

THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN

Acts 11:26

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INTRODUCTION:

Christians have not always presented a pretty picture to the world. Too often we have failed to show the beauty of love, the beauty of Christ, the holiness of God, as the world has turned us away. Is there then no way to make the world look again - this time at true Christianity? Must Christians continue to stand with arms folded, presenting to men and women a tarnished image of God - a shattered body of Christ? How should we show the world that we are Christians?

Through the centuries, people have displayed many different symbols intended to show that they are Christians. They have worn marks in the lapels of their coats, hung chains about their necks, and even had special haircuts. But there is a much better sign - a universal mark that is to last through all the ages of the church till Jesus comes back.

1. UNDYING FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST:

The most important mark of the Christian is that undying faith in the Lord, the author and finisher of the Christian faith. (*Matt. 24:43-48, Lk16:10,12*). To be faithful in Christ entails more than just a statement, it requires far more than just saying it. We need to reflect on what happened at the beginning of Christianity when there was persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem (*Acts 8:1-2, Acts 11:19-22*). This is clear indication that, the mark of the Christian should show on any individual in times of trouble and not only at period of peace. (*Col. 1:1-4, Rom 1:17*). No matter the situation one should make effort to attend all church approved programs or events to show that mark and avoid excuses (*Heb. 10:23-25*). This is the authentic mark we need to show to Christ for Him to be pleased with us. Not just the claim of the name I am a Christian.

2. CONSISTENT IN PRAYER:

This is one of the indelible marks of a Christian. A Christian who does not pray cannot live up to his or her calling. A Christian who does not pray is exposed to Satan's attack because that shield that we need from God is not worn by anyone who does not pray. (*Eph. 6:10-18*). We are required to pray always whether in times of peace, trouble, sickness or in good health. (*Phil. 4:6*). When overwhelmed, we have options to involve other brethren to intercede and pray with us for God

to come to our rescue (**Jam. 5:13-16**). God in His knowledge has given us all these avenues to express ourselves to Him as we continue to worship Him. If we don't have the needed result, we are advised to back it up with fasting as a model of prayer in the light of the scriptures. A true Christian who shows this mark will remain focused and will never doubt his her believe in God.

3. ONE WHO DISPLAY GENTLE ATTRIBUTES IN AND OUT:

Another salient mark of a Christian are gentle attributes displayed by every individual who believes in Christ. Christianity is a way of life that reflect the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ. No matter your position in the society, ones you become a Christian, you drop those societal accolades in the world and be a true Child of God. That is the genuine mark of Christianity. If you want to be at the fence, partly in the world and partly in Christ, you cannot actually show that Christian mark. (**Jn. 3:1-6, 1Thes. 2:6-7, Tit. 3:2 1Pet. 3:4**). The mark of Christian is seen in any person, when he or she shows those clear attributes of humility and gentle spirit in the brotherhood and elsewhere. (**Gal. 5:22-25, matt. 19:16-22**).

4. ONE WHO PREACHES PEACE AND AT PEACE WITH OTHERS:

This is another clear mark of a Christian where ever we dwell. Christian can be answered by anybody but when it comes to actually showing the meaning, it goes beyond answering the name. Your relationship with people in terms of your character, benevolence, utterances, honesty, dressing, trust by all living around you go a long way to show who you are (**Rom. 12:1-3**). Wherever we find ourselves as Christians, let our attitude show what we stand for. We should not give room for people to doubt our faith and make mockery of the Church Christ purchased with His blood (**Acts 20:28**). This statement is not directed to the Elders alone, but to everyone who profess Christianity. Whatever you do as an individual, thinking you did it by yourself and not to anybody affects the Church in one way or the other. Especially when you are traced to the body of Christ. (**Rom. 5:1-2, 1Cort. 7:15**).

5. THE CHRISTIAN MARK AS WE RELATE WITH ONE ANOTHER:

At the close of His ministry, Jesus made clear what was to be the distinguishing mark of the Christian until His return; A new commandment I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (**John 13:33-35**).

Note that what He says here is not a statement for people in the world. It is a command which includes a condition for His believers. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. And if this is considered seriously, if you obey, you will wear the character badge that Christ gave. Since this is a command, it can be violated. The point is, while it is possible to be a Christian without showing the mark. If we expect non-Christians to know that we are

Christians, we must show the mark. We must speak to the church to take this command in our day-to-day interaction with every person within and without. same John who wrote the account above says; this is the message you heard from the beginning; we should love one another. **(1 John 3:11)** John in effect says, don't forget this... don't forget this! This command was given to us by Christ while He was still on earth. This is to be our mark.

6. LOVING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

If Jesus had commanded so strongly that we love all people as our neighbors, then it is important, especially to love our fellow Christians. If we are told to love all people as our neighbors, then surely we can understand how overwhelmingly important it is that all men and women be able to see an observable love for those with whom we have these special ties. The apostle Paul makes the double obligation clear in **(Gal. 6:10)** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. He does not negate the command to do good to all people. But it is still not meaningless to add, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. This dual goal should be our Christian mentality, our minds; we should be consciously thinking about it and what it means in our one moment-at-all-time in our lives. It should be the attitude that governs our outward observable actions.

7. THE QUALITY OF OUR LOVE BY HUMILITY (Jn 13:3-18)

The thing to notice in these verses in John 13 is the quality of the love that is to be our standard. We are to love all Christians as I have loved you. [Jesus says] The love he exhibited is to be our standard. We are to love all true Christians as Christ has loved us. No discrimination, tribalism or any form of closeness to one person than others.

The church is to be a loving church to all and sundry. Jesus says by this shall all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority he gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are Christians with a mark, on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians. And we must not get angry. If people say, "You don't show love to other Christians," we must go home, get down on our knees, and ask God whether or not what they say is true. And if it is, then they have a right to have said so. All we need do, is to change for good.

8. DEALING WITH OUR FAILURE IN LOVE:

We must be very careful at this point to appraise ourselves. We may be true Christians, and yet fail in our love toward other Christians. As a matter of fact, to be realistic, it is stronger than just answering the name Christian. There will be times, when we fail in our love toward each other as Christians. In a difficult world,

there is no such thing as perfection (until Jesus comes), we know this will be the case. And, of course, when we fail, we must ask God's forgiveness.

But, Jesus is not here saying that our failure to love all Christians proves that we are not Christians (**Gal. 6:10**). If we fail in our love toward all, we must not tear our heart out as though it is a proof that we are lost. No one except Christ Himself has ever lived and not failed. If success in love toward our brothers in Christ were to be the standard of whether or not one is a Christian, then there would be no Christians, because all men have failed. There is a mark which, if the world does not see, allows them to conclude, "This person is not a Christian." Of course, the world may be making a wrong judgment because if the man is truly a Christian, as far as the reality goes, they made a mistake. (**Jn. 17:25-26**).

CONCLUSION:

At the close of His ministry, Jesus looks forward to His death on the cross, the open tomb and the ascension. Knowing that He is about to leave, Jesus prepares His disciples for what is to come. It is here that He makes clear what will be the distinguishing mark of the Christian: *"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (**John 13:33-35**). This passage reveals the mark that Jesus gives to label a Christian not just in one era or in one locality but at all times and all places until Jesus returns. Furthermore, there must be consistency in the display of our faith in Christ, prayers offered for ourselves and others, our peaceful existence in our various location with others that preaches Christ before we quote the bible passages. Such attributes show the Christian mark before announcing ourselves as Christian (**Act 11:26**).