

WHY CHRISTIANS MUST BE DIFFERENT

Note to the speaker:

Help audience see and appreciate the need for us as Christians to be different from people of the world around us, even though we must live in the world and preach to worldly people. By following the counsel of God's Word and the example set by Jesus and the early Christians, we can succeed in doing so

MOST PEOPLE SUBMIT TO MORAL STANDARDS OF THEIR CONTEMPORARIES (2 min.)

Vast majority of people today do not want to be different

They are subject to peer pressure and are quick to follow crowd

This is true of both adults and youths

On learning the truth, we, as Christians, abandon our worldly ways (1Pe 4:2, 3)

This is puzzling to our former worldly friends, and they may deride us (1Pe 4:4)

JEHOVAH'S SERVANTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DIFFERENT (15 min.)

Nation of Israel was brought to Promised Land and set apart by God (De 7:6)

Israelites were commanded to keep separate from pagan nations (Ex 23:32, 33)

They had distinctive blue thread above fringes of garments, which set them apart and served as a protective reminder (Nu 15:38-41; *it-1* 655))

First-century Christians followed teachings of Christ, including being "no part of the world" (Joh 15:18-20)

So distinct were they from world around them that Christianity was called "The Way" (Ac 9:2; 19:9, 23)

They were widely recognized as being different (*tp* 123-4)

True Christians today are different

God's name has been called upon them, and they faithfully strive to obey his commandments (Ps 83:18; Isa 43:10, 12)

They endeavor to keep unspotted from world (Jas 1:27)

This difference is evident to sincere onlookers (Joh 13:35; *g94* 12/22 13)

Others may persecute them because of it (2Ti 3:12)

Like Moses, they choose individually to be ill-treated with the people of God rather than have the temporary enjoyment of sin (Heb 11:24, 25)

Christians are subjects of God's Kingdom

Are "aliens and temporary residents" in this world (1Pe 2:11)

Look forward to permanent residence in God's righteous new world (2Pe 3:13)

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we should strive to think and act in harmony with Christian standards

This separates us from the world, emphasizing that we are different

Does not mean that we isolate ourselves and become hermits (Joh 17:15, 16)

Rather, as Jesus' disciples, we are 'sent forth into the world' to make known the truth to others (Joh 17:18)

Christians are to serve as "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14-16; Php 2:15)

Our preaching and disciple-making work is one factor that makes us different (Mt 24:14; 28:19, 20)

SUCCESSFULLY COPING WITH PEER PRESSURE (4 min.)

The desire to be popular and be accepted by others is very strong

Even the apostle Peter succumbed at one time (Ga 2:11-14)

How can we successfully cope with peer pressure?

Come to know Jehovah and view him as a friend

Develop a strong love for him and his counsel (Ps 119:9-11, 105)

Associate with those who have the same high standard (Pr 13:20; 2Ti 2:22)

Do not fear men; develop courage of convictions (Pr 29:25)

Christian youths must especially follow this direction

[Illustrate how to cope successfully with the problem of peer pressure while in school (*yp* 73-80)]

SPECIFIC WAYS IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE DIFFERENT (20 min.)

Christians must seek first the Kingdom, not material interests

Majority of mankind absorbed in affairs of life, focusing attention on getting as much materially from world as possible

Christians see foolishness of trying to 'make use of the world to the full' and of putting emphasis on things destined to pass away (1Co 7:29-31; 1Jo 2:15-17)

Our focal point is Kingdom, not making a living or acquiring riches in dying world (Mt 6:31, 32)

We should each ask: 'What am I pursuing as a career? Can I pursue wholesome goal of full-time service?'

Note example of the apostle Paul (Ro 11:13, 14)

Christians are not “lovers of pleasures” (2Ti 3:4)

Must be selective in recreation and entertainment

Follow direction recorded at 1 Timothy 4:7, 8 and at 1 Corinthians 10:31

Young people must exercise caution in regard to after-school activities (*sj* 22-5)

Limit size of social gatherings

Large gatherings are difficult to supervise and can have adverse effects on those in attendance, both spiritually and physically (*km* 9/95 2; *om* 136)

Christians maintain wholesome moral standard (Php 4:8)

Standard of world is deteriorating, going from bad to worse

Position that Christians must take is clearly outlined in Scriptures (1Co 6:9, 10; Heb 13:4)

Must control desires of flesh and avoid entertainment or reading material that will tend to excite one

Includes lewd dancing and wild, passion-arousing music, which have become so prominent in world

Associate only with those who have high regard for Jehovah’s righteous laws (1Co 15:33)

Christians are different in dress and grooming

The way we dress identifies us with certain group or class

Elijah was identified by distinctive garment of prophet (2Ki 1:2-8)

Our dress gives an impression for good or for bad (*yp* 90)

Can connect one with what is dishonorable

Are we quick to copy fashions of world that are immodest?

If parents note that their children are being influenced by spirit of world in dress and grooming, they should endeavor to reach their heart and help them see need to adjust

Should set proper example themselves (1Pe 3:3, 4)

Our being modest will protect us from the wicked world, which is alienated from God

BLESSINGS RESULTING FROM FOLLOWING CHRISTIAN STANDARD (4 min.)

Maintaining the Christian standard and being different from the world bring many blessings

We are able to serve our God with a clean conscience and will have his approval

Will be protected from Satan, the ruler of this world, and his machinations (Joh 14:30; Eph 6:10-13; 1Jo 5:19)

Enables us to remain on the narrow road leading to everlasting life (Mt 7:13, 14)

If we desire Jehovah’s favor and blessing, we must be different!

Never forget, “the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever” (1Jo 2:17)

May that be our happy lot!

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read or commented on)