

## Question: "How can I detect a false conversion?"

**Answer from GotQuestions.org:** Conversion means to be “born again.” At the moment of conversion, the converted person is filled with the Holy Spirit and begins a journey of turning away from sin and beginning to worship and serve the Lord. A “false conversion” is no conversion at all. A false conversion may *look like* a true, Spirit-caused conversion, but it is not. The reasons for false conversions are varied. Sometimes the person experiencing a false conversion doesn’t even realize it. At other times, there is intentional deception on his/her part. Not everyone who claims to have been converted has, in fact, been converted.

Just as those trained to recognize counterfeit money become intimately acquainted with the real thing, in order to detect a false conversion, it is necessary to first know what true Christian behavior looks like. We do this by studying and knowing intimately God’s Word. We learn from the Parable of the Weeds in [Matthew 13:24-30](#) that Satan works to deceive the church by mingling his children with God’s children, often times making it difficult for believers to discern the true from the false. The more we are familiar with Scripture, the easier it will be for us to detect the true Christians from the false conversions.

True Christians are “born-again” ([John 3:3](#)) and are controlled by the Holy Spirit; they are no longer controlled by their sinful nature ([Romans 8:9](#)). Indeed, born-again Christians have the Spirit of Christ indwelling their hearts ([Galatians 4:6](#)) and they become new creations, “the old has gone, the new has come!” ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). When a person receives Christ, tremendous spiritual changes take place in him, and true converts will indeed display the characteristics of genuine Christians. For example, they will understand the importance of abiding daily in God’s Word, which shows not only how we can be saved from our sins, but also how we may be equipped to serve God as well as how to obtain true success in life ([2 Timothy 3:17](#); [James 1:25](#)). True Christians will walk in the light and obey God’s commands, for “God’s love is truly made complete” in those who obey His Word ([1 John 2:5](#)).

Christians live by the Spirit so as not to gratify the desires of the sinful nature, “for the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature” ([Galatians 5:17](#)). The things of this world, “the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does” ([1 John 2:16](#)) no longer have a stronghold on the life of the true believer. Indeed, “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” ([Galatians 5:24](#)). We no longer live for us but rather we live for the One who died for us, sacrificing our desires and ambitions and replacing them with those of Christ. Granted, we will never be completely victorious in our Christian walk ([1 John 1:8](#)), however Christians will not repeatedly engage in sinful behavior, as “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed (nature) remains in him” ([1 John 3:9](#)). And this new nature exhibits the habitual character of righteousness produced by the Holy Spirit ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

In [Matthew 7:13-14](#) Christ tells His followers the road that leads to eternal life is narrow

and that “only a few find it.” The broad road with the wide gate, on the other hand, is the one that leads to destruction and we see that “many” will take this path. And many who claim to be converted Christians will never leave the broad road with its worldly allurements. They desire to live an easy Christianity that makes few demands on them yet when “trouble or persecution comes because of the word” they quickly fall away (Matthew 13:21). Furthermore, they produce little, if any, fruit. Yet we know that true faith in Christ profoundly changes one’s life and will cause us to produce much fruit for God’s glory. And, ultimately, fruit is the test of true salvation, and this includes holiness (Romans 6:22), Christian character (Galatians 5:22-23), good works (Colossians 1:10), winning others to Christ (Romans 1:13), sharing what we have (Romans 15:25-28; Hebrews 13:16), and praising God (Hebrews 13:15). As Christ said, “by their fruit you will recognize them...A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:16, 18).

Truly converted sinners have trusted Christ alone and seek to become more and more Christ-like all the time. Those who claim to be Christians will indeed display the characteristics of true Christians: sound doctrine, obedience to God’s Word and love. They will unashamedly work to spread the good news of the Gospel, as we are called to do (Matthew 28:19-20), knowing well that they might be mocked and ridiculed by many in these increasingly secular times. And although false Christians may sometimes be able to deceive us, they certainly cannot deceive God as nothing in all creation is hidden from His sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13). At the end of the age, His angels will separate the true from the false Christians.

**Recommended Resource:** Eternal Security by Charles Stanley.