

119

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Torah Terminology: Should We Call Ourselves "Christians"?

TEACHING SUMMARY

This teaching examines whether followers of Messiah should call themselves "Christians." The lesson begins by showing that the term "Christian" is biblical. Acts records that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch, King Agrippa recognized the term, and Peter himself encouraged believers not to be ashamed if they suffered as Christians. The teaching explains that the Greek word *christianos* means "follower of Christ," making it an accurate description of those who follow Yeshua, the Messiah.

The teaching then considers why some believers reject the title "Christian." Over the centuries, the term has become associated with many beliefs and practices that differ from those of Yeshua and the apostles. Modern Christianity often rejects the Torah, replaces biblical feast days with later holidays, and embraces doctrines that were unfamiliar to the first-century believers. Because of this historical baggage, some suggest adopting another biblical name that better reflects the faith practiced by Yeshua and His disciples.

Next, the lesson evaluates several alternative terms used in Scripture. "The Way" is examined because Paul used it to describe the faith, but it is considered too vague and is also associated today with an unrelated religious organization. "Nazarene" is also biblical since Yeshua and His followers were called Nazarenes, but it likewise carries modern institutional associations that can create confusion. The term "Believer" is biblical and free from organizational baggage, yet it is too general because everyone believes something. While "Messianic" accurately points to the Messiah and has become increasingly recognizable, it also carries modern associations that may not accurately describe every group using the term.

The teaching concludes that there is nothing wrong with calling ourselves "Christians" because the apostles themselves used the term and it accurately identifies followers of

Messiah. Whatever terminology believers choose, the greater priority is living in a way that represents Messiah faithfully. Rather than focusing primarily on labels, believers should seek to follow Yeshua's teachings, uphold the whole Word of God, and glorify God through lives that honor the name they bear.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The term "Christian" first appears in Acts 11.
 - Peter encouraged believers not to be ashamed to suffer as Christians.
 - "Christian" means "follower of Christ" or "follower of the Anointed One."
 - Many object to the term because of historical and doctrinal baggage.
 - Modern Christianity often differs from the faith practiced by Yeshua and the apostles.
 - "The Way" was another biblical name for the early believers.
 - "Nazarene" referred to Yeshua and His followers.
 - "Believer" is biblical but is less descriptive.
 - "Messianic" has advantages but also carries modern associations.
 - The most important issue is following Messiah faithfully, not simply choosing the right label.
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FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The disciples were first called _____ in Antioch.
 2. The Greek word *christianos* means follower of _____.
 3. Peter encouraged believers not to be ashamed to suffer as a _____.
 4. Paul referred to the faith as _____.
 5. Yeshua was called a _____ because He was from Nazareth.
 6. The teaching emphasizes that following _____ is more important than the label we use.
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Challenging

1. The Greek word *christos* means the _____ One.

2. Paul described "the Way" as believing everything written in the _____ and the Prophets.
3. Acts _____ records Paul being identified as a leader of the sect of the Nazarenes.
4. The term _____ is considered too general because everyone believes something.
5. The Hebrew word *mashiach* is translated into Greek as _____.
6. The teaching concludes that believers should represent Messiah well through their _____.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the apostles were comfortable calling themselves Christians?
2. What concerns have led some believers to stop using the term "Christian" today?
3. How do the biblical terms "Christian," "the Way," "Nazarene," and "Believer" each describe followers of Messiah?
4. Why does the teaching conclude that no single label completely avoids misunderstanding?
5. How can believers represent Messiah faithfully regardless of what title they choose to use?
6. Why is living according to Yeshua's teachings more important than debating terminology?

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Christians
2. Christ
3. Christian
4. The Way
5. Nazarene
6. Yeshua

Challenging

1. Anointed
2. Law
3. 24
4. Believer
5. Christos
6. Lives