



Many Praise Queen Elizabeth for Her Christian Faith and Practice

The Wired Word for the Week of September 18, 2022

In the News

Amid tributes to Queen Elizabeth following her death on September 8 are several that praise her for living a Christian life. Among them was one from the Church of England's Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who used his sermon at Canterbury Cathedral last Sunday to laud the queen for her practice of the Christian faith. "It has been said very often in the last few days, but it bears repeating that in her life and her example, God graciously gave us the most wonderful example of a Christian life and a Christian death," Welby said.

Given that the queen was officially the Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England, titles vested in the reigning British monarch since Henry VIII renounced the Papacy in 1534, such praise from the archbishop of that church was not unexpected. But the queen was widely respected for her faith by adherents of other Christian bodies as well. Here's a sampling:

The *National Catholic Reporter* noted that while like previous British monarchs, the queen had a major constitutional role regarding religion, given that Britain has an established church, but "what Elizabeth also had, and for which she was deeply respected, was a profound personal Christian faith -- a faith she publicly articulated more frequently as she got older." They added that she helped to make the UK more tolerant of all Christian denominations.

For its part, the U.S. publication *Christianity Today* said, "the queen demonstrated how to keep one's Christian faith personal, private, inclusive and compassionate while serving in a global, public role under intense scrutiny from virtually every sector."

On its website, The Methodist Church in the UK stated, "We give thanks to God that [the queen's] duty as monarch was grounded in a deep faith in Jesus Christ, which has been an inspiration to countless people throughout her reign. Her dedication, commitment and service to her people will never be forgotten and will sustain all those who mourn in the coming weeks. Our prayers are for her family who have lost a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and aunt and we pray that all may be inspired by her service and guided by her example."

The queen referred to her faith in public statements on several occasions, beginning in 1952, when she requested prayer for her upcoming coronation: "I want to ask you all, whatever your religion may be, to pray for me on that day," she said, "to pray that God may give me wisdom

and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve him and you, all the days of my life."

In 2000, she said, "For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example."

In addition to her relationship and duties with the Church of England, as the British sovereign, the queen also had a constitutional relationship with the Church of Scotland. Since the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland, British monarchs have sworn to maintain the Church of Scotland. As a Presbyterian body, the Church of Scotland recognizes only Jesus Christ as "King and Head of the Church." The British royal therefore does not hold the title "Supreme Governor" of the Church of Scotland; when attending church services in Scotland, the queen did so as an ordinary member.

Following the queen's death, the Church of Scotland issued a statement that said, "Tireless in her duty, the Queen has demonstrated a life of selfless dedication. Her love for her family was mirrored in her love for our nation and the wider Commonwealth. Wherever the Queen went she brought encouragement and appreciation as she showed a genuine interest in the people she met. The Church of Scotland has valued Her late Majesty's generous support, and seen in her private devotion someone for whom faith remained central throughout her long life."

Thus, the queen worshiped as an Anglican in England and Wales and as a Presbyterian in Scotland. She attended the local church when in residence at Balmoral or Sandringham and All Saints Chapel when at Windsor.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Queen Gave Us the 'Most Wonderful Example' of a Christian Life and Death, Says Archbishop. *Christian Today*](#)

[Queen Elizabeth Helped Make UK More Tolerant of All Christian Denominations. *National Catholic Reporter*](#)

[Died: Queen Elizabeth II, British Monarch Who Put Her Trust in God. *Christianity Today*](#)
[Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. *The Methodist Church*](#)

[The Church of Scotland Pays Tribute to Her Majesty the Queen. *The Presbyterian Outlook*](#)

[The Queen's Christian Faith in Her Own Words. *Christian Today*](#)

[The Queen, the Church and Other Faiths. *Official Website of the British Royal Family*](#)

Applying the News Story

There is, of course, a difference between belonging to the Christian faith and living as a sincere follower of Jesus Christ. And, of course, only God sees what is in our hearts. But from the queen's words and actions, many Christians readily viewed her as a fellow traveler on the Christian way. So we are using the occasion of her death to consider some questions and biblical references about what it means to be a Christian.

