

Lyceum 117, October 30, 2025 – a forum to Think, Discuss, Share, and Learn from one another. Your input is welcomed - Iron sharpens iron.

Neighborhood “The 1826, in Connecticut, a farmer named Josiah Holbrook started a school for ‘the general diffusion of knowledge and raising the moral and intellectual taste’ of Americans. In those days, the opportunities for higher education were limited to those venerable old universities that had long served the upper crust. Holbrook’s vision was to make learning – practical, liberal, and humane – available to working people of all kinds. He named his school the Lyceum, after the garden where Aristotle once taught his students philosophy.... We need to go deeper than the superficial fights that characterize public life. We need to return to the first principles and meet each other there as human beings.” – Nathan Beacom, Plough Magazine, Autumn 2023, p. 9.

An overview of Christianity – Faith’s adaptability and cultural influences.

Christianity is practiced by millions today, but its history holds a lot of small, surprising details that do not always make it into everyday conversation. These facts reveal how beliefs, traditions, and customs took shape over centuries. Some of them show faith’s adaptability, while others highlight just how much it has influenced culture and culture influenced faith around the world. -Roger J. Vanden Busch

The First Christians Had a Different Name.

In the earliest years after Jesus, his followers did not call themselves Christians. The book of Acts describes them as "followers of the Way," focusing on the life and teachings they tried to live out. The term "Christian" first appeared in Antioch, given by outsiders. Over time, the name stuck, but the original title reminds us that the movement began as a path to walk, not just a label to wear.

The Fish Symbol Predates the Cross.

Before the cross became the most recognized Christian symbol, believers used the simple outline of a fish. Known as the ichthys, it carried a hidden message—the Greek letters stood for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior." It was discreet enough to mark meeting places or identify fellow believers during times of persecution. Later, when

Christianity became more public, the cross took its place as the primary emblem of the faith.

Christmas Wasn't an Early Christian Holiday.

For the first few centuries, Christians did not celebrate Christmas at all. Their focus was much more on Easter, which commemorated Jesus's resurrection. It was not until the fourth century that December 25 was chosen for the celebration, partly aligning with existing Roman festivals. This decision made it easier for Christianity to integrate into the wider culture while blending a sacred event with seasonal traditions people already recognized.

There Are Thousands of Denominations.

Christianity is not one single unified group. Researchers estimate there are over 45,000 denominations around the world. These range from large historic traditions like Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy to countless Protestant and independent churches. Differences might come from theology, style of worship, or cultural context, but most share the core belief in Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. This variety shows both the adaptability of the faith and its long, complex history.

The New Testament Took Decades to Complete.

The New Testament was not written in one sitting. The earliest parts were letters from leaders like Paul, written around 50 AD. The Gospels and other writings came later, over a span of about fifty years. Each book was shaped by its author's perspective and the needs of the community it addressed. This gradual process created a collection that reflects both unity and diversity in how the story was told.

The Bible Is the Most Translated Book in History.

No other book comes close to the Bible in terms of translation. Full versions exist in more than seven hundred languages, and portions have been translated into thousands more. These efforts, conducted over centuries, aim to make the text accessible to people in every culture. This enormous reach has allowed Christianity to spread far beyond its original setting in the Middle East, influencing communities across the globe.

Baptism Practices Differ Widely.

Baptism is a common Christian practice, but it does not look the same everywhere. Some traditions immerse the person fully in water, while others pour or sprinkle. In some churches, infants are baptized, while others wait until someone can choose it for themselves. These differences reflect varying beliefs about what baptism means, when it should happen, and how it connects someone to the community of faith.

Early Christians Met in Homes.

Before church buildings existed, Christians gathered in homes. These churches provided space for worship, meals, and encouragement, often in small groups. Meeting in private also offered safety during times of persecution. It was not until Christianity became legal under the Roman Emperor Constantine in the fourth century that larger, dedicated places of worship started to appear, changing the way believers gathered.

Sunday Worship Replaced the Jewish Sabbath.

The earliest Christians were Jewish and observed the Sabbath from Friday evening to Saturday evening. However, eventually, Sunday became the main day for gathering, chosen to honor the day Jesus rose from the dead. This shift became standard in most traditions, though some groups today, such as Seventh-day Adventists, keep Saturday as their day of rest and worship, preserving an older practice within the faith.

The Word "Christian" Wasn't Self-Chosen.

When the term "Christian" first appeared in Antioch, it was not necessarily meant as a compliment. It came from outsiders describing the group as followers of Christ. Over time, believers adopted the name as their own by transforming it into a proud declaration of identity. The shift shows how a community can take an outside label and turn it into something deeply meaningful.

Common Phrases Have Biblical Roots.

Many everyday sayings trace back to the Bible. Phrases like "the powers that be," "by the skin of your teeth," and "go the extra mile" first appeared in scripture. Over the centuries, these expressions became part of regular speech, often used by people who do not know their origin. It is a small but clear example of how Christian texts have shaped language far beyond religious settings.

Missionary Work Started Early.

Missionary activity is not just a modern idea—it began in the first century. Leaders like the Apostle Paul traveled widely to share the message of Jesus, often facing hardship and danger. Their journeys, recorded in the book of Acts, show a determination to reach new communities. This early outreach helped establish Christianity far beyond its original location and laying the groundwork for its global presence today.

Symbols Carried Hidden Meanings.

Beyond the fish and the cross, early Christians used symbols like the Greek letters alpha and omega to represent Christ as "the beginning and the end." These images often appeared in art or inscriptions and could serve as quiet reminders of faith. In times when open worship was not safe, symbols offered a way to encourage believers. And marked sacred spaces without drawing unwanted attention.

The Bible Holds Many Kinds of Writing.

The Bible is not just one type of literature. It contains poetry, law, letters, history, parables, and prophecy. Knowing which type you are reading helps make sense of the message. A psalm, for example, speaks in metaphor and song, while a gospel tells a narrative. This variety is part of why the Bible continues to engage people—it offers many ways to connect with its words and themes.

-Internet

Halloween riddles: no treats, only tricks, you figure them out.

If a pumpkin hurts itself, what is a remedy?

I was invited to a Halloween party; the invitation asked me to bring.

Dracula was known for what gift?

Why was the Wizard admitted to the hospital?