

# Being a More Christian Christian

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This is the call of Christ to every Christian today: “Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep.”

What does it mean to be a Christian?

A Christian has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the literal Son of God, sent by His Father to suffer for our sins in the supreme act of love we know as the Atonement.

A Christian believes that through the grace of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, we can repent, forgive others, keep the commandments, and inherit eternal life.

The word *Christian* denotes taking upon us the name of Christ. We do this by being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by those holding His priesthood authority.

A Christian knows that throughout the ages, God’s prophets have always testified of Jesus Christ. This same Jesus, accompanied by Heavenly Father, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the year 1820 and restored the gospel and the organization of His original Church.

Through the scriptures and the witness of Joseph Smith, we know that God, our Heavenly Father, has a glorified and perfected body of flesh and bone. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit whose work is to testify of the Father and the Son. The Godhead is three separate and distinct beings, unified in purpose.

With these doctrines as the foundation of our faith, can there be any doubt or disputation that we, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are Christian? Yet for every Christian, a simple question remains: what kind of Christians are we? In other words, how are we doing in our quest to follow Christ?

Consider with me the experience of two Christian disciples:

“Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”<sup>1</sup>

As Christians today, we have the opportunity to act straightway, immediately, and decisively, just as Peter and Andrew did: “they forsook their nets, and followed him.”<sup>2</sup> We too are called upon to leave our nets, to reject

worldly habits, customs, and traditions. We are also called to forsake our sins. “When [Jesus] had called the people unto him ... , he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>3</sup> Denying ourselves of ungodly behavior is the beginning of repentance, which brings a mighty change of heart until “we have no more disposition to do evil.”<sup>4</sup>

This change, called conversion, is possible only through the Savior. Jesus promised: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. ... And my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will *I make weak things become strong unto them.*”<sup>5</sup> As we are *made new* in Christ, our very natures change and we no longer want to go back to our old ways.

Even so, faithful Christians will always be blessed to experience difficulties and disappointments. When these refining challenges come, we may be tempted to return to our old ways. After the Savior’s Crucifixion, He appeared to the women and told them that the brethren would find Him in Galilee. When Peter, the senior Apostle, returned to Galilee, he also went back to what he knew—to what he felt comfortable doing. “I go a fishing,”<sup>6</sup> he explained, and took several disciples with him.

Indeed, Peter and the others fished all night without catching any fish. The next morning Jesus appeared on the shore and called to them across the water, “Cast [your] net on the right side.” The disciples in the boat followed the Savior’s instructions and quickly discovered their nets were miraculously filled to overflowing. John recognized the Savior’s voice, and Peter instantly cast himself into the water and swam to the shore.<sup>7</sup>

To Christians who have returned to their old, less faithful ways, consider the faithful example of Peter. Do not delay. Come hear and recognize the Master’s voice calling. Then straightway return to Him and receive His abundant blessings once again.

As the brethren returned to the shore, they discovered a feast of fish and bread. “Come and dine,”<sup>8</sup> the Savior invited. As He fed them, He asked Peter three times, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” When Peter expressed his love, the Savior implored him, “Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep.”<sup>9</sup>

This is the call of Christ to every Christian today: “Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep”—share my gospel with young and old, lifting, blessing, comforting, encouraging, and building them, especially those who think and believe differently than we do. We feed His lambs in our homes by how we live the gospel: keeping the commandments, praying, studying the scriptures, and emulating His love. We feed His sheep in the Church as we serve in priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations. And we feed His sheep throughout the world by being good Christian neighbors, practicing the pure religion of visiting and serving the widows, the fatherless, the poor, and all who are in need.

For many, the call to be a Christian can seem demanding, even overwhelming. But we need not be afraid or feel inadequate. The Savior has promised that He will make us equal to His work. “Follow me,” He said, “and *I will make you fishers of men.*”<sup>10</sup> As we follow Him, He blesses us with gifts, talents, and the strength to do His will, allowing us to go beyond our comfort zones and do things we’ve never before thought possible. This may mean sharing the gospel with neighbors, rescuing those who are spiritually lost, serving a full-time mission, working in the temple, raising a child with special needs, loving the prodigal, serving an ailing companion, enduring misunderstandings, or suffering affliction. It means preparing ourselves to answer His call by saying, “I’ll go where you want me to go; I’ll say what you want me to say; I’ll do what you want me to do; I’ll be what you want

me to be.”<sup>11</sup>

To be who Heavenly Father wants us to be, we follow Jesus Christ. I testify that He is continually calling us to follow Him. If you are just learning about the Christian commitment of Latter-day Saints or if you have not been fully participating in the Church and want to follow Him again—fear not! The Lord’s first disciples were all new members of the Church, newly converted to His gospel. Jesus patiently taught each one. He helped them fulfill their responsibilities. He called them His friends and laid down His life for them. And He has already done the same for you and for me.

I testify that through His infinite love and grace, we can become more Christian Christians. Consider the following Christlike qualities. How are we doing in strengthening them within ourselves?

*Christian love.* The Savior valued everyone. Kind and compassionate to all, He left the ninety and nine to find the one,<sup>12</sup> for “even the very hairs of [our] head are ... numbered”<sup>13</sup> to Him.

*Christian faith.* Despite temptations, trials, and persecutions, the Savior trusted our Heavenly Father and chose to be faithful and obedient to His commandments.

*Christian sacrifice.* Throughout His life the Savior gave of His time, His energy, and ultimately, through the Atonement, gave Himself so that all of God’s children could be resurrected and have the opportunity to inherit eternal life.

*Christian caring.* Like the good Samaritan, the Savior was continually reaching out to rescue, love, and nurture people around Him, regardless of their culture, creed, or circumstances.

*Christian service.* Whether drawing water from a well, cooking a meal of fish, or washing dusty feet, the Savior spent His days serving others—lifting up the weary and strengthening the weak.

*Christian patience.* In His own sorrow and suffering, the Savior waited upon His Father. With patience for us, He waits upon us to come to ourselves and come home to Him.

*Christian peace.* Throughout His ministry He urged understanding and promoted peace. Especially among His disciples, He taught that Christians cannot contend with other Christians, notwithstanding their differences.

*Christian forgiveness.* He taught us to bless those who curse us. He showed us the way by praying that those who crucified Him would be forgiven.

*Christian conversion.* Like Peter and Andrew, many recognize the truth of the gospel as soon as they hear it. They are instantly converted. For others it may take longer. In a revelation given through Joseph Smith, the Savior taught, “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day,”<sup>14</sup> the perfect day of our conversion. Jesus Christ is “the light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth.”<sup>15</sup>

*Christian endurance to the end.* In all His days, the Savior never gave up doing His Father’s will but continued in righteousness, goodness, mercy, and truth to the end of His mortal life.

These are some of the characteristics of those who hear and heed the Savior’s voice. As one of His special witnesses on the earth, I give my Christian testimony that He is calling to you today, “Come, follow me.”<sup>16</sup> Come

walk the path that leads to eternal happiness, joy, and everlasting life in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, amen.

## Notes

1. Matthew 4:18–20.
2. Mark 1:18.
3. Mark 8:34.
4. Mosiah 5:2.
5. Ether 12:27; emphasis added.
6. John 21:3.
7. See John 21:3–8.
8. John 21:12.
9. See John 21:15–17.
10. Matthew 4:19; emphasis added.
11. See “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270.
12. See Matthew 18:12–14.

13. Luke 12:7.

14. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 93:9.

16. Luke 18:22.

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