

SESSION 5

FUNDAMENTAL #3: WHAT EXACTLY IS A CHRISTIAN?



Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

FOCAL VERSE

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.
1 Corinthians 15:3-4

CHAPTER THREE - GROUP EXPERIENCE

"WHAT EXACTLY IS A CHRISTIAN?"



From the author, *W. Kieper*

Immediately following the death of Kobe Bryant, my first thought was, "Was Kobe a Christian?" I googled that very question and when I did, it was apparent that other fans were asking the same thing. At first glance, the conclusion I came to was, "*I think so...but I don't know for sure.*" Had it been Steph Curry, David Robinson, or Kevin Durant, there would have been no question. I continued my investigation.

NBA Superstar Kobe Bryant's 20-year career with the Los Angeles Lakers made him "No. 1 of all-time" of NBA players who played for a single franchise. Entering the NBA directly from high school, he won five NBA championships with the Lakers, was an 18-time NBA All Star, became the youngest player in league history to reach 30,000 career points, was the leading scorer in Lakers franchise history, and is widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time. Most fans know about these accolades, but what many don't know is that he was a man of faith who spent his last moments at church, shortly before boarding the flight which took his life on Sunday, January 26, 2020.

Early that morning Kobe and his daughter, Gianna, attended the family's Newport Beach, CA church, Our Lady Queen of Angels. According to the church's priest, Father Steve Sallot, the Bryants took time to worship there before the 7AM service. On his way out, Kobe discussed with Father Sallot his desire to make a deeper commitment to Christ by becoming confirmed, a sacrament which affirms one's Christian identity. When I read those words, I knew the answer to my question...and was comforted.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FROM SESSION 2:

- Since our last session, did you find that you were more aware of sin, and confessing it?
- Why is confession and repentance so important?

NOTE TO LEADER:

This chapter is one of the most significant chapters in the book! It will lay a crucial foundation for the listener. Don't rush through it and give yourself plenty of time to prepare for the lesson.



Photo courtesy of Kevork Djansezian / Getty Images

Introduction & Discussion Questions

Becoming a Christian and **being** a Christian are two very different things. In this chapter, we will highlight what it means to be a Christian and how you can become one.

As we begin, let's start with this important question: **If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?**



I am fascinated with shows like Dateline, 48-Hours, and Forensic Files.

I'm always trying to figure out "whodunit" before the end of the show. Detectives always start their investigation with the people closest to the victim. They strategically go through the victim's social media, scour their text messages, interview eyewitnesses, and analyze where the victim hung out, (and with whom). Following the evidence and digital fingerprints reveal a great deal about the victim and, in most cases, leads to a conviction of one or more suspects.



- **What would an investigation of your life reveal about you?** Would your life point people toward Christ or away from Him? Would you be convicted of being a Christian? A disciple of Jesus Christ?
- **If someone were to ask you, "What is a Christian?" would you be prepared to answer that question with confidence?**
- **Before reading today's text, can you guess how many times the term "Christian" is used in the Bible?** Take some guesses, then explain the answer will be revealed on page 30.

“
OUR FAITH
SHOULD BE
PERSONAL
BUT NOT
PRIVATE.”

Page 30

- After second paragraph, ask: **If your salvation is not based on good works or our righteous acts, then why is our behavior so important? How are we supposed to behave?**

Page 31

- After second paragraph, ask: **Do you have a nickname? If so, what is it? Why was it given to you?**
- **Before going further, let's firmly establish what the word "saved," or "salvation," means.** (paragraph 3)
 - When we place our trust and faith in Christ, the Bible says we are "saved."
 - The dominant meaning in the New Testament (NT) is "deliverance from the consequences of sin and the clutches of death and Satan."
 - The major theme in the NT is deliverance from God's wrath.
 - God sent Jesus Christ to rescue (save) us from the consequences of our sin.
 - Salvation is not only being saved from something, it is also being saved to someone. **We are saved from sin and brought to God.**
 - **Optional Illustration:** A young boy made a poor decision—one that required consequences. The boy's father was brokenhearted over his son's sin, but he knew it couldn't go unpunished. With belt in hand, the father handed it to the boy and said, "Here, I will take the punishment for your sin." That's the love our Heavenly Father has for us! He took our sin and placed it upon His son in order to save us from the wrath of our sin, even though he was blameless.

