

What's In a Name?

by Bryan Gibson

Everything, especially when it comes to the names God uses to describe me. He uses these names to teach me different things about myself—about my privileges and my responsibilities, about my relation to Him and my relation to others, about my character and my life. Here are some names He calls me, and a few things I've learned from each one.

I am a **Christian** (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), which means that I belong to Christ, or that I live in Christ (think about the suffix “ian”). My job then is to “follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21), to “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6), “to be conformed” to His image (Romans 8:29). When in Christ, do as Christ does.

I am a **disciple** of Christ (Acts 6:7; 9:1, 19, and many others), which makes me both His student (Matthew 11:28-30; 28:19-20; John 8:31-32) and His devoted follower (Luke 14:25-33). This name challenges me to study more, and to adhere more carefully to what my Teacher says.

I am a **saint** (Ephesians 1:1, 15, 18, and many others), a name that reminds me that I've been sanctified or set apart from the world (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11), a name that calls me to a life of holiness (Ephesians 5:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

I am a **believer** (2 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Timothy 4:12; 6:2), and so I can say with Paul, “I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Because I believe in the Lord, I will speak for Him (2 Corinthians 4:13; 1 Peter 3:15), and I will live for Him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; James 2:14-26).

I am a **servant** or **slave of God**, which means that I'm obligated to obey my Master (Romans 6:15-23). My Master owns me, because He paid for me, with the precious blood of His Son (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:17-19). My complete loyalty belongs to Him, because it's really impossible to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

Because I am a servant of God, I am also a **servant of others**, and so I must follow the example of Jesus (Mark 10:45; Philippians 2:5-11) and look out, not only for my own

interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:1-4). This is the very thing that will make me great, at least in the eyes of God—“whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:26).

I am a **child of God**, a wonderful blessing indeed (1 John 3:1), because for one, it puts me in line for a wonderful inheritance (Romans 8:16-17). But it’s also a great responsibility, because a child should bear some likeness to his Father, and will do his best to honor and obey Him (1 Peter 1:13-14; Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 John 3:9-10).

I am a **brother in Christ** (Romans 14:10, 13, 15, 21; Philippians 1:14; Colossians 1:2), which means, of course, that I have other brethren, and that together we belong to the family or household of God (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15). There’s only one way to treat brothers, and that’s to show them brotherly love (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; Hebrews 13:1; Peter 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 1 John 3:16-18).

I am a **member of Christ’s body** (Romans 12:3-8), an obvious analogy to the human body, where Jesus is the Head (Colossians 1:18), and individual Christians the different body parts (1 Corinthians 12:27). I’m no more essential than the other members—the other body parts, because it takes us all working together to keep the body healthy and growing (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16).

I am a **soldier** in the Lord’s army (Philippians 2:25; Philemon 1:2), so I must be willing to “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3), and I must be willing to fight—*for* the faith, and *against* sin and Satan (Jude 1:3; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6). The Lord provides all the armor and weaponry I need (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Like every other Christian, I am a **priest** in the temple of God (Revelation 1:5-6; 5:10; 20:6; Ephesians 2:21), with complete access to the throne of God, through my High Priest and Mediator, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22). My primary function, in this spiritual temple, is to offer spiritual sacrifices (Hebrews 13:16; 1 Peter 2:5; Philippians 4:18; Romans 12:1-2).

I am one of the **elect**, or **chosen** of God (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10), because I am in Christ, and He has “chosen us in Him” (Ephesians 1:4). The fact that I’m among His elect doesn’t guarantee that I’ll always be—“be even more

diligent to make your call and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). God’s chosen people, just like His chosen people in the Old Testament, have an important mission to fulfill—to glorify Him (1 Peter 2:9), and the best way to do that is to model His character before the people of this world (Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:12-14).

On this earth, I’m just a **sojourner**, a **stranger**, a **pilgrim** (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13). Wouldn’t it be foolish, then, for me to get caught up in the lusts of this world? (1 Peter 2:11-12; 1 John 2:15-17). I’m not home, not yet, and I won’t be—until I’m with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Corinthians 5:8).