

The Legacy of a Label **(Does this one fit you?)**

Scripture: Acts 11:25 How many of you simply reach onto a shelf at the grocery store and pick up an item without looking at the label? Do you just pick up a can or box of “something” (just stuff)? No, you don’t. You choose a food item based upon what it is. How do you know what it is? You identify it by its label. Labels not only identify, they clarify and specify. They not only tell us the primary content of a box or can; they also tell us such things as the amount of calories, fat, or carbohydrates in the product. The more health conscious we are, the more we will examine the labels of the food we eat.

We like to have labels on the products we buy, but we tend to resent labels when they are attached to us! We don’t like people attaching labels such as hypocrite, moron, jerk, retard, bigot, or idiot to us. We may even consider such labels to be libelous. It’s a fact of life that labels are applied to us, and some of them have been used to divide Christians. Terms such as “liberal,” “conservative,” and “fundamentalist” have been used in a way that divides followers of Christ. However, there is one label that could unite all of us. What is it? It’s the *original* label that was attached to the followers of Jesus. That label is the name “Christian.” I refer to the name “Christian” as a label because that is its legacy. The name was not used by early followers of Jesus in the New Testament. It was given to them by the populace of the pagan city of Antioch in ancient Syria. Like the labels of the products we purchase, this one is very important. What does this label tell us about who we are and what we are to do? The label “Christian” indicates ...

- **The Nature of Christian Faith [This label suggests our basic Beliefs – “Christian” (Acts 11:25)]**

 - Our beliefs are based on a title rather than a name [We are “Christians” rather than “Jesuits” (Acts 3:20; 8:5; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5)]
 - The content of our faith determines its credibility [Believing just anything may simply mean you believe nothing (Gal. 1:6-9)] – Implications:
 - The facts of the faith must not be changed just because they are unpopular (An accusation of “intolerance” is no excuse for diluting our doctrines or corrupting our convictions)
 - Authentic commitment need not fear the criticisms that condemn it (Belittling of our beliefs shouldn’t cause us to reject them)
 - We cannot change our history just because others don’t like it
 - We really can defend our faith without being defensive
 - We must at least believe what we were told at the beginning (Acts 2:23-24, 32, 33; 3:15, 20-21; 17:3)
 - Our beliefs reflect a *relationship* rather than a *religion* (Gal. 6:1)

- **The Nature of Christian Conversion [This label suggests our basic Behavior – “in Antioch” (Acts 4:4; 11:25)]**

 - Conversion is based on behavior rather than beliefs (John 3:3-7; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Eph. 4:15)
 - Conversion is a process rather than a profession (1 Cor. 3:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:20-24)
 - Conversion is the only thing that persuades people to believe us [Character is the megaphone that enables our words to be heard (James 2:14-24)]

- **The Nature of Christian Vocation [This label suggests our basic Business – “called” (Acts 11:25)]**

 - Who we *are* is determined by what we *do* [Our identity comes from our occupation (*kramatizo* rather than *kaleo, ekklesia*)]
 - Our vocation comes from our calling rather than how we make a living (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:23)
 - We must remember that we don’t have to be called a “missionary” to be one [We cannot spell the word “missions” if the “I” is missing (Acts 1:8)]