Page 32

- **Why do you think it's so hard for people to believe that we don't have to do anything to earn salvation?** (Second paragraph. You may want to refer back to chapter four, "Fundamental #2").

“
THE BIBLE EXPLAINS THAT
BECOMING A CHRISTIAN IS
NOT ABOUT BEHAVIOR, BUT
ABOUT RESPONDING TO
JESUS'S OFFER OF
FORGIVENESS.
”

Page 33

- **Discuss the "inside-out" process.** How does it relate to you as an athlete? How does it relate to your spiritual life? Do you recall a time in your life when you committed to this inside-out process as an athlete? As a Christian?
- Bullet point one: "You must believe in faith..." Faith has everything to do with salvation!
 - What is faith? Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not yet see (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is complete trust or confidence in Jesus...not in ourselves!

Page 34

- Last bullet point on page 34: Christians should set themselves apart to be holy.
 - **Look up 1 Peter 2:9. What does this verse say about being set apart for Christ?** *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*
 - **Romans 12:2 is another verse calling Christians to set themselves apart:** *"Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes."* (TPT)

Page 35

- (Second paragraph). Although the book poses this question, don't burden the members to answer it out loud. They will have an opportunity to answer privately as they prepare for session 6.
 - **Have you ever made a deliberate decision/choice to set yourself apart from the rest of the world by accepting Jesus as the Lord of your life?**

Page 36

- End with Post Game Prayer

Optional:

- Read "Three Old Hunting Dogs," by Jerry Fine. (See attachment)

“
SALVATION IS A
MATTER OF THE
HEART, NOT A
MATTER OF WORDS.
”

Assignment for session 6:

- Prior to the next session, read chapter six on your own.
- After completing the chapter, email your leader and let her/him know if you've made a decision to follow Jesus Christ for the first time, or if you've made a decision to recommit your life to Christ, by allowing Him to be boss of your life.
- If you have already committed your life to Christ, would you be willing to briefly share your salvation experience with your leader? How old were you? Who led you to Christ? How has Christ made a difference in your life?
- **LEADER: Follow-up with the class members about this assignment prior to the next session.**

Three Old Hunting Dogs

How They Represent Some Attitudes of Christians Today

Jerry Fine, *One on One with God*

The Apostle Paul's determined purpose was to know Jesus. What is our attitude about knowing Jesus today? When I think about this, it brings to mind three old hunting dogs. They were very different. To me, they represent three of the many different attitudes that Christians have today about knowing Jesus, growing spiritually, and serving Him.

One of the dogs was a pointer who always watched me from a distance. We didn't enjoy a close fellowship because he wasn't interested in having fellowship with me, his master. He had his own agenda, and it didn't include me unless I took him hunting, which was something *he* wanted to do. Does this sound like some Christians?

The second dog was a German shorthaired pointer, and she liked brief encounters with me, but spent most of her time just out of my reach. I could pat her once or twice and she was gone. She was not interested in anything more than a "bump and run" type of fellowship. Even in the backyard where there was time for us to get to know each other, she was not really interested. So our fellowship was very shallow and not very meaningful. Does this sound like some Christians?

The third dog was a little English setter, and she was a pure delight to us. She brought us much joy because she not only wanted to serve me with a willing heart as we hunted together, but she constantly showed her love to me and the rest of the family. She stood at the door just watching for me, and when she saw me, she got so excited she could not stand still. She lived for our time together, and we had great fellowship. I am happy to say that our lives have been touched by some Christians who modeled this type of love and devotion to Christ.

God loves us and desires our fellowship but He will not force that fellowship on us. It's time to pursue that fellowship.

Optional discussion question:

- Which hunting dog best describes you?
- Some might say they are a "mixed breed."

