

NOTES

~ Do we look like Christians? ~

- What does a Christian look like?
 - From the **world's** perspective
 - Hypocrite
 - Just like everyone else . . . including the *divorced*
 - Jews 30%
 - Born-again Christians 27%
 - Other Christians 24%
 - Atheists, Agnostics 21%
 - “Holier than thou”
 - From **our** perspective, we often try to make ourselves look like one
 - Carry a Bible and a WWJD bracelet
 - Speak right and dress right
 - Pray aloud and discuss our offerings . . .
 - . . . but keep our sins private . . .
 - From **Paul's** perspective
 - One who is not bound by legalism
 - One who doesn't **practice** sin
 - One who displays fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**)
 - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, & Self-control
 - One who has ‘crucified the flesh’ (**Galatians 5:24**)
 - One who walks in the Spirit, not the flesh (**Galatians 5:25**)
 - From **Jesus'** perspective: Obedient
 - Obedient son (**Matthew 21:28-31**)
 - In love
 - Carry out the commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**)
 - Take care of others (**John 13:34-35; Luke 6:27-38**)
- Consequences
 - For those who ‘look like Christians’ – inherit the kingdom (**Matthew 25:34-36**)
 - For those who don't – cut out and won't inherit the kingdom (**Galatians 5:19-21**)
 - For those who don't . . . separation from God and ‘lake of fire’ destruction (**Luke 3:9-11; Matthew 13:49-50; Matthew 25:41-43**)
- Treat the heart, not the symptom: Pray, fellowship, study, & be obedient

NOTES

How does a Christian appear to a non-believer?

Divorce statistics

Why some people left the church

What's OUR perception of how a Christian should look?

~ Do we look like Christians? ~

What might a *Christian* look like to someone who isn't a believer?

According to the worldview, many believe we're **hypocrites** – just as sinful as everyone else. And, that we often display a “**holier-than-thou**” attitude: judgmental but not introspective or self-correcting. Perhaps they're right as a whole. After all, the **divorce rate** among couples proclaiming a Christian faith is actually higher than their secular counterparts (Barna research statistics as of about 2007).

- Jews 30%
- Born-again Christians 27%
- Other Christians 24%
- Atheists, Agnostics 21%

Many of the men I talked to in **Iraq** stated that they used to go to church but no longer attend because they felt that:

1. The people in the church were **unfriendly, uncaring, or hypocritical**.
2. The **pastor** “let them down”.

Unfortunately, this is the result of putting faith in man and not in God. We're **imperfect** at best and no one will agree with everything we say or do – even when we're scripturally correct.

What's *our* perception of what a Christian may look like? This will probably depend on your upbringing. A strict background may instill a **legalistic** perception. A **charismatic** background may bring more of a demonstrative perception of Christianity steeped more in manifestations of the Spirit and love than in the need to adhere to strict guidelines. Regardless, we probably have our own perception of how one dresses or acts to appear “Christian”. In an effort to determine what a ‘real’ Christian may look like to some, let's **meet Brad . . .**

(Play Christian clip)

Bible; WWJD
bracelet; dress the part;
pray out loud but keep
our sins private

. . . but should be
opposite

Must confess

A Christian should be
a reflection of the
Spirit within them, and
be of pure motive -
heart

Hmmm . . . perhaps trying to dress ourselves up to look like what we believe a Christian should look like by carrying a **Bible**, wearing a **WWJD**, bracelet or speaking and dressing ‘right’ is the **wrong approach**. So would be a tendency to **pray out loud but keep our sins private** and silent. According to Scripture, the opposite should be true: Pray in private and confess our sins to each other. (cf. Matthew 6:6; James 5:16).

No confession, no repentance. No repentance, no forgiveness.

So, who looks like a Christian? Brad? Someone in a suit? I smoked pot as a teenager, committed adultery at 18, drank more than I should’ve on occasion, and deal with the same temptations most men do. And I have a tattoo! Surely I don’t look like a Christian? But perhaps everyone does. **Perhaps no one does . . .**

Ideally, looking like a Christian should be a manifestation that will come naturally if our **heart or our intent** is right. Let’s look at this concept from both extremes:

- *Blessed are the **pure in heart** for they will see **God**.* (cf. Matthew 5:8).
- *But the things that proceed out of the **mouth come from the heart** . . .* (cf. Matthew 15:18).
- *For from within, **out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries** . . .* (cf. Mark 17:21). The heart/intent is where sinful behavior begins. **Thoughts-sin-death**.
- *You have no part or portion in this matter, for **your heart is not right** before God. Therefore **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.* (cf. Acts 8:21-22). This is the scenario where Simon the magician tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit. What was his intent or motive? Money and pride . . . Paul said that the “love” of **money** is a root of all sorts of evil (cf. 1 Timothy 6:10).

Let's look at what Paul and Jesus say a Christian should look like

No legalism; can't be good enough to 'earn' our way

Doesn't practice sin – truly repents

Displays the fruit of the spirit

- Love
- Joy

- Peace

- Patience

So, what does the **Bible** say a Christian should 'look' like? It would be helpful to look at what **Paul and Jesus** had to say in our quest to appear as a follower of Christ by doing the **right things for the right reasons**. What we'll learn from them is that **NO ONE CAN DO ANYTHING TO TRULY MAKE THEMSELVES LOOK LIKE A CHRISTIAN – IT'LL HAPPEN BY DEFAULT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS AT WORK PRODUCING FRUIT!**

[**Galatians 5:22-25**] Let's take a look at Paul's letter to the church at Galatia – verses 22-25 in particular. According to Paul, followers of Jesus should reflect the **following characteristics**, which are behaviors born out of a right spirit:

