

## **Are you a “Christian”?**

### **By Bob Young**

Often the word Christian is used as an adjective to refer to anything that generally relates to Christianity, for example, Christian churches, Christian views, Christian books, or Christian nation. The word as a noun is used in everyday speech in several different ways. Some use the word generically to mean “anyone who claims to be a follower of Christ”. Others use the word specifically, referring only to those who have obeyed certain teachings or doctrines. The word literally means “related to” Christ (a parallel English construction is Bostonian). Some have observed that the word suggests one who is “like Christ”.

The more common word in the Bible to describe followers of Jesus is disciple. The word Christian is only used after the death of Jesus; the word disciple appears more frequently during Jesus’ lifetime and ministry. The word disciple literally suggests a learner, one who follows the Master or Teacher. The word also suggests imitation: the student who becomes like the teacher. In Luke 14, Jesus speaks about the demands of discipleship. Perhaps we would do well to spend more time exploring and explaining the demands of Christianity.

Here are some of the most important questions in the world. Who is a Christian? Are you a Christian? What does the Bible say? The Bible uses the word in only three New Testament passages.

#### Dedicated Disciples

In Acts 11:26, the word refers to disciples, noting that they were also called Christians. The word Christian is reserved for genuine followers of Christ. At Antioch were disciples, and their lives and commitments were so in tune with and governed by Christ that those who observed them began to call them Christians. Those who were called Christians lived lives dedicated to Christ. This passage raises the question, Am I a genuine follower of Christ? Do others see Christ when they look at my life?

#### Decided Disciples

In Acts 26:28, Agrippa uses the word in his response to Paul, “Do you think that you will cause me to be a Christian so easily?” Agrippa’s response suggests that the process of becoming a Christian is no thoughtless matter. Christianity is not to be easily adopted. Christian requires a decision. In our “Christian” nation, many have become Christians with little thought. Some have inherited faith. Many are Christians by default. Did you inherit your faith, or have you thoughtfully adopted faith in Christ as your guide for living? Some talk of active and inactive church members, or active and inactive Christians. What is an inactive Christian? Are you an active follower, or an inactive follower?

#### Determined Disciples

1 Pet 4:16 suggests that Christians are called to suffer. Paul writes to Timothy the same thought: Christians will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). Christians are those who are willing to count the cost and pay the price. Only determined followers will persevere when difficult days come. Are you willing to count the cost and pay the price? Will your faith be strong and determined in the face of adversity, or will it crumble?