



BEARING THE TITLE "CHRISTIAN"

Wearing the Label

April 15, 2023

1

PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Acts 11:26 (NIV) • "So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

Romans 10:9, 10 (CEV) • "So you will be saved, if you honestly say, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others."

Acts 2:37-39 (The Message) • "Cut to the quick, those who were there listening asked Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers! Brothers! So now what do we do?' Peter said, 'Change your life. Turn to God and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so your sins are forgiven. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is targeted to you and your children, but also to all who are far away—whomever, in fact, our Master God invites.'"

Mark 9:38-41 (NIV) • "'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'

"'Do not stop him,' Jesus said. 'For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. Truly I tell you,

anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.'"

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "BEARING THE TITLE 'CHRISTIAN' "

A lot of people with very diverse views and opinions call themselves "Christians." Some people use the word to mean only those who belong to a particular denomination or subscribe to a specific doctrine. Others use it in a general way to mean good people, people they approve of. Some believe that all who consider themselves Christians are Christians—regardless of their beliefs. How are we to define a "Christian"? What does it mean to bear Christ's name? Is it important to define who's "inside" and who's "outside"? This lesson takes the position that judging others' Christianity is always difficult and dangerous. What matters most is what it means for each of us, personally, to bear Christ's name. What does Jesus expect of those who wear His label?

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "BEARING THE TITLE 'CHRISTIAN' "

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Construct their own definition of what it

means to be a “Christian.”

2. Be able to defend their definition using the Bible.
3. Explore what difference being a Christian makes in their day-to-day lives.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) pictures of people cut from magazines or catalogs; (Activity B) white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Connecting • Bibles, “T-shirt” handout (p. 32), pencils.

Applying • Heavy paper cut into strips, markers, stickers.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Get a variety of pictures (20 or more) from magazines, newspapers, and catalogues, of people engaged in different activities. Try to get a variety of ages, ethnic backgrounds, activities, clothing styles, etc., but include only pictures of ordinary or little-known people. Bring pictures to class in a box or bag.

Get set • Say: We’re going to go around the circle, and I’m going to ask you to say the first word that comes into your mind when someone says “Christian.” It can be what you think, or what you know others around you think of Christians. Just toss out the word. There are no wrong answers.

Go • Hold up the pictures one by one like flash cards and allow the group to respond by labeling the person in the picture as “Christian” or not. If there’s disagreement, allow a couple of minutes for kids to debate why they would judge that person Christian or not, then move on to the next one.

Debriefing • Ask: What did you base your judgments on? Do you think there’s any way to really judge whether someone is a Christian by looking at that person? Do people actually make these kinds of judgments sometimes? Are there things we can wear or do on the outside that make a statement about what we’re like inside? In real life, how do you judge whether someone’s a Christian or not?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Sit in a circle. Write the word “Christian” on a white/chalkboard at the front of the room.

Get set • Say: We’re going to go around the circle, and I’m going to ask you to say the first word that comes into your mind when someone says “Christian.” It can be negative or positive. It can be what you think, or what you know others around you think of Christians. Just toss out the word. There are no wrong answers.

Go • Go around the circle at least once, writing on the board all the words or phrases that people come up with. With a small class, or if students have more ideas to add, go around more than once, till all the ideas and suggestions are exhausted.

Debriefing • Take a few minutes to talk about the words and phrases that are on the board. Are they mostly positive or negative? What kinds of images and ideas do we attach to the word “Christian”? What images do non-Christians have of what “Christian” means? Do any of the words and phrases up here represent the kind of Christian you want to be?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Imagine that a new member comes to your church. He’s very popular, and everyone likes him. But one day an older church member draws you aside and says, “Watch out for that new member. Everyone thinks he’s such a great man of God, but I’ve talked to people in his old church, and you know what? He’s not even a Christian!”

That’s a pretty serious accusation to make—“not even a Christian.” How would you respond? If the person making the statement were someone you usually trusted and took seriously, how would your view of the other member change? What clues would you look for to figure out if he

really was a Christian? How can you tell whether or not somebody is a Christian? If you were sure the new member was a Christian, what would you say to the person who told you he wasn’t? What evidence could you give to prove that someone is a Christian?

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Everyone in Jesus Christ’s kingdom bears His name. We call ourselves “Christians”—Christ’s followers. But how much thought do we give to that name? Some people use the term *Christian* very loosely—it’s anyone who acts decent, who’s a nice person. Others are very uptight about how we use that word—unless people’s doctrine and beliefs and actions line up completely with how we interpret the Bible, they don’t deserve to be called Christians.

Is there a middle ground we can explore? What does it really mean to carry Christ’s name, to identify ourselves as His followers? Are you comfortable being labeled “Christian”? Do you worry about living up to that name?

