

Is everyone a follower of Christ who claims to be?

An ABC news poll showed that 82% of all Americans claim to be Christians. According to Jesus, there will be many people on judgment day who think they are going to heaven but will be turned away.

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

How we can test ourselves: The Fruit Test

Jesus really had only one test he told us to conduct to see if someone belongs to Him: the Fruit Test. In Matthew 7:20 He says, "You will know them by their fruit" (Apple Tree Illustration). Fruit is what one's life produces: words, actions, and attitudes.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come!" That means that there will be some changes when you commit your life to Christ (Semi Truck Illustration).

It is important to remember that salvation is in no way earned because of one's fruit or good works.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8–9

Salvation is a free gift that Christ purchased for us through His death and resurrection. When one receives this free gift through accepting Christ, their life will change and produce fruit.

The following verses show the fruit that will be in a true Christian's life:

- "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Matthew 7:21
- "We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."
1 John 2:3–4
- "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" James 2:14
- "Do you believe there is one God? Even the demons believe that and shudder." James 2:19

If you died right now and God asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What would you say? What percentage chance would you have of going to heaven?

Here is a quick, 8-question test to find out if you are good enough to get into heaven. Circle the appropriate answer:

1. Have you ever told a lie? Y N
2. Have you given money to charity? Y N
3. Have you gone to church regularly? Y N
4. Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)? Y N
5. Have you ever used "God" or "Jesus" as a curse word? Y N
6. Have you tried to read your Bible regularly? Y N
7. Have you ever looked at someone with lustful thoughts? Y N
8. Have you ever broken the first commandment? "You shall have no other gods before Me." Y N

Let's see how you did...

1. Have you ever told a lie?

The Ninth of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall not lie." Telling just one lie, according to God's standard, makes us a "liar." In Revelation 21:8 God says, "...all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire..."

4. Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)?

The Eighth of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not steal." Stealing just one thing (regardless of its size or monetary value), according to God's standards, makes us a "thief." In 1 Corinthians 6:10, God says, "No thieves... shall inherit the kingdom of God."

5. Have you ever used "God" or "Jesus" as a curse word?

The Third of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain." If you've ever used the name "God," "Jesus," or "Christ" as a curse word that offense is called "blasphemy" and according to God's standards, you are a "blasphemer." In Leviticus 24:16 God says, "he that blasphemes the name of the LORD, shall surely be put to death..."

7. Have you ever looked at someone with lustful thoughts?

The Seventh of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not commit adultery." If you've ever looked at another person with lustful thoughts, according to God's standards, that makes you an "adulterer" in your heart. Jesus said, "You have heard it said, You shall not commit adultery: But I say to you, that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" Matthew 5:28. In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, God says that no adulterers "...shall inherit the kingdom of God."

8. Have you ever broken the first commandment? "You shall have no other Gods before Me."

The First of the Ten Commandments is "You shall have no other gods before me." That means that we should love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. The Bible tells us that no one has kept this commandment (Psalm 14:2–3).

2. Have you given money to charity?**3. Have you gone to church regularly?****6. Have you made it a practice to read the Bible regularly?**

These are good activities, but none of them impress God. The Bible says, "and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6). That means, all our "righteous acts"—these "good deeds" that questions 2, 3, and 6 asked about—can never make up for the fact that we've broken God's Holy Commandments. Think of it this way: if a person was guilty of a serious crime such as murder but gave money to charity, does that make up for his crime? No. The person's crime hasn't been paid for because he gave money to charity. This "good deed" will mean nothing to the judge when he passes sentence. The murder must still be punished.

Test Result: The Bad News

This test showed you how you stand up when judged by just five of God's Ten Commandments. God is perfectly just. If God judges you by His standard, would you be innocent or guilty (circle one)? Do you think you would go to Heaven or Hell (circle one)?

The Solution: The Good News!

Imagine you're in a courtroom and you're guilty of many serious crimes. The judge says, "It's a fine of \$500,000,000 or prison." You don't have anywhere near that amount of money, so they begin to walk you out of the courtroom. Then the judge himself tells the bailiff to stop, pulls out his checkbook, writes out a check for \$500,000,000, and says, "I've paid the fine for you." Now that the fine has been paid, the law no longer has any hold on you. You're free because of the gift you've been given.

This is what God did for you by sending Jesus to die on the cross in your place.

So that you wouldn't have to go to Hell, God sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross—suffering the punishment that justice demands. Then He rose from the grave, forever defeating death! The Bible tells us:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

If you will repent of your sins and put your trust in Jesus, God says He will forgive all your sins and grant you the gift of everlasting life because the payment for your crimes was made by Jesus on the cross. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." **The Bridge Illustration** helps explain this verse.

The pie illustration shows what it means to make Jesus Lord of your life.

You can turn from your sins and trust Christ by faith through prayer right now. God knows your heart. The words of the prayer are not magical, but if they reflect the decision you would like to make, you can use it to express your faith to God.

