

How can we know what to believe, what to practice and/or to celebrate – and if some things are really “Christian” or not? (this is a *helpful Biblical Discernment tool*)

There are some “**sure fire**” ways of finding this out.

We must understand that Christianity (or the “faith” of following Jesus Christ as LORD and Savior)... is first and foremost a “**BIBLICAL**” faith. It is founded upon the Holy Bible, **ALONE**. Yet, in some cases, this may not be clear enough for everyone. So, to help, the following is a list of *criteria* that *can* be used to determine if a certain “teaching”, “doctrine”, “celebration”, “holiday”, “practice/rite”, and/or other kind of “faith” activity claims to really be “Christian” actually is.

2 Corinthians 1:20 - For ALL the Promises of God, in Christ, are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

We must find out which **Promises**, which **Precepts/Commands** of God, which **Biblical Principles**, which **Biblical Patterns** apply to us, as Christians, New Testament, Born Again, Disciples/Followers of Christ (not everything applies to us)

The following *can* be used as a filter or a way of determining if a “belief” or “practice” is really Christian or not:

1. **Is it found in the Bible?** Can it be found in more than one place, as well (this is just to make sure it was not just a “historical” reference and not a real teaching or practice all Christians are to follow – such as some of the events that are recorded in the Book of Acts, etc.)? **The Apostles’ Doctrine/Teaching is found within Romans through Jude** (ref: Acts 2:32).
2. **If it is found in the Bible...** (seek God prayerfully as you study God’s Holy Word...)
 - a. **Is it, ONLY, found in the Old Testament?** (hint: any command, practice, or ritual that relates **STRICTLY** to the tabernacle/temple, and/or to the Levites, and/or the Levitical Priesthood... have **all been fulfilled** by Jesus Christ and we are **NOT** required to practice those specific commands, etc... [ref.: **book of Hebrews**] - but there are some commands, principles, and patterns/practices that were **not** modified **nor** done away with)
 - b. **If it is found in the Old Testament, has it been modified in the New Testament by Jesus Christ and/or His apostles?** (hint: Matthew 5, 6, 7; Galatians 3; book of Hebrews – read the Whole Bible)
Are some from the Old Testament *without* change... are some from the Old Testament, but now they are **modified** in the New Testament?
 - c. Is it brand **new** teaching, **only**, found in the New Testament from Jesus and/or His Apostles?
3. **If the origin** of that teaching, doctrine, or practice **IS NOT** found in the Old or New Testaments and it claims to be “Christian”, then you need to ask yourself: “**where did it come from?**” If it has its origins in the worship of false gods (*ancient or new*) → in paganism and/or idolatry; the God of the Bible is **extremely clear**: we are not to touch it, believe in it, nor practice it. In **all** cases, in the Old and New Testaments, those types of things were to be burned, torn down, avoided, and/or cast out as the result of **obedience to God**. There are **NO** commands, principles, or examples in any part of the Bible in which God told or hinted to us or to follow anything pagan directly or indirectly or to mix pagan beliefs, rituals or practices in with His Truth, with His followers’ beliefs and/or practices – or to form “new” Christian beliefs and/or practices. We were never called to “Christianize” any pagan belief, ritual, or practice for any reason or at any time. (Deuteronomy 12:30-31 “... do not worship God the way the pagans worship their pagan gods...” [paraphrase])
4. This last criterion is “**extra-biblical**” – or “outside the bible” (used as a **last resort**). This relates to the “first hearers” of the Word of God by the apostles of Jesus Christ [i.e.: “**The Apostolic Fathers**”]. The “first hearers” or “first believers” of the apostles wrote extensively regarding all that they learned from Jesus Christ and His Apostles. They sent letters from one church to another throughout the first 100 years after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). These letters contain much of the teachings of the New Testament, and much of the Old Testament, including many direct quotations. Since they were the “first hearers” or “first believers”, what they say, explain, and understand about **#1 through #3 above** is of much importance. Since, they were the first disciples of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, what they believed and practiced is more than likely what we should believe and practice, today. I would much rather listen to what they had to say about what I read in the Bible, than someone who came later (let’s say, 3 Centuries or more, later)... and coming up with “new” doctrines and/or practices claiming to be “Christian”. According to Jude 1:3, we should never encounter any new beliefs, rituals, or practices **after** the last living apostle died (i.e.: John the Apostle, who wrote the Gospel of John, 1st 2nd & 3rd John, and the book of Revelation). We are not to “**add to**” “**nor take away**” from God’s Holy Word (Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19)