How should Christians live differently?

Christian Living · https://thebiblicalroots.org/answers/how-should-christians-live-differently/

Christians are called to live differently because they belong to Jesus. We are not saved *by* living differently, but because we have been saved by grace through faith, our lives begin to reflect the character of Christ (Eph. 2:8–10; Titus 2:11–14). The Christian life is not about earning God's acceptance; it is the natural fruit of being united to Christ.

The New Testament describes Christians as people who have been made new. Paul writes, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). While believers still struggle with sin in this life (Rom. 7:15–25), they are no longer defined by it. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christians are gradually being transformed into the likeness of Jesus (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

This transformation affects every area of life. Christians are called to pursue honesty rather than deceit (Eph. 4:25), purity rather than immorality (1 Thess. 4:3–7), generosity rather than selfishness (2 Cor. 9:6–8), forgiveness rather than bitterness (Eph. 4:31–32), and humility rather than pride (Phil. 2:3–8). These are not arbitrary rules. They reflect the character of the God we worship.

One of the most distinctive features of Christian living is love. Jesus taught that love for God and love for neighbor summarize the entire moral law (Matt. 22:37–40). In fact, He said that love would be the identifying mark of His followers: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Christians are called not merely to love those who love them, but even to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Matt. 5:43–48).

The New Testament also emphasizes holiness. The Greek word *hagios* ("holy") means "set apart." Christians are called to live as people who belong to God (1 Pet. 1:14–16). This does not mean withdrawing from the world. Jesus ate with sinners, engaged with unbelievers, and moved freely among the people of His day (Mark 2:15–17). Rather, Christians are to be in the world without becoming conformed to it (Rom. 12:1–2). We participate in society, work, raise families, serve our communities, and build friendships, while maintaining a distinctly Christ-centered identity.

Historically, Christians have understood this transformation as the fruit of sanctification—the lifelong work of the Holy Spirit in believers. Different Christian traditions may explain the process somewhat differently, but mainstream Christianity agrees that genuine faith produces a changed

life. Good works do not create salvation; they flow from it (James 2:17–18).

Ultimately, Christian living is not about following a checklist. It is about following a Person. Jesus calls His followers to take up their cross daily and walk after Him (Luke 9:23). The goal is not mere moral improvement but growing conformity to Christ Himself.

Key Scriptures to Study

- John 13:34–35 — Love is the defining mark of Jesus' disciples.
- Romans 12:1–2 — Christians are transformed rather than conformed to the world.
- Galatians 5:22–23 — The fruit of the Spirit describes Christian character.
- Ephesians 2:8–10 — We are saved by grace and created for good works.
- Ephesians 4:17–32 — Practical instructions for living as a new person in Christ.
- Philippians 2:3–8 — Christ's humility is the model for Christian living.
- Titus 2:11–14 — God's grace trains believers to live godly lives.
- 1 Peter 1:14–16 — God's people are called to be holy.
- Luke 9:23 — Following Jesus requires daily self-denial and discipleship.

Objections & Misconceptions

Common Objection: "If we're saved by grace, why does it matter how we live?"

Response: Because saving faith changes us. Christians are not saved by good works, but neither are they saved for a life of indifference toward sin (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:11–14).

Common Objection: "Does living differently mean isolating ourselves from unbelievers?"

Response: No. Jesus regularly spent time with unbelievers while remaining faithful to His mission and values (Mark 2:15–17). Christians are called to engage the world, not retreat from it.

Common Objection: "Does becoming a Christian mean I will stop struggling with sin?"

Response: No. The New Testament acknowledges an ongoing battle with sin in the life of believers (Rom. 7:15–25). The difference is that Christians now have the Holy Spirit working within them to produce growth and repentance.

Common Objection: "Is Christianity mainly about following rules?"

Response: No. Christianity is fundamentally about a relationship with Jesus Christ. Obedience flows from faith, gratitude, and love, not from an attempt to earn God's favor (John 14:15; Eph. 2:8–9).

Why This Matters

The way Christians live affects both their own spiritual growth and their witness to the world. Jesus calls His followers to be "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14–16). A transformed life points others to the transforming power of the Gospel.

Living differently also brings freedom. God's commands are not burdens designed to restrict human flourishing; they are instructions from a loving Creator who knows what is best for His people. As believers grow in Christ, they increasingly discover that true joy is found not in self-rule but in following Him.

Recommended Resources

- *The Cost of Discipleship* — Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Practicing the Way* — John Mark Comer
- *The Pursuit of Holiness* — Jerry Bridges
- *Life Together* — Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* — Sinclair Ferguson