

What Is "The Gideons International?"

Most of us have seen the Bibles in hotel rooms or hospital waiting areas. Although The Gideons International has placed Bibles in 80 languages in more than 180 countries of the world, most people do not know hardly anything about the organization. According to www.gideons.org, it was founded in 1899 in Boscobel, Wisconsin. It began distributing free Bibles in 1908, when the first Bibles were placed in the rooms of the Superior Hotel in Superior, Montana.

The organization takes its name from the story of Gideon in Judges 7. They say, "Gideon was a man who was willing to do exactly what God wanted him to do, regardless of his own judgment as to the plans or results. Humility, faith, and obedience were his great elements of character. This is the standard that The Gideons International is trying to establish in all its members, each man to be ready to do God's will at any time, at any place, and in any way that the Holy Spirit leads." In keeping with this symbolism, the symbol of the Gideons is a two handled pitcher and torch, recalling Gideon's victory over the Midianites.

The Gideons state that they are not a denomination or a church. They say they are an association that works with Protestant/evangelical churches, with the intent of spreading the gospel. Their membership is composed of members of many denominations from all over the world. However, they claim to all hold to certain core beliefs such as the Bible being the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God, and that Jesus is the Son of God. They also insist that their members have received Jesus as their personal Savior, endeavor to follow Him in their daily lives, be members in good standing in their Protestant/evangelical churches, and have the recommendation of their "pastors."

As one might already guess, The Gideons hold to heavily Calvinistic beliefs, and a few of them will be examined in this article. In order to "receive Christ," they state that one needs to say, "Confessing to God that I am a sinner, and believing that the Lord Jesus Christ died for my sins on the cross and was raised for my justification, I now receive and confess Him as my personal Saviour." But the Bible says that baptism is required to be "in Christ" (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12). Someone who is not baptized does not have the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

After the Gideons claim that one is "saved," they then counsel one to "prayerfully seek a local Bible-believing church that will assist you in growing as a new Christian." After one is saved according to God's word, they are

added to the church by God Himself (Acts 2:47). When one joins himself to a local church, he must make sure that the congregation is following the scriptures (Acts 9:26). Most "Protestant/evangelical" churches do not care where one attends because they think all of them are going to heaven. But this is not the case (Matthew 15:13-14). Believing the Bible is not enough! One has to follow it!

A final point is the subtle teaching of "once saved, always saved" on their website. John 5:24 is quoted: "... *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ...*" This is certainly true for it is the words of the Lord! But context has to be considered -- one who believes and is baptized must remain faithful (Revelation 2:10). There is the possibility of being lost (Hebrews 6:1-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

While the Gideons may do good distributing Bibles (the NKJV, if you're wondering), they advocate doctrines that are contrary to the Bible. A Bible will not do anyone any good if they are led away from the truth by false doctrines!

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