The Big Questions

1. What sorts of words and/or actions have led you to identify others as followers of Jesus?
2. What is the *primary* message of Christianity? Is it basically anti-something or pro-something? What is that "something"? Or is it "both," in which case, what are the anti- and pro-somethings?
3. What do you intend to communicate when you tell someone, "I am a Christian"?
4. What things do you do to make sure you know what Jesus actually taught? Do you find places in the Bible where you are troubled by something Jesus said? If so, how do you handle that?
5. How is church attendance related to being a Christian?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Colossians 2:6-7

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (For context, read [Colossians 2:6-15](#).)

These verses present characteristics of how a Christian should act -- having received Christ, continuing to live our lives in him, rooted and built up in him, established in the faith, as the result of teaching by the church.

Question: What else, if anything, needs to be added here to make this a complete definition of what it means to be a Christian?

Luke 10:25-29

An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." And [Jesus] said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (For context, read [Luke 10:25-37](#).)

The encounter described in the verses above is what led Jesus to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan. We are familiar with the parable, so we won't retell it here, but do recall that with it, Jesus broadened the definition of who our neighbor is.

But notice again the incident that caused Jesus to tell this story. According to Luke, a certain legal expert asked Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life." The question was not sincere, for, as Luke explains it, this man wants to *test* Jesus, put him on the spot, see how he will handle himself in a public debate.

Jesus responded by saying, in effect, "That's a good question. How would you answer it?" The lawyer then spouted the answer any Jewish schoolboy would have learned in the synagogue, a quote from the Old Testament: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Yes, said Jesus, that's right, effectively communicating, *You know the answer to your own question.* Then Jesus added the kicker: "Do this, and you will live."

Jesus was telling the man his conclusion was both obvious and right, but that the next step was to act on his conclusion

The legal expert didn't want to accept that, so he next asked, "And just who is this neighbor I am supposed to love?" In response, Jesus told the parable.

From the point of view of human behavior, this man's second question is interesting because it is quite clear that when he answered his own first question, *he already knew what he should do. He just didn't want to do it.* Luke says he wanted to justify himself. In other words, in posing the second question, this man sought a loophole.

The Good Samaritan parable reveals a lot about how to be a Christian, for it affirms that how we act is an indication of how deep our beliefs go. The first question the legal expert asked Jesus was, "What must I *do* ...?" And after Jesus had the man answer his own question, Jesus added "... *do* this, and you will live." And then, after Jesus had told the parable, he asked the man, "Which one of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers." The lawyer responded, "The one who showed him (i.e., *did*) mercy." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and *do* likewise."

Jesus didn't tell the man who his neighbor would be; he told the man to *be* the neighbor.

Doing is an important part of being a Christian.

Questions: Might drawing obvious conclusions from the Bible about how we should act be one way God gives us directions? Why or why not?

Titus 2:9-10

Urge slaves to be submissive to their masters in everything, to be pleasing, not talking back, not stealing, but showing complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the teaching of God our Savior. (For context, read [Titus 2:1-15](#).)

Have you ever heard someone referred to as "arm candy"? It's not usually meant as a compliment, but it does convey the idea of one person adding to the reputation of another. The person being called arm candy is usually an exceptionally attractive young woman being escorted by an older man who is rich, famous or powerful. The woman is arm candy that the mogul "wears" on his arm for much the same reason that he wears \$3,000 suits on his back -- to make himself look important and influential.

Oddly, this derogatory term, arm candy, might come to mind while reading the verses above, from the apostle Paul's letter to his coworker Titus. In the chapter containing these verses, Paul advised Christians who were slaves to live in "complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior." But if you read the context verses, you'll see that Paul was addressing every group in the church, not just slaves.

In any case, "the doctrine of God our Savior" means Christianity, but note the word "ornament." It might seem a strange word in this context, for we usually use it to denote something that has no function other than to look nice, and that hardly sounds like a call for active Christian love.

