

# The History of Christianity

(taken from Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity)

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## Introduction: The Christian Centuries

(excerpts from Robert D. Linder's introduction)

**A resilient faith.** Historians are often struck by the resilience of Christianity and its seemingly inexhaustible capacity to revive after periods of stagnation or decay. In fact, this has been a major theme of Christian history. Related to its capacity for renewal and reform is Christianity's tremendous impulse to evangelize—to share with others the good news (gospel) of forgiveness of sins through Christ. Finally, there are many examples of Christianity responding to different pressures and threats without altering the essentials of its message:

- Fierce persecution has led to the purifying of the faithful;
- heresy and aberrations have led to the clarifying of beliefs;
- and intellectual attacks have led to a refinement of practices and emphases.

**The initial surge.** What the apostles taught and practised became the true pattern for all later teaching and practice, and the standard by which they would be judged. The basic claim of the early Christians was that they had discovered a different way of life, that Jesus was the promised Messiah or Christ, and that he had freed them from their sins and transformed their lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Many of the early converts to the faith, such as Justin Martyr, were first attracted by the love they saw among believers. Since their lifestyle was so radically different, Christians were almost automatically excluded from the mainstream of pagan society.

**Christian hallmarks.** The hallmarks of apostolic Christianity were simplicity, community, evangelism and love. It was simple because it had little or no formal organization, maintained no church buildings or membership rolls, taught easy-to-understand doctrines, and followed a plan of financing activities by personal giving. Many felt themselves adrift in a world grown too large, and they craved the type of intimate fellowship offered to the Christian congregations. The early Christians were aggressively evangelistic. They wanted to share their new-found life in Christ with others less fortunate.

**“What is your Mission?”**

**Philippians 1:6**

**June 1, 2025**

Hartford Bible Church

Bob Cobleigh

### **Point 1. Discover your Gifts that God has given you**

Imitate HIS Love John 13:34, 1 John 4:19, Ephesians 5:2

Humility Philippians 2:3, Matthew 23:12, James 4:10

Jesus was Servant/ So should we Mark 10:45, Galatians 5:13

Forgiving Matthew 6:14-15, Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:32

Spread the Good News 1 Peter 3:15

Fruit of Spirit Galatians 5:22-23 Within us

His workmanship Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 3:12-14,

Corinthians 6:11

Colossians 3:10 We are renewed

### **Point 2. Redeem the time Ephesians 5:16**

### **Point 3. Attitude is Everything in the Lord: Focus/Dream big/Aim High**

Phil 4:13

Be Confident in this very thing.

He began the good work and WILL complete it!