

Being a Christian

by John Russomando
Chicago Staff

What does it mean to be a Christian? This question has plagued men and women for centuries. Some will say that if you go to church on Sunday that they are Christians. Attending worship on the Sabbath is an important part of being Christian, but attending church on Sunday does not make one a Christian.

The central tenet to being a Christian is renouncing your personal desires for Christ's glory. As a Christian the first are last and the last are first.

This means that a Christian must be selfless and place the needs of others before your own. For most people pleasures of the flesh and of being intoxicated are all there is and anyone who speaks against this is a fool. There is a fulfilling pleasure which can even out last death and that is to lay down your life for Christ.

I have no need for alcohol, drugs, or sex to fill my life because a Christian cannot serve two masters. The pleasure I get from serving Christ is beyond the pleasure of being drunk or

having sex.

Many people think that "God loves me and he does not care what I do." Yes, God loves you unconditionally but he demands that you love him with all your heart, all your strength, and all of your soul.

How do you love God? If you love God you will obey his commandments --not suggestions. You shall have no other god, no sex outside of marriage, no homosexual sex, no bestiality, no incest, etc. Do not steal. In the eyes of God taking a pencil is the same as stealing a car. Do not lie. Do not desire what is not yours. Obey these commandments as well as all others. Show your love for commandments as well as all others. This shows your love for God, and if you deny this you will never see salvation.

As human beings we are bound by our sins, but through faith in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection we can overcome our sins. It is faith alone which can bridge the gap between what is seen and what is unseen.

No human rationality, or atheistic binding to what can be explained by their limited senses

which makes them no higher than animals, can comprehend the mystery of God almighty. This mystery is beyond even the comprehension of anyone whose faith brings him/her close to God.

The Bible is the eternal word of God. Although it was transcribed by men, it was



revealed to them through the wonder of the Holy Spirit. Some say the Bible is mere folktales and wishful dreaming, and still others say that it is outdated.

The Bible is the word of God. The Bible liberates the dead and restores life. The teachings of the Bible are that of God, and

therefore as God is eternal so is the Bible and its words. The words of those who hate Christ and his disciples are lies and come and go like the wind. The Bible has always been and always will be.

Again I ask what does it mean to be a Christian? Salvation in Christ does not come from material outward signs of devotion, but from the deeds of love and selflessness. The Lord said forgive them as I have forgiven you. Jesus forgave those who tortured and killed him. Just as Jesus forgave so must Christians forgive their brothers and sisters when they hurt them.

A Christian must not conform to the ways of the world and must constantly struggle with the world. Being a Christian also means to welcome scorn of those who deny Christ with open arms. It is better to be an oppressed outcast living for Christ than to die for nothing. To be a Christian requires strength, patience, love, self-control, and the willingness to give up every aspect of your being to Christ. Many will be frightened and discouraged, but those whose faith is strong will

achieve salvation.

Do not try to analyze the word of God with your small human minds because it is like a blind man trying to read printed words on paper. No one is too wretched or too high for the love of Jesus Christ.

As human beings we are weak and easily give into our sins, but through faith in Jesus Christ our sins are taken up on the cross and we receive the assurance of eternal life. Not even the most pious of Christians deserve grace on their own merits, but God's love grants them salvation. It is impossible for God to damn a person willingly, but through our own free will we choose whether we want salvation or damnation.

Do not crave material objects for they will bring you down, but the spirit of righteousness will raise you to life. What meant everything to you in death shall have no meaning for you in life. The price for living in the light is great. You shall suffer greatly for your faith, but from your faith not even physical death nor the Devil shall prevail. May peace be with you and may you live in grace.

Football fever

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

It is the time of the year when we put the holiday season behind us; a time when we suck in our stomachs, leave the cozy confines of our homes, go back out into the working world, purchase some beer, return to our homes, lie down in front of our TVs and let our stomachs protrude back out.

It's time for the pro football playoffs.