The title “Christian” shouldn’t be a burden. It should be a privilege. It’s easy to earn—God doesn’t have tough entrance requirements. But sometimes it can be hard to live up to. Being a Christian means being *like Jesus*—and that often requires sacrifice.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Ask: Have you ever been fooled by a product that you thought was genuine but turned out to be fake? Is it possible for us to wear

the name “Christian” and yet not be really Christian inside?

Hand out copies of the “100% Christian” T-shirt outline to each class member. Divide the class into pairs or groups of three and give each group pencils and a Bible. **Say: The label on this T-shirt certifies that the wearer is 100 percent Christian. What would the “package”—the person’s beliefs, attitudes, lifestyle—have to contain in order for that claim to be accurate? Under “Contents” on the T-shirt, list the things you think have to be inside if you’re a real Christian. For each thing you list, you must also list a Bible verse to show why you believe this is part of the Christian “package.”**

Allow 10-15 minutes for groups to fill out their “Contents” list. When time is up, have each group share their list with the whole class.

Ask: Do your package contents include beliefs, or actions, or both? Can a person be a Christian if their “package” doesn’t contain everything on that list?

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario and then open for discussion:

Tara grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist home and always went to Sabbath School and church. She’s now 13. Last year at a youth rally, the speaker made a call for people who wanted to give their lives to Jesus to come forward. Even though she’s always considered herself a Christian, Tara felt really touched by the speaker’s message and wanted to give her heart completely to God, so she went up to the front. For a while after that she was on a real spiritual high. She began studying her Bible more and praying every day. She told her pastor she wanted to be baptized, and along with four other kids in her earliteen class, she is now studying for baptism later this year.

However, Tara is starting to wonder about the whole “Christian” thing. Some of the bad habits she’s always had, such as swearing, gossiping, and lying, don’t seem to be getting any better—maybe even a little worse! She’s

getting bored with the Bible study and has let it slip. Plus, she and a couple of her friends have started smoking, which Tara knows is kind of stupid, but she likes doing it.

Tara believes in and loves Jesus, and she still plans to be baptized, but she’s not sure if she’s really a Christian. If Tara told you her story and asked, “Am I a Christian?” what would you tell her?

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Hand out strips of heavy paper about 11 inches (28 cm.) long and four inches (10 cm.) wide. Provide colored markers and decorative stickers. Give everyone a strip of paper. **Say: From what we’ve learned in this lesson, you’re going to design a bumper sticker to tell the world what it means to be a Christian. The message must be short and snappy enough to fit on a bumper sticker, and can start with “A Christian is . . .” or “Christians are . . .”** When the bumper stickers are finished, share them with the group.

Debriefing • Ask: Would you be comfortable putting this bumper sticker on the door of your room? on your locker at school? Do you like being “labeled” as a Christian with this definition? Why or why not?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Is it important to draw boundary lines around Christian belief? Why or why not?
2. How do you respond to the following statement: If a person’s life hasn’t changed since they met Jesus, that person is not really a Christian.
3. Some churches define “a Christian” as anyone who has been baptized. How do you feel about that? Where does being baptized and becoming a church member fit into being a Christian?

4. Is it possible to be a Christian if you've never had a particular moment when you made the decision to accept Jesus or be saved? Do you have to have a conversion in order to be a Christian?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

