

## INTRODUCTION

This is a passage of scripture that tells what a real Christian is like. First Corinthians 10:14-11:1 says:

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup> I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf. <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? <sup>19</sup> Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything?<sup>20</sup> No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.<sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? <sup>23</sup> "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. <sup>24</sup> No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. <sup>25</sup> Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, <sup>26</sup> for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."<sup>27</sup> If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. <sup>28</sup> But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. <sup>29</sup> I am referring to the other person's conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience? <sup>30</sup> If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? <sup>31</sup> So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. <sup>32</sup> Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— <sup>33</sup> even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. <sup>1</sup> Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Unfortunately, the King James Bible put a break between chapters 10 and 11 when really in the Greek text it's part of the same paragraph. Paul begins by talking about the problem.

### I. THE PROBLEM OF IDOLATRY

What is idolatry? It's the worship of idols. When we think about idol worship, we usually think about a statue or totem pole and we picture somebody bowing down before it. I don't that know many of you are doing that, but idolatry is more than just worshipping statues.

### **1. Idolatry is worshipping anything other than God**

It's possible for you to commit the sin of idolatry without ever having any kind of statue or totem pole in front of you. John MacArthur gives this definition of idolatry: "Idolatry is having any false god, any object, idea, philosophy, habit, occupation, sport, or whatever has one's primary concern and loyalty to any degree that decreases one's trust and loyalty to the Lord."

Is there anything in your life more important than God? You say, "Well, of course not. I would never put anything before God." Let me take it a step further. You need to apply what I call the "T Test." Do you want to know who your god really is? Your god is whoever you Think about the most, whoever you Talk about the most, where you put most of your Time, and where you invest most of your Treasure. You csn say you worship the God of heaven, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But if there's something you think about, talk about, spend your time on, and invest in more than God, that is your god.

I know for some people, without a doubt, their God is Dallas Cowboys football. They worship it. How? They don't bow down and pay homage to it. But hey talk about it. They think about it. This is where they put their time. It's where they put their money. I like Dallas Cowboys football just as much as anybody, but it never becomes a god to me. Be careful that nothing becomes more important to you than God.

### **2. Idolatry is worshipping God in the wrong way**

You can worship God. But if you worship in the wrong way, it can be idolatry. In the Old Testament, Exodus chapter 32, Moses went on the mountain to get the 10 Commandments. The Israelites down at the foot of the mountain thought Moses had left. They really wanted to worship the God of heaven, but they said, "We can't really see the God of heaven, so we need to do something so we can see him." So Aaron, the brother of Moses, had all the people melt down their gold earrings, their gold necklaces, their gold bracelets. Then they poured all of this gold into a mold until it made a golden calf, which they set up and danced around and worshiped. And they called it the Lord..."the Lord that brought us out of Egypt." And they worshiped him.

Here's Moses up on the mountain. God tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Hey, Moses, we got a problem at the foot of the mountain. Those sorry people have substituted a golden calf for me." It made Moses so mad he went running down the mountain and threw the stone tablets containing the 10 Commandments to the ground and broke them. I've always wondered if the original 10 were like the 10

that we have now, but we'll never know. Then he took that golden calf and melted it back down, put the gold in the water, and made the people drink the water. God was very upset, even though they claimed to be worshiping the God of heaven. "We just want something we can see," they cried. But God is spirit; to worship God, you must worship him "in spirit and in truth." God is invisible. And if you need something visible to worship an invisible God, you're treading on dangerous ground.

To worship God, who is invisible, you worship him in your spirit. You can worship God in the wrong way and it still be idolatry. Some people say, "I don't need to go to church. I can worship God out in the woods hunting, or I can worship God fishing on the lake, or I can worship God playing basketball." Well, you better be careful because you're treading on idolatry.

### **3. Idolatry opens your life to demons**

This is what the apostle Paul is saying. He compares it to the Lord's Supper. Paul says that when you, as a Christian, drink the cup, you're participating with the blood of Jesus. And when you eat that bread, you're participating with the body of Jesus. So Paul says the same is true of idolatry—when you worship anything other than God and/or when you worship God in the wrong way, you are participating with demons. Demons are real, just as God is real. There are some scary, supernatural things that can go on that are not of God. People think just because it's supernatural that it's of God. No. The devil is the great counterfeiter of God. And he will imitate God at every point.

