**Why is a fish a symbol of early Christians?**

The *Ichthys* or fish symbol was used by early Christians to identify themselves as followers of [Jesus Christ](http://christianity.about.com/od/newtestamentpeople/p/jesuschrist.htm) and to express their affinity to Christianity. *Ichthys* is the Ancient Greek word for "fish."

The "Christian fish," or "Jesus fish" symbol consists of two intersecting arcs tracing the outline of a fish (most commonly with the fish "swimming" to the left). It is said to have been used by early persecuted Christians as a secret symbol of identification.

The Greek word for fish (Ichthus) also forms the acronym "[Jesus Christ](http://christianity.about.com/od/newtestamentpeople/p/jesuschrist.htm), God's Son, Savior." As early as the first century, Christians made an acrostic from this word: Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter, i.e. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. **ICHTHYS**

Followers of Christianity identify with the fish as a symbol because fish frequently appeared in the ministry of Christ. They were a staple in the biblical times diet and fish were often mentioned in the [Gospels](http://christianity.about.com/od/booksofthebible/qt/The-Gospels.htm). For example, Christ [multiplied the two fish and five loaves of bread](http://christianity.about.com/od/biblestorysummaries/a/Jesus-Feeds-5000.htm) in Matthew 14:17. Jesus said in Mark 1:17, *"Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men."* ([NIV](http://christianity.about.com/od/faqhelpdesk/p/newinternationa.htm))