"Lord, I confess to you that I am a sinner and that I am separated from you. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I want to turn from all of my sins (name some) and I trust Jesus Christ to come into my life and take control of my life from now on. Please forgive me and grant me your gift of everlasting life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

Does this prayer show the desire of your heart? If so, pray it out loud to God.

If you have truly repented and trusted Jesus, there will be some changes in your life. You will experience a new desire to honor God, a deeper love for others, and more. 1 John 5:13 says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." If you surrendered your life to Christ, this is the start of an exciting relationship with God and you can be sure He came in and will give you eternal life! You should take steps to grow in your new relationship with God. Next time, we can look further at how to grow as a follower of Jesus.

Discipleship Challenge: Read back over this lesson. Make sure you understand the Gospel and are truly committed to following Jesus. Spend time in prayer thanking Jesus for your salvation. Start reading the Gospel of John one chapter a day and write down your thoughts and questions.

LEADER'S GUIDE

This lesson was put together as a simple way to share the gospel with a potential disciple. This clear presentation of the gospel has been the primary tool God is using at Christian Challenge CSUC to help people start a relationship with Jesus. You should look over "How to Share Jesus Using Gospel Appointments" before you share this lesson with someone else.

Purpose

To share the gospel with a potential disciple and help them choose to become a follower of Jesus. The goal is to shatter the false gospel that people can be "good enough" for God and clearly communicate the payment Jesus made for them on the cross. This lesson also communicates the necessity of accepting His forgiveness and sacrifice by making Him Lord.

Tips

- Simply read the lesson out loud with meaning and confidence.
- Move quickly through the lesson. This is not meant to be an in-depth study on each verse.
- Be brief when explaining illustrations and points.
- Don't stop and ask "Have you heard this before?" or "Have you prayed this before?" out of insecurity. Asking those types of questions will make them feel awkward. Those questions may tempt them to lie even if they don't really understand. If they have heard it before it is likely that they will tell you.
- Share the lesson with confidence even if you know that they are a Christian. It will strengthen their understanding of the gospel and serve as an example for what they can do with future disciples.
- Here are four themes this lesson is trying to get across:
 1. Not everyone is a Christian. True Christians produce the "fruit" of a changed life.
 2. All of us are sinners and no one is "good enough" to get to God by good works.
 3. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins through His death on the cross and resurrection! We can be forgiven and get a fresh start!
 4. We must accept His forgiveness and decide to make Jesus Lord (leader) of our lives to be saved.
- Don't go on tangents and try to explain every gospel truth that you know. Keep it simple! The goal is for them to meet Jesus and then whet their appetite for more.
- Make sure your tone sounds like you are sharing "Good News!" Which is what the word, "Gospel" is. Don't present it with an overly serious "turn or burn" vibe. Have the attitude of "just one beggar telling another beggar where they found bread." Say something like, "I just wanted to share a lesson that explain the most important thing about our group."
- Focus on the fact that Jesus paid for our sins as our substitute on the cross and resurrection. If they don't get anything else, make sure they understand that.
- Take time to read over "How to Share Jesus Using Gospel Appointments" before your meeting for more tips.
- Relax and trust God to use His Word. Don't be preachy, just share the material with confidence.

LEADER'S GUIDE CONT'D

Key Illustrations

- **The Apple Tree Illustration**

Simply say, "If I showed you a tree and it had oranges hanging on its branches but I told you it was an apple tree would you believe me? It is the same thing with people. If a person says they are a follower of Jesus, their life should bear the fruit (actions and attitudes) of a Christian. What fruit do you think should be in a true Christian's life?"

- **Semi Truck Illustration**

Say, "If I told you that I was hit by a semi-truck today and I showed up to our meeting uninjured and clean, would you believe me? It is the same thing when you become a Christian. If you have the living God in your life you will be different."

- **Bridge Illustration**

The bridge illustration is a great tool for quickly, clearly sharing the Gospel in a visual way.

1. Draw two sides of chasm. On the left side, draw two stick figures (they represent you and the person you are presenting to) and on the right side, write "God."
2. Explain that we are separated from God due to our sin and that nothing we can produce on our own (good works, religion, philosophy) can bridge that gap.
3. Draw a cross in between the two sides, bridging the gap between us and God.
4. Explain that Jesus, God's son, died on the cross in order for us to be able to cross over to God. We cross over through belief in God and Christ's sacrifice (John 5:24).

- **Pie Illustration**

The point of the pie illustration is to explain "Lordship." Lordship means that Jesus is the leader and king of your life. He calls the shots in every area of life. Lordship means leaving your self-ruled life for a Jesus-ruled life.

1. Draw one pie chart. Say, "this is the way most people live life." Write in different areas of life such as girlfriend, job, school, family, future, free time, friends and sometimes God gets a slice. Then say, "that is not what it means to be a Christian."
2. Draw a second pie chart. Draw a circle with a big cross in the middle and explain that Jesus leads you and empowers you to do each of these areas in a way that honors Him. Write in those areas and mention how He may impact those areas. Say something like, "it's an amazing blessing to have Jesus influencing every area of your life."
3. Simply ask: "Which pie chart would you like to most represent your life?"