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Part 1: What Christians Believe—Becoming a Christian

By Dick Moes

The goal of this lesson is to draw the first five lessons together. In these lessons, you covered the basics about what Christians believe about God the Father and our need of Him, about God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This lesson pulls this teaching together into a very simple outline of the gospel based upon the Apostles' Creed.

What is a Christian?

By now the participants should be familiar with the idea of journey to faith. Remind them of some of the things you discussed when you dealt with the prodigal son in lesson two. Then ask them to break into groups and to share something about their journey of faith: whether they are Christians and if so, how they came to faith? Once they have done this, run through the list of descriptions on the handout. The facilitator should ask people to say what is wrong with each of them. These descriptions include: I went to Sunday School; I am a good person; I believe God exists; we were married in the church; I enjoy *Songs of Praise*; I was baptized as a child; I'm not anything else; and my wife goes to church. After having pointed out what is wrong with these descriptions, the participants are asked to formulate how they would describe a Christian. Write down some of the descriptions that are offered on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

The facilitator now goes into a teaching session explaining what a Christian is. He does this by expanding on and illustrating the statements listed on the handout. These statements include:

- Many people in our society believe themselves to be Christians but have only begun to understand the Christian faith.
- Being a Christian is not something vague and private but something definite and public. Jesus makes it clear He expects us to stand up and be counted.
- No one is born as a Christian (although you may be born into a Christian family). No one becomes a Christian by accident either.
- You become a Christian by recognizing that you are unable to bring about a positive change yourself in the fact that you are guilty before God, but only by appealing to the only One who can make a difference in this situation: Jesus Christ who transfers his perfect righteousness and holiness to your account when you place your trust in Him.
- You become a Christian by making a deliberate decision to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to wholehearted commitment.
- Jesus calls this process being born again. Just as with a normal birth, this is not something you do yourself; it happens to you. As a Christian you will increasingly

discover that long before you were busy with God, God was already busy with you.

The Christian Gospel

Having given a description of a Christian, the facilitator proceeds to give an outline of the Christian gospel. This outline first focuses on *God and his love*:

- He made us.
- He loves us.
- He wants the best for us.

Then it focuses on *our need*:

- We were created to know God.
- We have turned away from Him.
- We have rejected his love.
- We are sinners.

After our need, the outline focuses on *Jesus Christ as the solution to our need*:

- God sent his Son Jesus to draw us back to Him.
- Jesus lived a life without sin.
- He died on the cross and arose from the dead.
- Through Jesus, God promises everyone (a) forgiveness of sins, (b) a new relationship with God and his people (c) the gift of eternal life.

Then comes *our response*:

- Repentance
- Faith
- Becoming a full member of the church.

How do I become a Christian?

After having outlined the gospel, the facilitator focuses on how someone becomes a Christian. He should emphasize that becoming a Christian is a process that may take months, sometimes years. In a certain sense, it looks like a journey back to God. Then he expands on the significant points in this journey as listed on the handout. These points include:

- Wanting to know more.
- Finding out about Christianity.
- Sensing your own need of God.
- Making a commitment to follow Christ.

- Baptism.
- Membership of the church.

General Question Period

As with all the lessons, also this lesson should end with a general question period. It may very well be that some would like to make a commitment to Christ. It could also be that some have already made this commitment, but would like to become a member of the church. Whatever the case may be, the facilitator should deal with the questions with great care and sensitivity. Then, the evening should be closed with prayer.

If you would like to view the outline for this lesson, go to www.reformedevangelism.com and follow the links. We have added John Blanchard's little booklet *Ultimate Questions* to our site. It will prove to be good background reading for this lesson.

Next time, we hope to introduce lesson seven which is the first lesson of section two: "How Christians Grow: Learning to Pray."