When Aaron, the older brother of Moses, stood before Pharaoh, he took his staff and threw it down and it turned into a snake. The Bible says the fortune tellers and the priests of Pharaoh did the same thing. They said, "We can do that. We can imitate that." The devil imitates things of God, even supernaturally. And the Bible says in the book of Revelation that the Antichrist (who is going to be filled with the spirit of the devil) is going to perform signs and wonders. He's going to make fire fall from heaven, and he will even deceive the very elect if possible. I want to warn you, especially young people, especially children, not to ever dabble and experiment in things like seances, Ouija boards, psychic readers, tarot cards, any of those things. Don't you dare mess with it. Why? Because it opens your life to demons. And you know what demons want to do to you? The devil wants to kill, steal, and destroy. God loves you. And he wants to give you abundant life. But the thief, the devil, comes to kill, steal, and destroy. And sometimes it even looks religious.

Not all of the things you see in the world that you think are religious, are of God. For instance, what do you think was really going on in Mount Carmel, Texas, outside of Waco with David Koresh? What do you think was going on? He claimed to believe the Bible. He claimed to preach the Bible, but he actually set

himself up as Christ as the Messiah. And there were supernatural things that happened, but was that of God? No. How do we know? Because, in the end, everybody took their own life, or in a real sense everybody was willing to die. And the very fact that that happened, we know that it was of the devil, because the devil comes to kill, steal, and destroy.

It's the same thing with Jim Jones in Guyana because of the very fact that his followers would all drink Kool-Aid laced with poison. How do we know that was of the devil? Because Jesus comes to give life, but the devil and his demons come to destroy life. Don't mess around with horoscopes in the newspaper or those kinds of things, because it opens your life up to demons. And that's what the Bible is saying here. You cannot sit down at the table of the Lord and at the table of demons. You must be different.

## **II. THE PRINCIPLE OF UNSELFISHNESS**

### **1. The background—eating meat**

The context Paul uses is eating meat. You ask, "What's wrong with eating meat? I eat meat all the time." The historical background of Corinth is that they had a huge temple to the goddess Aphrodite, who was the goddess of love. Over 1000 women worked there as priestesses/prostitutes in a kind of fertility worship. People would come to the temple to bring some meat, maybe a leg of lamb or shoulder of beef as a sacrifice to this goddess. They would cut off a portion of it. And they would burn it on an altar before this idol of Aphrodite. And then they would cut off another portion of it for these priestesses as a payment.

The rest, they would often barbecue right there for friends and family. The temple became an outdoor BBQ restaurant and a house of prostitution and a church all in one. If you could imagine that kind of combination, that's what it was. So when the people at Corinth became Christians, they wondered if they should we eat this meat that's been offered to these idols because sometimes the leftovers would be sold in the meat market. So they didn't know whether it'd been offered to an idol or not. Paul told them there's nothing wrong with that meat because that god is not real. There's only one God. So he says, if you don't know whether it's been offered or not, that's all right; just go ahead and eat it.

He said, "But if somebody invites you to eat it and they tell you it's been offered to idols, don't eat." Why? Because, he says, you're going to have a negative influence on that person. The reason they're telling you that information is because they believe there's some question about it. Paul is saying to practice unselfishness.

### **2. Don't cause anyone to stumble**

The background is eating meat, but here's the modern application. Once you become a Christian, you ought to live differently. Live in such a way that you don't make anybody else stumble or keep them from coming to Jesus Christ. Let's

consider cursing—what’s wrong with that? Will it send you to hell? If you say a cuss word, it probably won't send you to hell, but it could send someone else to hell. You know why? Because people are looking at you; they're listening to you. And when you do something that's wrong...you cuss, or you drink, or you do drugs...somebody else looks at you. They say, “Hey, I know that person. They go to church. I thought they were supposed to be a Christian.” And when they see you committing sin, you cause them to stumble. Now, some people say, “It's my body. I can do what I want. If I want to smoke, I can smoke. If I want to drink, I can drink. If I want to curse, I can cuss. If I want to have premarital sex, I'll have premarital sex. It's my life.” That's the whole point: it’s not your life. The way you live should be so that nobody else stumbles.