I love to watch football on TV, and I will tell you exactly why: I have no idea. Perhaps the appeal of this violent game stems from some basic biological urge that guys have, dating back millions of years to when primitive spear-carrying men would go into the forest to hunt game for their families, and their very survival depended on their ability to operate a remote control.

Whatever the attraction is, a lot of women seem to be immune to it. I have seen women walk right past a TV set with a football game on -- and this always amazes me -- not stop to watch, even if the TV is showing replays of what we call a "good hit," which is a tackle that causes at least one major internal organ to actually fly out of a player's body. The average

guy cannot ignore something of this importance. He is going to stop and watch, even if he is supposed to be doing something else, such as reporting that his house is on fire. The average guy might not be able to name the secretary of state, but he can tell you who made the hit that turned Joe Theisman into a human Gumby - an injury so horrible to watch that the TV people basically canceled the rest of the season so they could show close-up replays of it in slow motion.

(Just for the record: The player that made this hit is Lawrence Taylor. The secretary of state is a dweeb.)

Every Thanksgiving, my family attends a gathering at the home of our friends Gene Weingarten and Arlene Reidy. The women all gather in one room and talk about careers, relationships, world events, etc., while the guys, most of whom see each other only once a year, all gather in front of the TV and stare, cowlike, at the football game. We even watch the pickup-truck commercials, despite the fact that most of us are journalists who rarely haul any payload larger than, say, a bagel. We do not talk, except to analyze the fine points of the game.

FIRST GUY: Whoa! Look

at that! What IS that?

SECOND GUY: I think that's his spleen.

THIRD GUY: No, a spleen that travels that far is going to rupture. That has to be a kidney.

I don't want you to think that all we guys do at this gathering is watch football. We also PLAY football, in the back yard. It's a demanding game. For one



thing, each player has recently consumed his weight in onion dip. For another thing, the Weingarten-Reidy yard is not a regulation football field: It is a small hillside covered with thousands of regulation dog doots, provided courtesy of two large, high-output, retriever-style dogs, Harry Truman and Clementine, who add to the

complexity of the game by racing around in frantic circles at high speeds, like subatomic particles in the Superconducting Super Collider, but not as intelligent.

We play Standard Back-Yard Touch Football Rules, which require that, on each down, the offensive players must spend a minimum of five minutes in the huddle, devising a pass play more complex than the Clinton health plan, calling for curls, hooks, slants, feints, cutbacks, laterals, running all the way around the house, diving into the hammock, giving the ball to a small child and instructing the child to cry if an opposing player comes near, etc. Once we designed a play that involved spitting on the defensive backs.

When the ball is snapped, everybody forgets about the play and concentrates on (a) not falling down, and (b) avoiding the pass rush, which is a threat to players on both sides in as much as it is provided by Harry Truman, a relentless competitor who will definitely bite off your leg.

The main difference between our games and pro-football is that sometimes we score a touchdown. This virtually never happens in the NFL. The referees won't allow it. They're jealous of the players, because

the players get to wear sleek athletic uniforms, whereas the referees have to wear dorky little hats and pants that make them appear to have enormous butts. They look like they're smuggling mattresses back there. So if a player scores a touchdown, the referees immediately call it back and make a complex announcement over the loudspeakers ("OK, WE HAVE A HOLDING ON NUMBER 84, WHICH IS OFFSET BY AN ILLEGAL PARAMETER ON NUMBER 73, WHICH IS FURTHER COMPOUNDED BY A FAILURE TO DECLARE NON-ACCRUABLE DIVIDED INCOME ON THE PART OF NUMBER 143, ALTHOUGH THIS IS SOMEWHAT MITIGATED BY ...").

My suggestions for making the NFL more exciting are:

1. Allow the refs to wear cool uniforms and participate in end-zone dances, or

2. Allow the players to tackle the referees. ("OK, WE HAVE-WHAM.")

Speaking on behalf of a lot of guys, I urge the owners to consider these sensible changes. Also, while they're up, they should get me a beer.