

What Does Different Look Like?

Over the past few weeks

I have presented some lessons associated with shining as lights in a dark world. We have talked about how Jesus is our example that we imitate. We have also noted the darkness that is around us and what we can do about that darkness. Today, I want to present another lesson from this study – what does different look like?

We live in a time where so many simply want to blend in. That is the mantra of the day. But there is something to be said about being different. Being different is sometimes considered a good thing in our society. There are many people who thrive on being different. Some become outcasts and ridiculed by the “in crowd”, while they are viewed by others as different, whether good or bad. Many are different just for the sake of being different, or even out of rebellion.

I want us to understand that God wants us to be different, not just for the sake of it, but because when you serve Him properly you WILL be different.

I. We are called to be different

- a. Philippians 2:15 – we are lights in a dark world implies that you are different.
- b. We are called upon to be separate – 2 Corinthians 6:17. Being separate means you are different.
- c. They think it strange we do not run with them (as we used to) – 1 Peter 4:3-4.
- d. Romans 12:1-2 – Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed.
- e. God’s following has almost always stood out as different from society. His people were often described as a minority or remnant. Think of Abraham leaving Ur and Haran, Noah – one of 8 souls saved from the flood, Israel was not chosen because they were a great nation (Deuteronomy 7:6-8), etc. Even on Pentecost we read of 3000 souls saved (Acts 2:41), but it is highly likely that such was a minority considering the occasion.

II. Examples of being different

- a. **Jesus was different.** In every way He was different.
He taught differently – with authority (Matthew 7:28-29, John 7:46)
He frequently drew criticism from the leaders and often the majority.
Even in Nazareth, His own country, when He returned, they saw him as different and rejected Him – Mark 6:1-6.
Matthew 10:24-25 - He proceeds to warn His disciples that if they called Jesus Beelzebul, they will much more call his servants that.
- b. **Peter and John** were different – the apostles, after Pentecost were a special breed of people. They lived their lives different from those around them. James was the first to be executed (Acts 12:1-2). Acts 4:13 notes that though “uneducated” they perceived that “they had been with Jesus.”
When we are followers of Christ, the world will take notice.
- c. **Enoch** – we know very little about him. He is mentioned in the genealogies leading up to Noah (Genesis 5:21-24). All we know about him is that he walked with God and then he was not, for God took him. Hebrews 11:5 notes that he pleased God. Jude 14 describes him as a preacher of righteousness.
How different does one need to be for God to take him so that he does not see death?
- d. **Noah** was different – at a time when God had determined to destroy the world, we read that Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. He walked with God, was a just man and perfect in his generation (Genesis 6:8-9). When instructed to build an ark, he obeyed God. By faith he saved his family, 8 souls (2 Peter 2:5, Hebrews 11:7).
Different mean we do what is right, even when everyone else is doing wrong.

- e. **Joshua and Caleb** were different – Numbers 14:6-7 records them pleading with the people to go take the land (though the other 10 spies had given a negative report).
They dared to trust in God, while everyone around them criticized and complained.
- f. **David as he confronted Goliath** was different – there are many occasions in the life of David where we see different. One specific occasion while young was when he confronted Goliath – Israel with all its warriors cowered at this 9+ foot giant, the warrior of the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:4). David, visiting his brothers at the battle field is insulted when he hears the blasphemies of this giant. He offers to fight him and defeats him with a sling and a stone (1 Samuel 17:50).
His willingness to stand motivated the people to fight for the LORD and they gained a great victory that day.
- g. **John the Baptist** was different – in the wilderness, eating locust and wild honey, he preaches the coming Messiah. The people go out to see him, including the religious leaders. John rebukes them and calls for repentance (Matthew 3)
John's actions result in him being imprisoned and executed by Herod's wife who hated him (Mark 6:16-29).
- h. **Paul** was different – we find an incredible example in standing for what is right, regardless of the circumstances. Consider all that he gave up to follow Christ – Philippians 3:4-8.
Consider the criticisms he faced from the Corinthian brethren because he chose to not be supported by them. Consider all that he endured as he preached Christ – 2 Corinthians 11:22-28.
You find someone with purpose and willing to be different even if it costs him everything earthly.
- i. In all these examples we see the need to stand up and be counted and to be willing to be different.

III. What does different look like to us?

- a. It doesn't mean we always have to stand out, just for the sake of being different. We live in the world and conduct ourselves with proper decorum. Recall in the intro, we talked about those who dress differently for the mere sake of being different. Our difference is because of our convictions. We're not trying to be different, but it happens because of our faith.
- b. It doesn't mean you are the only one – it is important to understand this. The Bible emphasizes we are a family. That is the concept of the local church. We are in the minority, but a family is more than an individual.
Elijah was discouraged thinking he was alone. The LORD told him there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Constantly the prophets spoke of God's remnant.
BUT there may be times when you do have to stand alone, in what seems like everyone else.
- c. It means we don't talk like the world anymore – Matthew 12:34-37 notes that our speech reveals our hearts. And the Bible has plenty to say about our speech and its impact on others (cf. James 3:1-12).
Matthew 26:73, when Peter was warming himself, he was associated with Jesus because, "Your speech betrays you." That is an interesting thought when we think about being different.
What do you talk about when around others? Does your speech betray you?
- d. It means we don't act like the world anymore. We have given up the works of the flesh –
1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- e. It is seen in the way we dress – modest apparel. 1 Timothy 2:8-9 speaks of women adorning themselves in modest apparel. Modest means that which is becoming or proper.
Many today wear clothing to make a statement – often immodest and provocative. And we know that clothing is a statement of status, etc. Christians are to be simple.
AGAIN, not necessarily drawing undue attention to yourself either way.
- f. We live lives of holiness – 1 Peter 1:13-16. That means we belong to God, and thus we are not conforming ourselves to our former lusts.
- g. With live with integrity – the Christian life is to be one of virtue (2 Peter 1:5, Philippians 4:8, "if there is any virtue...meditate on these things."

- h. We do not love the world or the things of the world – 1 John 2:15-17
- i. It is seen in how we treat our enemies – Matthew 5:43-44, Romans 12:18-21. Consider “cancel culture” today. If you are deemed an “enemy”, they believe they have the right to “cancel” everything about you.
- j. We act like Christians
 - i. NOTE: Being different as Christians is a combination of ALL these qualities. Many in the world possess some of these qualities. There are good and honest people in the world in virtually every sector. But they are still lost. Where we stand out is in our faith.
 - ii. We walk by faith – 2 Corinthians 5:7. When we walk, trusting God in everything, it will make us different. It will be reflected in how we deal with whatever circumstances we are facing.
 - iii. We think differently – Philippians 2:3-4 – in lowliness of mind; 2 Corinthians 10:5 – we bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. We have that “other worldly” perspective.
 - iv. We defend our faith – 1 Peter 3:15. Matthew 5:14-15 tells us we don’t hide our light under a basket.
 - v. We openly confess our Lord – Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 8:38 – “whoever is ashamed of Me...”
- k. In summary, different means we are seeking first the kingdom of God - Matthew 6:33, Colossians 3:1-2, and it shows in every aspect of our lives.

Conclusion: The gospel changes people. That can be a good thing. When this dark world, that is hurting so much now, sees how the gospel can change someone, perhaps that is what will spark an interest in learning more. So are we different? Is God pleased with that difference?