- Not bound by **legalism**. No one could possibly follow the law enough to earn salvation. The 'law' shows how impossible it is to please God on our own. Also, the counsel at Jerusalem provided only a couple of strict requirements (no sexual sin, no food sacrificed to idols, etc.). And, we learn in the same letter to the Galatians that the **law is fulfilled with the single command to love our neighbors** as ourselves.
- **Doesn't practice sin**. Repeated sinful behavior suggests a **lack of true repentance**. Those who practice sin won't inherit the kingdom of God.
- Displays fruit of the Spirit:
 - **Love** (*agape* - obligation). Remember this one is a sense of **moral obligation** – the same love that will identify us as Christ's disciples. (cf. John 13:35).
 - **Joy** (*khar-ah*) - calm delight; fullness; gladness). This is the same joy expressed by the wise men when they saw the star over **Bethlehem** (cf. Matthew 2:10) or **Zacharias** would feel at the birth of his son John (cf. Luke 1:14) or the joy felt when finding the **treasure** in the field in Jesus' parable (cf. Matthew 13:44).
 - **Peace** (*i-rah'-nay*) - prosperity; quietness; rest). This is the peace the angel proclaimed to the **shepherds**: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased". (cf. Luke 2:14).
 - **Patience** (*makrothumia* - fortitude; longsuffering) (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-2). This is the patience we're to express when **preaching** the Word.
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- Kindness

- Faithfulness

- Gentleness

- Self-control

- **Kindness** (*kh-ray-stot-ace*) – moral excellence in character/demeanor) (cf. Ephesians 2:7-9). This is the kindness God showed us through **grace** in Christ Jesus.
- **Goodness** (*agathosune*). This is the fruit of light that causes us to try to learn what is **pleasing to God**. (cf. Ephesians 5:9-10).
- **Faithfulness** (*pistis* – moral conviction; assurance; belief). Remember the centurion and his sick servant? Not worthy for a visit; Say the word; No greater faith found in Israel . . . (cf. Matthew 8:5-13).
- **Gentleness** (*prah-oo'-tace*) - **humility**; meekness). This is how we're to receive the Word of God, which is able to save our souls. (cf. James 1:21).
- **Self-control** (*eng-krat'-i-ah*) – temperance) (cf. 2 Peter 1:4-9). Knowledge brings this, which then brings perseverance . . . The entire context of this reference is good for us because it reminds us of what we should 'look' like.
- Has 'crucified the flesh'. Otherwise, the body gets in the way of the spirit.
- Walks in the Spirit, not the flesh. What are some actions of the flesh?

A Christian is obedient, according to Jesus

We're to make disciples

. . . and care for other brothers and sisters

Love, bless, turn the other cheek, and clothe

[**Matthew 21:28-31**] What did **Jesus** say a Christian will look like? As sons of God, we're **obedient** – even when we don't *feel* like doing so.

[**Matthew 28:18-20**] In our obedience – in **true love** – we carry out the Messiah's commission to preach the Gospel and make **disciples** and take care of others . . .

[**John 13:34-35**] Here, Jesus tells us to love one another as He has loved us. And that this is how others will know we're His disciples. Remember that the type of love mentioned here is *agapao* – doing the right thing out of a moral sense of obligation.

[**Luke 6:27-38**] **Love** our enemies, **bless** those who curse us, **turn** the other cheek, **clothe** the naked, and **treat** others as we want to be treated. Doing these things ensures there's room for forgiveness and reconciliation to work, and for caring for God's children.

So, Christians have a heart that is **obedient** and that causes the individual to **bear fruit**. They take care of others and tell them about Jesus. They don't practice sin, but repent when they fall. They're **slow to anger** and are kind. True followers of Christ don't normally sin in their anger, but **repent** when they do. Sin is the exception, not the norm. No amount of WWJD bracelets, contemporary Christian songs, Bibles, or believer slang can substitute for obedience.

Christians will inherit the kingdom of God

[**Matthew 25:34-36**] What will be the end for those who bear fruit, and for those who don't? We just learned that those who don't bear fruit will be 'cut down' and thrown into the fire. Those who 'look like Christians' will inherit the kingdom of God.

Those who practice sin will NOT inherit the kingdom

[**Galatians 5:19-21**] Those who don't will *not* inherit the kingdom.

Judgment and hell await the disobedient

They'll also experience separation from God and 'lake of fire' destruction [**Luke 3:9-11**]; [**Matthew 13:49-50**]; [**Matthew 25:41-43**]. Yes, there will be consequences for our behavior and there will be a very real destruction for those who aren't God's or Christ's.

You're probably saying to yourself, "I want to exhibit fruit of God's Spirit and therefore inherit His kingdom. How do I do this?"

How to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and 'look' like a Christian:

Repent of sinful behavior. This means to have a change of heart that in itself brings about a change in behavior. Ask God to forgive you for the sinful behavior. Believe that Jesus died for us and was raised again.

- Believe
- Repent
- Follow

If you **believe** that the Messiah – the promised one of God – has come, died to become a sacrifice on our behalf, and was raised again, then confess this if you haven't before and receive the Spirit of God.

Pray, fellowship, study, and be obedient

Then, as you walk in the faith, **treat the heart**, not the symptoms: Pray, fellowship, study, & be obedient. By this, you'll build your faith and put it into action.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. —Galatians 5:22-23.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. —Galatians 5:24.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. —Galatians 5:25.

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.” —Matthew 21:28-31.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” —Matthew 28:18-20.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” —John 13:34-35.

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” —Luke 6:27-38.

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ —Matthew 25:34-36.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. —Galatians 5:19-21.

“Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what shall we do?” And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.” —Luke 3:9-11.

So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” —Matthew 13:49-50.

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ —Matthew 25:41-43.