of these. They are precious in your sight, and you died on the cross for them.

Now, Lord, would you help them to follow you and receive all that you have for them? We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. You know, everyone that Jesus calls, he calls openly and publicly.

And we're going to do the same tonight. In a moment, the group is going to sing a song for us about making choices in life. And I'm going to ask if you raise your hand with me during that last moment of prayer, that you would get up during the song, walk down these aisles, and stand here in the front, and when you get here, I'm going to lead you in a prayer of commitment or recommitment to Christ.

Now, why do I ask you to come forward publicly? Because Jesus said, if you will acknowledge me before people, I will acknowledge you before the Father and the angels in heaven. But he added, if you deny me before people, I will deny you before the Father and the angels. So this is a way to acknowledge him

publicly.

Maybe you did not raise your hand, but you want Jesus Christ to come into your life, or you want to return to the Lord. You get up and come as well. And when you all get up here, I'll pray for you.

Again, nobody leave early right now. Let's pray for these that will be coming forward to make this commitment. Again, if you raise your hand, even if you did not, but you want your sin forgiven, you want Jesus Christ to come into your life, you want to know that when you die, you'll go to heaven, you want to come back to the Lord, right now, wherever you are.

Get up out of your seat. Come on down these aisles. Stand up here and make your stand for Jesus Christ.

God bless you. Here comes the first one. Get up and come.

Amen. This is... This is the end of side 2 and the end of this message. If you would like further information on Tapes, contact Chapel Tapes, PO Box 8000, Costa Mesa, California, 92628.

Or you can contact us by phone at 1-800-272-WORD. That's 1-800-272-9673.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5434.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/greg-laurie/what-is-a-christian/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net