

CATHOLIC TESTIMONIES

GotQuestions.org: I want to thank you for the information you provide on your site. I was born and raised Catholic. In my early twenties I fell-away and was driven to the occult. I was "born-again" about 10 years ago (age 25), but accepted the claims of the Catholic church, made a general confession, and returned. For the better part of the past 10 years, and escalating with each passing year, I had questioned my Catholic faith while reading scripture. A few years ago I finally decided I couldn't in good conscience remain Catholic. Last year I found a good, biblical church, but still kept feeling drawn back to my Catholic faith. I think perhaps I was in denial, or I wasn't solid enough in my biblical knowledge (I've no doubt that is true!), or maybe a combination of both. After several episodes of falling back into my Catholic mindset, and after much dialogue with Catholic apologists, I developed a clearer picture of what the bible teaches, and realized that I couldn't go back again (to Catholic church). Anyway, I thought I would try to confirm some of my conclusions about what the bible teaches vs. Catholicism (specifically, the belief in sacraments conferring grace, and the Catholic claims of church authority [tradition] vs. biblical authority). In so doing, I came upon your website.

Somewhat of an abstract thinker, I wasn't exactly sure of what it was that was wrong with the Catholic system of sacraments, but I felt it had something to do with substitution. I felt very bound, as a Catholic, to the church. My faith and trust lied primarily in the church and its sacraments than it did in Christ. I knew that I had more of a relationship with the church than I did with Christ; feeling constantly that my attention was being diverted away from Christ and to something else (devotionals (special prayers...), sacramentalism (rosaries, relics, holy water...), seeking intercession of saints (in heaven), baptism and Eucharist as means of salvation... I couldn't fully lay it out in my mind or thoughts, exactly what it was that was wrong, and couldn't sufficiently verbalize it either.

I found your website to be the first (after many years of research) that properly represents the Catholic faith (and this, coming from a pretty knowledgeable, former, VERY devout Catholic). I see many misrepresentations of Catholicism among non-Catholics, but your site information is very accurate. I found, clearly and simply put, the inconsistencies of Catholic doctrine when compared with the Scriptures. This was such a blessing for me, as I was previously unable to verbalize the things I had conceived of in my own studies. Thank you for an honest representation of the Catholic faith, and a sensitive approach in attempting to reveal the truth, as God has revealed, in His Word. I hope that I can bless others with this new insight, and pray that it will more firmly ground me in my faith in God and His Word. Many thanks, and God Bless you and the ministry!

GotQuestions.org I was born and raised Roman Catholic and maintained myself as a practicing Catholic until a couple years ago when I joined a non-denominational church and married a Protestant woman. I still maintain an affection for many of the Catholic rituals and traditions. And often my wife and I discuss some of the many disconnects between Catholic teaching and that of strictly the Holy Bible. I have gained a great understanding first-hand the great need for people to develop a true relationship with Christ, whether within or beyond the walls of the Catholic church. I was relieved to visit your website where you have addressed the many differences very fairly and non-biased. Other websites address the Catholic church with bigotry, bias, and contempt. You on the other hand appear to confront the issues with factual data, and a loving, Christian heart. And I am grateful.

Question: "I am a Catholic. Why should I consider becoming a Christian?"

GotQuestions.org

Answer: First, please understand that we intend no offense in the wording of this question. We genuinely receive questions, from Catholics, along the lines of "What is the difference between Catholics and Christians?" In face-to-face conversations with Catholics, we have literally heard, "I am not a Christian, I am Catholic." To many Catholics, the terms "Christian" and "Protestant" are synonymous. With all that said, the intent of this article is that Catholics would study what the Bible says about being a Christian and would perhaps consider that the Catholic faith is not the best representation of what the Bible describes. As a background, please read our article on "What is a Christian?"

A key distinction between Catholics and Christians is the view of the Bible. Catholics view the Bible as having equal authority with the Church and tradition. Christians view the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice. The question is, how does the Bible present itself? Second Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." This text tells us that Scripture is not "just the beginning," or "just the basics," or the "foundation for a more complete church tradition." On the contrary, Scripture is perfectly and fully sufficient for everything in the Christian life. Scripture can teach us, rebuke us, correct us, train us, and equip us. "Bible Christians" do not deny the value of church tradition. Rather, Christians uphold that for a church tradition to be valid, it must be based on the clear teaching of Scripture and must be in full agreement with Scripture. Catholic friend, study the Word of God for yourself. In God's Word you will find God's description of, and intention for, His Church. Second Timothy 2:15 declares, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

A second key difference between Catholics and Bible Christians is the understanding of how we can approach God. Catholics tend to approach God through intermediaries, such as Mary or the saints. Christians approach God directly, offering prayers to no one other than God Himself. The Bible proclaims that we ourselves can approach God's throne of grace with boldness (Hebrews 4:16). The Bible is perfectly clear that God desires us to pray to Him, to have communication with Him, to ask Him for the things we need (Philippians 4:6; Matthew 7:7-8; 1 John 5:14-15). There is no need for mediators or intermediaries, as Christ is our one and only

mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), and both Christ and the Holy Spirit are already interceding on our behalf (Romans 8:26-27; Hebrews 7:25). Catholic friend, God loves you intimately and has provided an open door to direct communication through Jesus.

