

Following Jesus is *wonderful* – and ***sometimes hard!*** The wonderful part is knowing that God has forgiven you and loves you no matter what! The hard part is living out your love for God everyday.

Starting with Forgiveness

Forgiveness is wiping away a debt that is owed. If you owe \$5,000 in credit card debt, and your bank “for-gives” your debt, then you will owe them nothing! Wouldn’t that be great? Of course, banks aren’t really in the business of forgiving debts. **But God is.** You have a BIG DEBT, and God can forgive you so that you owe nothing at all. What is this debt you have that God forgives? **Sin-debt.** Sin-debt is something we build up by doing wrong again and again in our lives. This is a serious debt that we have to pay one way or another.

The forgiveness of our sin-debt is what it means to be a Christian. *God loves us so much that He died to pay that debt.* By trusting Him, we receive forgiveness of our debt. If anyone adds to this with rules of their own, **do not listen.** Some people may say, “You must do THIS to be Christian” or, “You must do THAT to be a Christian” but that is not what God says. ***Your debt was forgiven as soon as you believed that Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead.*** The Bible says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9 NIV).

Now what?

Following Jesus can be *wonderful* but also ***sometimes hard!*** How can following Jesus be hard when you are already forgiven? The Bible give us lots of instructions on how we should live. The Bible tells Christians to be *loving, forgiving, gracious, kind, hospitable, wise, self-controlled, and generous.*

From the outside, it may seem like a bunch of rules we have to follow so that we can be forgiven. That is absolutely wrong. As we already said, forgiveness of our sin-debt really is simple: **1) Believe** and **2) Be forgiven.**

Why does the Bible talk about things Christians should and shouldn’t do? It is because the instructions will help us **love God and others.** They are things we should do BECAUSE of the loving relationship we have with God. We don’t do them to BE Christians. ***We do them because we love God.***

In short, we are Christians because we are forgiven, not because of the things we do. But we do the things God wants us to do, not to earn forgiveness – we already have that - but because we love God.

Wrapping it up

If you understand that your forgiveness is built on God’s love, not the good things you do, then you can start living your life in a healthier way as a Christian. You get the opportunity to follow God, and when you do, you will be expressing your love for Him. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking you have to earn God’s love or forgiveness; if you believe, you already have those! **Now, it is time to grow.**