In the Christian life, there are some gray areas. By gray I mean that we don't really know whether it's right or wrong. The Bible says, “Thou shall not” about certain things. We know that’s wrong. Thou shall not steal. Thou shall not kill. Thou shall not lie. Those things are easy, but let's face it. There are some things that make us wonder, “Does the Bible say I can do that or not?” The principle of unselfishness is not doing what’s going to make someone else stumble. Ask yourself, “Is it going to push them away from Jesus Christ?” Live in such a way that you don't cause anybody else to stumble.

### **3. Your goal is to glorify God in everything you do**

That means whether you eat, whether you drink, whether you play basketball, whether you go to school, where you play with your friends, when you sit down with your family, everything you do ought to be done to glorify God. Ask yourself this question, “Can I do this thing to the glory of God? Can I ask God to bless it?” There's a lot of things you can't do to the glory of God. And if you can't do it to the glory of God, don't do it.

Is this a big deal? Some still say, “If I want to do something and it causes somebody else to stumble, it's my life.” But it is a big deal. Jesus said in Matthew 10:30. “If you cause one of these little ones to stumble, it's better that a millstone be tied around your neck and it be cast into the ocean.” A millstone is a huge round rock that weighs about a ton that was used to grind corn. Can you imagine putting a rope around your neck, putting that rope through the center of that millstone and having somebody throw it into the deepest ocean? Jesus said it is a big deal if you make somebody stumble. So don't live for yourself. The proof of the Christian life is thinking of other people, not thinking of yourself and selfishness.

## **III. THE PROOF OF BEING A CHRISTIAN**

Some people are not sure whether they are a Christian or not.

### **1. A true Christian has a desire to seek what's best for others**

They never ask what's best for them. They think of what's best for others. When I was in the fourth grade, I was in RAs (Royal Ambassadors). After class, everybody would fight to get at the very front of the line of the Coke machine. It was, "Me first! Me first!" I've since learned that the attitude that says "me first" is not the attitude of a Christian. The attitude of a Christian says "you first" and "after you." Jesus said the first will be last. And the last shall be first. That doesn't make sense. Wanting to be first is the sin nature that we're all born with. But a true Christian says, "I want to think about what's best for you, rather than what's best for me." I tell kids, "You know your parents love you. They give you all these rules, and they ask you to do all these things—not to make your life miserable, but to make your life better. If you are a true Christian, you'll do those things because you're thinking of your parents, not thinking of yourself."

When you do unselfish things for others, you do what's best for them, rather than what's best for you. You don't grab the biggest piece of meat. You let somebody else do it. It's called a life of unselfishness, a desire to do what's best for others.

## **2. A true Christian has a desire to see others saved**

Paul says in chapter 10, verse 32 not to cause anybody to stumble. Then in verse 33, he says he tries to please everybody in every way ... not seeking his own good, but the good of many. Why? So that many may be saved.

Do you want to see other people saved after you become a Christian? I became a Christian when I was nine years old. I was seated on the back row of the church between my mom and my dad. Usually I sat with my friends. I didn't really pay any attention to the sermons. I would take the bulletin and I would underline every word that had an "a" in it, then circle every word that had an "e" in it, etc. I know now that was the devil trying to distract me from hearing the gospel, because that night I sat between my mom and my dad and had no choice but to listen. The preacher talked about how Jesus loved me and he died on the cross for me. And if I would give my life to him, he could make a difference and forgive my sins. And that night I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

When the preacher gave the invitation at the end of the service, and we all stood up to sing, I walked to the front and took that pastor's hand. I don't remember exactly what I said except that I wanted to give my life to Christ. What changed immediately was that I wanted to see my other friends saved. I would, I sit back there with my friends on Sunday. I told my friend Greg not to play with the bulletin in church and pay attention. When the preacher gave the invitation, I'd nudge Greg and say, "Don't you want to go to Jesus? Don't want you want to give your life to Jesus?" I had a burning desire to see my friends saved after I was saved. And I can remember the night that Greg gave his life to Jesus. When he got baptized, it was such a thrilling experience for me. Paul said, "I live the way I live so that other people can be saved."

