

7 CHARACTERISTICS OF A *Believer in Christ*

We recognize things by what characterizes them. For instance, if someone described something to you with the words: leaves, branches, trunk, oranges—you'd most likely say, "Oh, that's an orange tree!" And you'd be right. The tree is known by its characteristics. The same is true when it comes to being a believer in Christ.

A believer is known by what characterizes his or her life. Jesus said on several occasions, "a tree is recognized by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33). True believers in Christ are recognized—not by what they say they believe—but by what actively marks their lives on a daily basis.

1. TRANSFORMATION

"I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST AND I NO LONGER LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME. THE LIFE I NOW LIVE IN THE BODY, I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME."

—Galatians 2:20

Believers look different than they did before they believed. Taking on Jesus' life and ways, believers begin to act, talk, move, care, and share in ways that reflect God's love. No longer living to please themselves, believers are increasingly marked by the radiant, joyous, grace-filled, and loving life of Jesus.



2. LOVE ... FOR GOD

"JESUS REPLIED: 'LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. THIS IS THE FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT.'"

— Matthew 22:37-38

Believers' #1 love is God. Realizing how much God loved them and gave Himself for them through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, believers love God with all they have and all they are. Heart, soul, mind, strength, body, emotions—all become activated and engaged in loving God more than anything or anyone else.



3. LOVE ... FOR OTHERS.

"A NEW COMMAND I GIVE YOU: LOVE ONE ANOTHER. AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, SO YOU MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER. BY THIS, EVERYONE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

—John 13:34-35

Believers realize that loving God means also loving others. Love becomes more than a relationship with God to be solitarily possessed and enjoyed. Believers begin to love and sacrifice for others the way Jesus did. Believers love others because Christ first loved them.

4. OBEDIENCE.

"JESUS REPLIED, 'ANYONE WHO LOVES ME WILL OBEY MY TEACHING. MY FATHER WILL LOVE THEM, AND WE WILL COME TO THEM AND MAKE OUR HOME WITH THEM.'"

—John 14:23

Believers trust God to be in charge of their lives. They say "yes" to what God asks them to do—according to His Word, and as they hear God speak in various ways through the Holy Spirit. Believers obey God—regardless of popular opinion or the difficulties it may require—because they know God will see them through and always have their best interest at heart.



5. CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS.

"IF WE CLAIM TO BE WITHOUT SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST AND WILL FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND PURIFY US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS."

—1 John 1:8-9

Believers forgive much because they have been forgiven much. With Christ in their heart, believers feel conviction when they sin. They readily repent when they "miss the mark" or "offend" God and others. Believers lead with grace in forgiving others, knowing that God has forgiven them with unparalleled grace in their own life.



6. MEANING, PURPOSE, PRIORITY.

"BUT SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU AS WELL."

—Matthew 6:33

Believers live with renewed meaning and redefined purpose. They no longer live for themselves but for Christ and His Kingdom. Their focus and priorities center around "what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10). Believers arrange their time, energy, and resources around what they are most passionate about—Christ and His Kingdom.



7. FRUITFULNESS.

"THIS IS TO MY FATHER'S GLORY, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, SHOWING YOURSELVES TO BE MY DISCIPLES."

—John 15:8

Believers bear fruit. Remember what Jesus said a tree is recognized by? Fruit! That means, just as apple trees produce apples, believers in Christ produce Christ-like fruit. Increasingly, believers bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). They bear the fruit of serving others and sharing the good news about Jesus. Above all, they do what Jesus did and does as they get active in His Kingdom and in the lives of others.