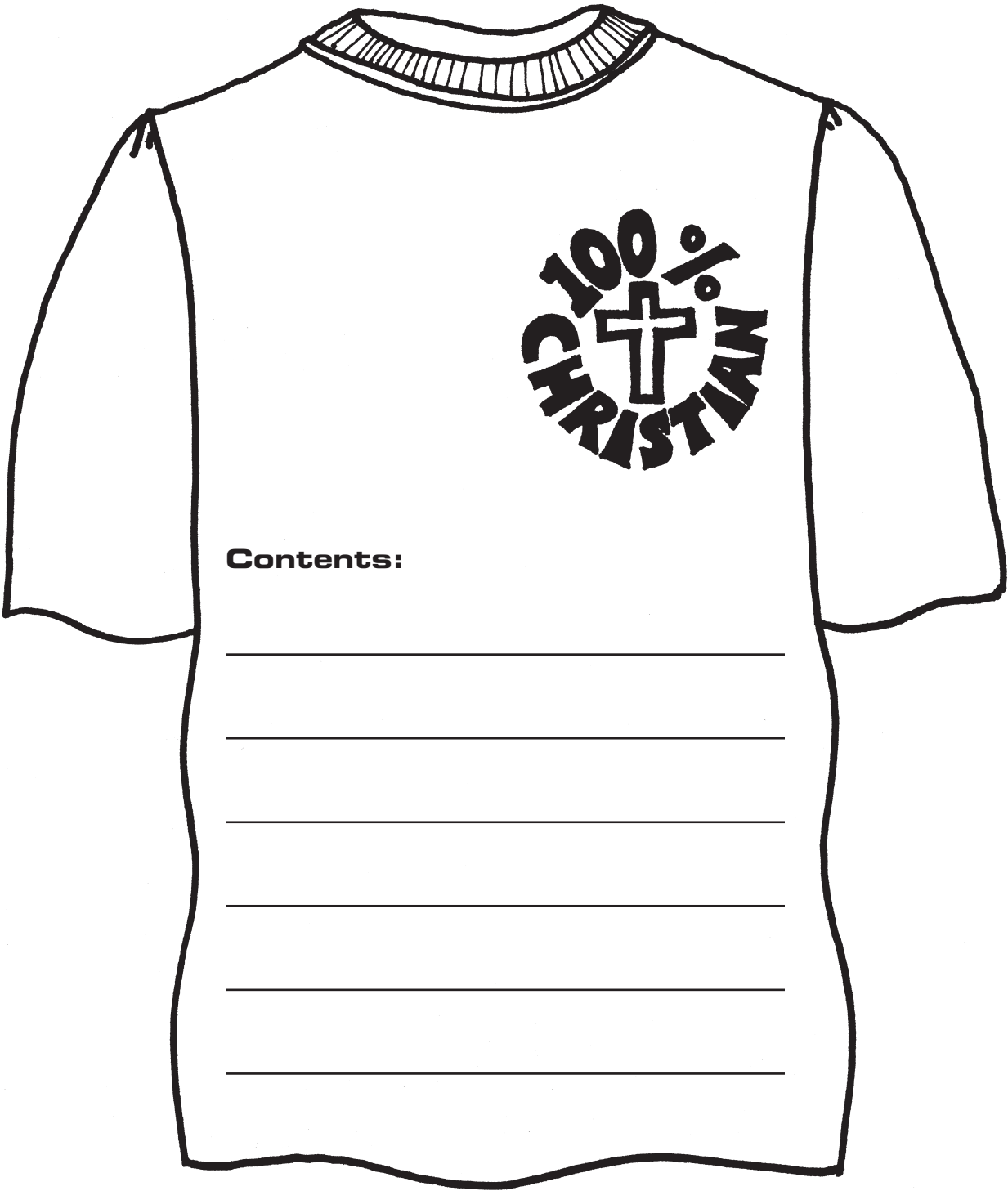
There's nothing simple or straightforward about defining exactly who is a Christian. Fortunately for us, sticking labels on people is not our job. We don't have to judge whether

others are Christians or not—though when someone tries to teach us about Christianity, we do have to judge whether what they're saying lines up with what the Bible says.

The label that really matters, though, is the one we wear ourselves. On the one hand, Jesus doesn't want us getting tied up in knots with guilt over whether we're "good enough" to wear His name. He loved us and died for us, and that's what saves us—nothing we can do for ourselves. On the other hand, once we wear that name, we do need to take it seriously. When the world looks at us, they may judge "what a Christian is" by what they see us doing. Only by the power of God's Holy Spirit living in our hearts can we ever possibly live up to everything it means to be a Christian. It's a lifetime journey—and God walks with us every step of the way.

FOR LESSON THREE:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION





STUDENT LESSON

BEARING THE TITLE “CHRISTIAN”

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Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 10, The Experience of Salvation:** “Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God’s sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 40

WEARING THE LABEL

Janel was excited when her sister Shaina got home from her senior class trip to New York. She couldn’t wait to hear about all the fun Shaina and her friends had had on the trip.

“Hey, I bought these for you,” Shaina said, handing Janel a shopping bag. Inside were three sweatshirts all with the logo of Janel’s favorite designer on them.

“Wow! What a cool gift, Shaina, thanks! Three of them? These are so expensive!”

“Not in New York City,” Shaina grinned. “We found a place that was selling them for about \$10 each.”

“You’re kidding!” Janel gave her sister a big hug. The next day she proudly wore one of the designer sweatshirts to school.

Two evenings later, when she pulled another of the new sweatshirts off over her head, she heard a ripping noise. “Oh, no!” she cried out.

Janel’s mom stuck her head into the room. “What happened?”

Janel showed her mom the long rip in the side seam of the sweatshirt. “I can’t believe it tore so easily—the first time I wore it! Their stuff is usually really good quality. Anyway, I know they have a guarantee, so maybe I can send it back to the company and get it replaced or something. I wonder if Shaina kept the receipts.”

Janel’s mom sat down on the bed and turned the sweatshirt inside out, looking at all the seams. “Janel, how much did Shaina say she paid for this sweatshirt?”

“Ten bucks.”

“And how much would it be normally?”

“Oh, at least \$50. I’ve seen them even more expensive than that.”

Mom sighed. “I think your sister got taken, Janel—and I don’t think the designer will be sending you any replacement sweatshirts.”

“What do you mean, taken?”