But "ornament" is an acceptable translation of the original Greek word Paul used, which was *kosmeo*, which literally means "to decorate." In the original usage, both "ornament" and "decorate" have the meanings of adding "luster" or "radiance" to something. *Kosmeo* can also mean "to put in proper order," and that may be closer to what Paul had in mind. But many Bible versions translate the word literally. Some of the other English translations render the sense of Paul's argument rather than the literal meaning of the word. The NIV, for example, says, "so that in every way [Christians] will make the teaching about God our Savior *attractive*" (italics added). The Good News Bible says that followers of Jesus "must show that they are always good and faithful, so as *to bring credit* to the teaching about God our Savior ..." (italics added).

Those alternative translations make it easy to get our minds around what it means to "bring credit to the teachings about Christ" or to make those teachings "attractive." But "ornament" adds a helpful dimension to Paul's message. Say what you want about a young woman holding the arm of an older man, she does add to the man's cachet, and her presence at his side causes other people to take note of the man.

Questions: When have you seen someone whose demeanor and witness caused you to think, "Christ has made a positive difference in that person's life"? Whose behavior has caused you to notice Jesus?

Luke 6:46

Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I tell you? (For context, read [Luke 6:46-49](#).)

Jesus asked this question at the conclusion of his teachings that are sometimes referred to as the "Sermon on the Plain" (see [Luke 6:17](#)). The whole sermon is contained in 6:17-49. His point with the question is that it's one thing to claim to be his follower but another thing altogether to actually follow him. The latter requires doing what Jesus said.

Following the question, Jesus explained, "I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them" (v. 47), and he went on to give an analogy, comparing a man building a house on rock to a man building on the ground with no foundation.

Questions: Does receiving Christ come with the foundation already in place, or is that something God helps us build thereafter? If so, what effort does that require from us?

For Further Discussion

1. Respond to this: Back in 1935, the wives of Spanish-speaking pastors of the Methodist Church held a meeting in Mission, Texas. Because of illness, neither the president nor the vice president was able to be at the meeting. Angelina Moraide, the secretary, had also been seriously ill, but because she lived nearby, she made the effort to come and preside at the meeting. But because of how poorly she felt, it was hard on her to carry out her duties. Many attendees urged her to go home, but Angelina replied, "As long as there is breath in me, the women's work of this conference will go on."

One woman who overheard that comment was a young clergy wife who had been trying to sort out her place in the church. Two weeks later, Angelina died from her illness, and this young wife, inspired by Angelina's commitment, offered herself to do what she could for the church. In other words, by viewing the commitment of Angelina to Christ, this young woman heard the answer to her search. She may have hoped for some other answer, something easier, but what she heard from God was, "Be as committed to me as was Angelina."

This young woman's name was Clotilde Falcon Nanez. She went on to earn a master's degree and had a long career teaching English to non-English-speaking people. She also served the church for 26 years by translating women's program books into Spanish. But her start in all that was because she saw the faithfulness of Angelina. She drew an obvious conclusion from that, and then went and did likewise.

2. Discuss this, from TWW team member Stan Purdum: "In every church I have served, there have been a few people who because of advanced age or illness were restricted physically. Their situations imposed severe limitations on what they could do in service to the church and to others. But each time I visited those persons, I came away with renewed appreciation for the power of their faith in Christ to provide meaning and courage for them, and for the testimony of their lives lived faithfully, even in restricted circumstances. We can truly say that such persons are a credit to Christianity."

3. Consider [this explanation](#) from the Jewish community in the UK about why every week they prayed for Queen Elizabeth and for the royal family. In a nutshell, the queen and the British system helped to ensure the safety of Jews in Great Britain -- something that was not so sure in other countries. How might Proverbs 10:7a -- "The memory of the righteous is a blessing" -- apply now?

4. Whose example of faith inspires you to live a life worthy of the call of Christ?

Responding to the News

This is a good time to consider what changes, if any, you should make to bring credit to Jesus, whom you follow.

Prayer

O God, help us let our light shine before others so they may see our good works and give glory to you, our Father in heaven. In Jesus' name. Amen.

