

*For thus says the High and  
Lofty One  
Who inhabits eternity;  
whose name is Holy:  
“I dwell in the high and  
holy place,  
With him who has a  
contrite and humble  
spirit.”*

— Isaiah 57:15a



## DAY 4: THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY: HE IS!

Christianity is remarkably full and complex, as we would expect of a religion that brings a person into a relationship with the Living God. It is full because it shares in the fullness that belongs to God. It is complex because it brings the reality of an immeasurable God (His character and claims upon us) down into every area of our lives. **If anyone attempts to reduce the Christian life to one emphasis (evangelism, joy, personal growth, etc.), he is sure to become spiritually lopsided.** There is a balance in Christianity. However, that said, certain truths are foundational to other truths. We find this when we read Paul’s letters to the early churches. Paul always lays a strong doctrinal foundation before he explains how a Christian is to live. The first chapter of Colossians serves as a rich example for us today. Paul’s description of the Christian life can be reduced to three statements.

- Christ has . . .
- I must . . .

**READ** COLOSSIANS 1:3–23. Using the passage, make three lists. (You will be taking a long look at these descriptions in a later chapter. Just list them here.)

He is [character of Christ, verses 15–18]:

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He has [work of the Father and Son, verses 12–14, 20–22]:

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I must [my response to His character and work, verses 9–12, 23]:

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*Apart from Christ let  
nothing dazzle you.*

— St. Ignatius

These phrases not only sum up the Christian’s life; they do so in the correct order. There is an evident cause-and-effect sequence in these. We cannot reverse them. We may be tempted to think of Christianity primarily as “**I must . . .**,” but that is not the starting place. You cannot make yourself a child of God by doing things that a child of God does, any more than you could make yourself an heir to Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain by walking around in royal clothes and waving kindly at people! The duty of the Christian life—the “**I must . . .**,”—is caused by something else. We may think of the Christian life as primarily about “**He has.**” The work of God for our salvation is certainly a significant part of Christianity and is the reason that we are able to live a life of obedience. But even the “**He has . . .**” is not the foundation of Christianity, for that itself is built upon a larger and deeper foundation. The greatest truth

of Christianity is summed up in the words “**He is.**” Who He is must be understood if we are going to grasp what He has done to save us. Who He is and what He has done form an irresistible argument for obedience in the heart of the Christian. We are all tempted to emphasize one of these to the neglect of the others. Which of the three do you find yourself thinking about most often?

Go back to the three lists you made from Colossians 1.

**READ** the “**He is**” list and then read a statement from the “**He has**” list. Do you see how the “**He has**” is enlarged and enriched by considering the *who* behind it all?

Continue until you have considered each of the “**He has**” statements in light of the “**He is**” truths.

Read the “**I must**” list with the “**He is**” and “**He has**” truths in mind. Do you see how the “**I must**” is wonderfully affected by *who* it is that commands you and *what* He has done to make it possible for you to obey Him?

## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

In light of what you have looked at, the “**He is**” list is the most significant of the three because it affects how you understand the others. Is that the list that gets most of your attention? Do you see the shortsightedness of starting with “**He has**” or “**I must**” in Christianity?