“Sometimes people manufacture cheap clothes and slap the label of an expensive designer on the front. It’s illegal, of course, but they often get away with it. Lots of people are just happy to have the designer label. They don’t realize they’re not getting the same quality.”

Janel looked down at the torn shirt. She could still wear the other two—until they fell

apart, which probably wouldn't be that long, she realized. Everyone would see the label and think she was wearing a top-quality product. But she would know different. Looking up, she caught her mom's smile.

Janel might have pondered, *How could these good-looking sweatshirts be of such poor quality?* Mother was right when she said, "It's what's on the inside that matters." Indeed, it is your character that matters to God.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 7:16-23.
- » You're reading a teen Sabbath School lesson. So you probably consider yourself a Christian. You're wearing the label. But what's inside the package?
- » If someone claims to be a Christian, does that make them a Christian? If you really wanted to know whether someone was a Christian, what questions could you ask to find out?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

- » Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 12:2; and 2 Peter 1:3, 4.
- » As God's sons and daughters we are called to live as light in this dark world. Because we have experienced the gift of salvation that comes through Jesus, we are responsible to share it with others as well. Unlike material gifts, the gift of salvation is multiplied exponentially in our heart when we share it with others.
- » How has Jesus made all things new in your life when you decided to invite Him into your heart?

- » How are you an ambassador of Jesus? How do you share with others the message of salvation?

- » Unscramble and replace the mixed-up words below so you can read the message. The message is from the New King James Version.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you tneserp your bodies a gnivil sacrifice, holy, elbatpecca to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be demrof-noc to this world, but be demrofsnart by the gni-wener of your dnm, that you may evorp what is that good and acceptable and tcefrep will of God" (snamor 12:1, 2).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you _____ your bodies a _____ sacrifice, holy, _____ to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be _____ to this world, but be _____ by the _____ of your _____, that you may _____ what is that good and acceptable and _____ will of God" (_____ 12:1, 2).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read John 3:3-8.
- » Who's a Christian? Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?
- » Do you have to believe Jesus is the Son of God?
- » What if you think Jesus was just a good man but you want to follow His teachings?
- » Can you still be a Christian?
- » How do we know if we're Christians?

» What difference does wearing Jesus' label name make to the quality of our character?

» "Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their life and character should be such that through them others will get a right conception of Christ and of His service" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 115).

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

» Match the text to the correct reference. All texts are taken from the New King James Version.

Romans 8:14-17	Galatians 3:26
1 Peter 1:23	Matthew 7:21-23
Colossians 1:13, 14	Acts 16:31
Isaiah 45:22	1 Peter 2:21, 22
Romans 10:17	

"... he who does the will of My Father in heaven ..."	
"... I am God, and there is no other."	
"... faith comes by hearing, and hearing ..."	
"... we are children of God, and if children, then heirs ..."	
"... leaving us an example, that you should follow ..."	
"... Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and you will be saved ..."	
"... you are all sons of God through faith ..."	
"... we have redemption through His blood ..."	
"... born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, ..."	

Thursday CONNECTING

» Read Romans 10:9, 10.

» Review the memory text.

» Maybe you've wondered, *Am I really a Christian? Sure, I go to church—maybe I've even been baptized—but can I really call myself a Christian?* First, relax. It's not about being "good enough," or believing a complicated list of doctrines. If you love Jesus and want to follow Him, if you've asked Him to forgive your sins and come into your heart, you can be confident that you're a Christian.

» But the Bible does tell us that Christians are different from other people. When you become a Christian, you begin a new life. It's not something that happens overnight—it's more like starting out on a journey. At first your surroundings may be familiar, but as you keep traveling, things begin to change. The Bible—especially the story of Jesus—paints us a picture of what this new life is like. If we wear Jesus' name, we want to live as He lived. That's why it's important to read the Bible—we need to know what the original is like if we want to copy it!

» Maybe we can go beyond asking, *Am I a Christian?* Perhaps we need to ask, *How am I letting Jesus change me? Am I following Him?*

» "But when we turn toward the Sun of Righteousness, when we come in touch with Christ, the whole soul is aglow with the brightness of the divine presence" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 40).

Friday APPLYING

- » Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- » All through this week's lesson we've been thinking about what it means to be a Christian.
- » Think back over what you've learned this week about being a Christian. Look over the Bible verses in Wednesday's lesson. Then circle the phrase that makes the statement below correct, and complete the next sentence with a few thoughts of your own.
- » I (am, am not) a Christian.
- » I know this is true because

- » If you circled "I am a Christian," take a moment to talk to God and thank Him for the gift that made it possible for you to be part of His family. Renew your commitment to Him today.
- » If you circled "I am not a Christian," where do you want to go from here? Is there a "next step" you need to or want to take? Talk to the Lord about it, then talk to a trusted Christian friend or family member.

