

## Definitions of Words You Might Hear Around Church

**Apocrypha** – Generally speaking, apocryphal (small “a”) refers to a text that is not part of the accepted canon of scripture. This can be used to talk about a wide variety of different texts, some of which should be treated with care because they advocate for things that do not adhere to biblical doctrine. The Apocrypha (big “A”) refers to a specific set of texts documenting Jewish history, prophecy, and wisdom literature, written predominantly between the time of the Old Testament prophets and the coming of Christ. Since they were written, there has been controversy over how these texts should be handled. Catholic and Orthodox traditions call them *deuterocanonical* texts and consider them to be part of the Old Testament. Protestant denominations refer to them as the Apocrypha and do not consider them to be scripture.

**Apologetics** – The practice of making a reasoned, rational, and intellectual case for the truth of Christian beliefs.

**Apostasy** – From the Greek meaning “revolt,” apostasy refers to an abandonment of one’s beliefs. In the Bible, this refers to turning away from God and his ways, abandoning trust in him.

**Apostle** – Refers to “one who is sent,” or a person with a specific mission. Typically the term Apostle (big “A”) is reserved for the men comprising Jesus’ inner circle of followers (plus Matthias – chosen to replace Judas Iscariot – and later Paul), whom Jesus sent forth with a mission to spread the gospel throughout the world.

**Atonement** – Making amends for wrongdoing. In a Biblical sense, this refers to giving something up to God as repayment for sin. Christians believe that atonement for our sins could only be accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, which permits us to reconcile with God.

**Blasphemy** – Speaking sacrilegiously against God; being insulting to God, showing contempt or great disrespect for him or failing to treat him with proper reverence.

**Born Again** – Refers to accepting a personal faith in Jesus. In this case, being “born again” does not refer to a physical process, but a spiritual one whereby your heart is changed and your desires shift toward wanting to fulfill God’s will and not your own.

**Consecrate** – To be made holy, meaning set apart for God. Can refer to a person or an object.

**Covenant** – A contract or agreement between two parties. Significant covenants in the Bible include that made between God and Abraham, between God and Moses, between God and David, and the new covenant established between God and all humanity as a result of the atoning work of the cross. A covenant can be either unconditional, meaning God will honor it regardless of the actions of humanity, or conditional, meaning that the group of people involved in the covenant have certain responsibilities to meet under its conditions.

**Disciple** – Literally means “follower.” To be a disciple means to be a follower of Christ, someone who adheres to His teachings and believes what he says about himself. *Discipleship* refers to the process of sharing the teachings of Christ, helping other believers learn more and thus grow to be more like Christ. It can also refer specifically to the twelve men Jesus called to be his inner circle of followers.

**Doctrine** – A set of beliefs taught and passed on by a specific group. From a Christian standpoint, this refers to the entire set of Biblical truths that define the gospel message.

**Doxology** – A statement of praise to God, often lyrical or poetic in nature.

**Eschatology** – The portion of theology concerned with studying and understanding end time events and the ultimate destiny of creation and humanity.

**Evangelism** – Spreading the gospel message through personal witness. It is the words, testimonies, deeds, and loving service Christians use to proclaim the truth about Christ to others.

**Exegesis/Exegetical** – Reading a Biblical text with the intention of understanding the original meaning intended by the author, thereby letting scripture “speak for itself.” This is as opposed to *eisegesis*, in which one reads a text with a preconceived notion of what it says – or in other words, reading something into the scripture.

**Gospel** – From the Greek meaning “good news,” this refers to the core message of the Christian Bible. The gospel message is essentially that God’s initial intention was to live in right and perfect relationship with human beings, but sin entering the world caused a divide between us and him. The cost to repay sin is death. Jesus came to pay that price instead of us, thereby offering a path back toward right relationship with God. God will ultimately reestablish his perfect Kingdom, and those who place their faith in Jesus will be welcomed to be part of it for eternity. Gospel may also refer to one of the four books of the Bible – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – which recount the life of Jesus and how he was the fulfillment of God’s plan to offer a Savior to bridge the gap between God and humanity caused by sin.

**Heresy** – Teaching untruths about God. Heresy occurs when someone teaches something about God that goes against scripture and/or alters the gospel message.

**Intercession/Intercessory Prayer** – Praying to God on behalf of another person, or asking in prayer for God to do something for someone other than yourself.

**Messiah** – Literally means “anointed.” Biblically, messiah refers to a savior who would provide liberation and redemption for God’s people. Christianity embraces Jesus Christ as the prophesied Messiah.

**Orthodoxy** – The core teachings of Christianity, such as the nature of God and the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. It can also refer to specific denominations of Christianity (i.e., Eastern Orthodox Christianity).

**Propitiation** – Refers to the act of pleasing a righteously angry God. Christians recognize that only Christ’s sacrifice on the cross can produce propitiation, because as sinful humans our attempts at pleasing God, who is rightfully angry at our sin, are feeble at best.

**Repentance** – Literally means “to turn around” or “to change the mind.” It involves making a sincere and decisive choice to turn away from what you have pursued in the past and instead pursue the ways of God.

**Salvation** – Biblically speaking, because of Jesus’ sacrificial death Christians have salvation, meaning the promise of eternal life and of a place in God’s eternal kingdom. The Bible is clear that salvation cannot be achieved by human works or deeds. It is provided as a gift from God, by his grace, through placing faith in him.

**Sanctification** – The act or process of becoming holy. Sanctification occurs as the Holy Spirit works in us to produce hearts that are desirous of acting in accordance with God’s will and in reflection of the holy life Jesus modeled during his time on earth.

**Septuagint** – The earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament).

**Sin** – Sin encompasses ways of being or acting that are counter to God’s character and will, which result in a gap between us and him that cannot be crossed under human power alone – the gap is bridged only by Jesus and his sacrificial death.

**Theology** – Literally means “talk about God.” It refers to what we believe about God and why. *Systematic theology* refers to studying the Bible as a whole to produce understanding of the nature of God, his will and intentions, and what our right response should be to what he has done (and is still doing).