### **3. A true Christian desires to follow Jesus' example**

In chapter 11, verse one, Paul says, "I follow the example of Jesus Christ." There is a song we sing that says, "...footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow..." And the Bible does say in 1 Peter that we are to follow in his steps. You don't become a Christian by imitating Jesus. Nobody can imitate Jesus. But once you become a Christian, that means you begin to live like Jesus and you follow his example. Now here's the good news—we have in the Bible the life of Jesus to follow: how he lived, what he said, what he did.

Did you know the Early Church at Corinth didn't have the New Testament? That's why Paul had to tell them follow his example. The King James says, "Be imitators of me." I wonder how many of us could stand up and say, "Follow my example, imitate my life. What you see me do, you do now"? Why was that so important for Paul? Because they didn't have a written New Testament yet like we have today. They did not know all that Jesus said and did, but much of it had been revealed to Paul. Since they didn't have the example of Jesus, Paul said, "You're just going to have to act like me! You're just going to have to imitate me, as I'm imitating Jesus." Do you know why it's important for Christians to be good examples? You've heard it said that you are the only Bible that many of your friends are ever going to read. Many kids' parents are never going to take them to church. Those kids are never going to play in a church basketball league. They're never going to hear a sermon. They're never going to open the Bible and read John 3:16 about how "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." They'll never read it. So you may be the only Bible. You may be the only example of Jesus Christ that some of your friends will ever see. And so if you're a true Christian, you'll have a desire to be a good example.

### **CONCLUSION**

What does it mean to be a Christian? It really is as simple as ABC. It's so simple, a child can do it. And that's the truth. Jesus said that adults must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. If you can't become a child, you can't be saved. And that's why it's easy for children to be saved because Jesus says you must have a childlike spirit.

#### **A - Ask**

Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and I'm knocking on the door of your heart. If any person will hear my voice and open the door, I will come into them." You just ask Jesus to come into your life and live in your life forever. It's as simple as asking.

#### **B – Believe**

You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. You must believe Jesus is the Son of God. You have to believe that he was crucified for you, that he was buried, and he was resurrected.

### **C – Confess**

This just means you say what you believe. And one way you do that is by being baptized. Another way you do that is by publicly confessing your faith in Christ. The Bible says that if you “confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

There are many people reading this who have asked Jesus to come in. You believe, and you've confessed your faith in him. You've been baptized. But I know there are many who haven't done that yet. You hear Jesus knocking on the door of your heart saying, “I love you. I want to save you. I want to come into your heart. I want to forgive all your sins. I want to write your name down in heaven so that when you die, you'll go to heaven. You won't go to hell. All you have to do is ask me to come in.” You see, the door to your heart has a doorknob on the inside. You're the only one who can open it. Jesus can't open it. Your parents can't open it for you. I can't open it for you, as much as I'd love to do so. You have to open it yourself. Are you willing to ask Jesus to save you? Are you ready to believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, that he can save you, that he can take you to heaven, and that he can come into your life? And then if you'll do that, you're ready to confess him publicly and be baptized. If you would like to ask Jesus to come into your heart, you can do that by praying a prayer. This prayer doesn't save you. It's the faith that you show when you pray. You don't have to pray it out loud, but if you will pray these words silently and sincerely, Jesus will hear you.

Dear God,

I admit that I am a sinner. I want Jesus to come into my life. I want to become a Christian right now. Lord Jesus, I ask you to come into my life, forgive my sins, and please make me a new person. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you died for me. I believe God raised you from the dead, and I believe you are now in my heart. Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my heart. I live for you now for the rest of my life. And I'm willing to confess you as my Lord. My boss. Thank you Jesus. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.



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