The most crucial difference between Catholics and Bible Christians is on the issue of salvation. Catholics view salvation almost entirely as a process, while Christians view salvation as both a completed status and a process. Catholics see themselves as “being saved,” while Christians view themselves as “having been saved.” First Corinthians 1:2 says, “To those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy.” The words “sanctified” and “holy” come from the same Greek root. This verse is declaring that Christians are both sanctified and called to be sanctified. The Bible presents salvation as a gift that is received the moment a person places faith in Jesus Christ as Savior (John 3:16). When a person receives Christ as Savior, he/she is justified (declared righteous – Romans 5:9), redeemed (rescued from slavery to sin – 1 Peter 1:18), reconciled (achieving peace with God – Romans 5:1), sanctified (set apart for God’s purposes – 1 Corinthians 6:11), and born again as a new creation (1 Peter 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Each of these is fully accomplished at the moment of salvation. Christians are then called to live out practically (called to be holy) what is already true positionally (sanctified).

The Catholic viewpoint is that salvation is received by faith, but then must be “maintained” by good works and participation in the Sacraments. Bible Christians do not deny the importance of good works or that Christ calls us to observe the ordinances in remembrance of Him and in obedience to Him. The difference is that Christians view these things as the result of salvation, not a requirement for salvation or a means of maintaining salvation. Salvation is an accomplished work, purchased by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2). God offers us salvation and assurance of salvation because Jesus’ sacrifice was fully, completely, and perfectly sufficient. If we receive God’s precious gift of salvation, we can know that we are saved. First John 5:13 declares, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

We can know that we have eternal life, and we can have assurance of our salvation because of the greatness of Christ’s sacrifice. Christ’s sacrifice does not need to be re-offered or re-presented. Hebrews 7:27 says, “He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself.” Hebrews 10:10 declares, “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” First Peter 3:18 exclaims, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice was absolutely and perfectly sufficient. Jesus declared on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Jesus’ atoning sacrifice was the full payment for all of our sins (1 John 2:2). As a result, all of our sins are forgiven, and we are promised eternal life in heaven the moment we receive the gift God offers us – salvation through Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Catholic friend, do you desire this “so great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3)? If so, all you must do is receive it (John 1:12) through faith (Romans 5:1). God loves us and offers us salvation as a gift (John 3:16). If we receive His grace, by faith, we have salvation as our eternal possession (Ephesians 2:8-9). Once saved, nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39). Nothing can remove us from His hand (John 10:28-29). If you desire this salvation, if you desire to have all your sins forgiven, if you desire to have assurance of salvation, if you desire direct access to the God who loves you – receive it, and it is yours. This is the salvation that Jesus died to provide and that God offers as a gift.

If you have received Jesus Christ as Savior, by faith, because of what you have read here today, please let us know by clicking on the “I have accepted Christ today” button below. Welcome to the family of God! Welcome, Catholic friend, to the Christian life!

Question: "I am a former Catholic. Should I continue to go to Catholic Church so I can reach people for Christ?"

Answer: The primary purpose of the church service is not to reach people for Christ. Acts 2:42 tells us the purpose of the gathering of the church: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” The early believers met as a church to 1) teach biblical doctrine, 2) provide fellowship for believers, 3) observe the Lord’s Supper, and 4) pray.

The question then becomes, “Does the Catholic Church fulfill the purposes of the church?”

The first purpose of the church is to teach biblical (apostolic) doctrine. Salvation by grace through faith is the most crucial issue, and the Catholic Church has turned “grace” into something to be earned, destroying the foundation of the gospel (see Galatians 1:6–9). In comparing Roman Catholicism with the Word of God, there are many other differences and contradictions as well. The Roman Catholic Church teaches many doctrines that are in disagreement with what the Bible declares. These include apostolic succession, worship of saints or Mary, prayer to saints or Mary, the pope/papacy, infant baptism, transubstantiation, plenary indulgences, the sacramental system, and purgatory. While Catholics claim scriptural support for these concepts, none of these teachings have any solid foundation in Scripture. These concepts are based on Catholic tradition, not the Word of God. In fact, they all clearly contradict biblical principles. Growing in Christian faith would be difficult while consistently being taught theology that is not supported with God’s Word.

Second, the church is to be a place of fellowship where Christians can be devoted to one another and honor one another (Romans 12:10), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32), encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and, most importantly, love one another (1 John 3:11). This may be possible in the Catholic Church if there are other born-again believers worshipping and fellowshiping there.

Third, the church is a place to observe the Lord’s Supper. According to the requirements for eligibility for Catholic Mass, a non-Catholic would be unable to participate in Catholic Mass. Biblically, the purpose of communion is to remember the death of Jesus Christ and the new covenant and to “proclaim” His sacrifice by means of illustration (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians

11:26). In a Catholic Church, the purpose of the Eucharist is something else entirely. When a person receives communion in a Catholic Church, the priest says, "The Body of Christ," and the communicant responds, "Amen," in agreement. This signifies a belief in transubstantiation. The majority of Protestants strongly disagree with the Catholic understanding of the Lord's Supper, and it would be dishonest to say, "Amen."

The final purpose of the church given in Acts 2:42 is prayer. Catholics view Mary and the saints as "intercessors" before God. They believe that a saint, who is glorified in heaven, has more "direct access" to God than we do. Therefore, if a saint delivers a prayer to God, it is more effective than if we simply prayed to God directly. This concept is blatantly unbiblical. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that believers here on earth can "approach the throne of grace with confidence." All believers are saints and priests (Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 2:5), and Jesus is our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14). There is no other mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

While witnessing to Catholic friends is an admirable and God-honoring goal, the Catholic Church is likely not the best venue to reach that goal.

Recommended Resource: Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics by Ron Rhodes