

# The Christian and God's Truth

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

John 17:6-8

An award-winning legal editor at the *Chicago Tribune* and convinced atheist, Lee Strobel set out to disprove Christianity after his wife Leslie became a Christian. He undertook a two-year investigation focused on the historical credibility of the New Testament and especially the resurrection (eyewitness testimony, the empty tomb, early creedal material, etc.). He has repeatedly affirmed that this was a genuine journalistic inquiry, which ultimately convinced him that the core claims are true.

Once persuaded that the evidence for Jesus and the resurrection was compelling, Strobel still recognized that **intellectual assent was not yet saving faith**. Leslie pointed him to **John 1:12-13**, and he articulated it as an “equation”: *Believe + Receive = Become*. Convinced of the truth, he then **prayed a prayer of repentance and faith**, receiving Christ as “forgiver and leader” (i.e., Lord). This marks his move from mere verification to **personal trust and submission**.

In his own retellings, his “call” to believe was not a sudden mystical voice but a Spirit-driven conviction arising **through** the Word and the facts he had tested—what we would call the Spirit’s internal work enabling him to embrace Christ freely offered in the gospel. Evidence brought him to *credence*; the Holy Spirit used Scripture and conscience to bring him to **repentance and receiving**. He dates this turning to **1981**, after his investigation and through Leslie’s patient witness.

Following this repentance-and-faith response, Strobel publicly identified as a Christian and later wrote *The Case for Christ* (1998), framing his story as “an atheist who investigated—and was convinced.” He continues to present his conversion as both **evidence-based** and **grace-driven**, guarding against claims that he fabricated or exaggerated his journey. *When examining personal faith, one must contemplate the question, “Who is Jesus to me?”*

## I. What are the Characteristics of Believers?

- A. The believer has settled the most critical issue of life.
  - 1. To know that we are the objects of God’s special care.
  - 2. To know that we have eternal life. (**Genesis 3:3**, the curse of death for sin)
- B. The most significant name has been revealed to them.
  - 1. God’s Name has been revealed to them – Christ did more than share a message; He manifested all that God is in the flesh and revealed it to man without blurriness or confusion.
  - 2. In doing so, He distinguished between two groups: those who are Christians (belonging to God) and those who are “of the world.” There is no middle ground in the spiritual economy.
- C. How the Lord describes a Christian:
  - 1. It is a clear definition and is narrowly defined (**Matthew 7:13-14**).
  - 2. Experience, feelings, decisions, or determinations do not define or give evidence of a Christian (**Matthew 7:15-21**).
  - 3. A Christian is in a relationship with Christ, who is the Truth (**John 14:6**). Evidence of relationship is found in obedience to truth. **John 17:6**, “*They have kept your word.*”
    - a) **John 8:31–32**, *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* (see also **John 8:33-47**)
    - b) **John 14:21–24**, *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.”*
    - c) **Psalms 119:9–11**, *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*

- d) The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is Wisdom (as He is Love) (**Proverbs 8:22-36**)
- e) **Proverbs 2:1–5**, *My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.*
- f) **Proverbs 3:1–4**, *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, 2 for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. 3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.*
- g) **Colossians 3:16**, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
- h) **2 Timothy 1:13**, *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*
- i) **Revelation 2:13**, *I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*
- j) **Revelation 3:8**, *I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

## II. What Trap Does the Enemy Use to Cause Us To Be Self-Decieved?<sup>1</sup>

- A. Civic Religion – it only demands you publicly give a “at hat-tip” to “the man upstairs” and sing God Bless America at the baseball game.
- B. Country Club Church – Being baptized and joining a church does not create spiritual life in a person.
  - 1. If your faith costs you nothing, it is not worth anything either.
- C. Christmas & Easter (C&E Christianity) – traditions, cultural norms, and sentimentality are not indicators of spiritual life.
- D. Decisions vs. Disciples – there is an eternal difference between “making a decision” and being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we pointing people to the person of Christ or to a destination of Heaven? One is a relationship, and the other is “fire insurance.”
- E. Party, Politics & Prosperity – these are not the vital signs of spiritual life. “Taking America back is not the mission of the church.”
- F. The Moral Majority – “Good people will go to eternal damnation.” This is moral relativism.
- G. Notre Dame (or Baylor) Wins – A religion, denomination, or institution does not impart spiritual life.
- H. Faith, Family, Football – Living in the Bible belt does not grant you eternal life. Watered-down doctrine and Biblical generalizations are failing to direct people through the narrow gate.

## III. Who is Jesus to the Christian?

- A. An awareness of God's plan (**John 17:7-8**)
  - 1. An ability to give an account of the hope that lies within you (**1 Peter 3:14-16, esp. vs. 15**)
  - 2. An Example, **John 6:68–69**, *Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”*
- B. Jesus has come from God the Father (**John 17:8**, “*I came from you*”).
  - 1. He is the only begotten of the Father (**John 17:1-5; 1:14**)
  - 2. He was born of a virgin (**Isa 7:14**) in the town of Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**)
- C. Jesus was sent by the Father (**John 17:8**, “*and they have believed that you sent me.*”)
  - 1. **Galatians 4:4**, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,*
  - 2. **John 3:16**, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*”

<sup>1</sup> Inserra, Dean. *The Unsaved Christian: Reaching Cultural Christianity with the Gospel*. 2019. Moody Publishers, 820 LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610. (TOC).