

What's Different about You?

Thesis: To stress the importance of not simply becoming a Christian and blending in with the ways of the world! To see the importance of making a difference by being different from a Christian worldview.

Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:17-24

Introduction Story

Mary sounds like a common story of the Christian experience in America. She grew up in church surrounded by Christian friends and made many great memories. As a teenager she walked the traditional aisle at a church service and committed her life to Christ, and even taught children's Sunday school classes for a number of years. At this time in her life many people could see a happy young lady and I bet even some of those around her would sometimes comment, "There's just something about that Mary." But little by little as life happened around her, something changed. But something was happening through the years of Mary's life. The circumstances of bad relationships and personal loss had been slowly eroding away at the difference that she once held dear in her life. Sorrow disappointment, and inconsistency overwhelmed her life as she slowly and deliberately pushed away from the time she spent in prayer and Bible study. She reached a point where nothing in her life appeared different at all. She easily became discouraged, and her circumstances controlled the way she felt. She didn't see herself as an over-comer in her life, but a spiritual under-achiever disillusioned and defeated inside. In fact she reached a point where she just desired to be accepted by others and even steered away from being labeled with the term "Christian." **What happened to the difference that once set her apart from those who did not follow Jesus Christ?**

I would like to think that Mary was an exception to the rule, but according to the Barna Research Group more than 84% of the respondents in the U.S. considered themselves Christians. It sounds good until you break down the Mosaic group. (Those born between 1985-2002) The Mosaic generation is not comfortable with the Christian label while falling one step short of abandoning Christianity altogether.

Why does it appear that although scores of Americans wear a Christian logo t-shirt, and a WWJD bracelet or Christian silly-bands, there appears to be no real difference in the way they live, how they react to circumstances, or what entertainment they allow to enter their homes. **Many of us are so watered down, tolerant, and politically correct in our Christian walks that maybe there is no real difference in the way we walk and the way the un-saved walk!**

In the words of Pastor Denny Brake, “**If a Savior leaves you as you are and where you are, from what has he saved you?**”

So I say again to those here who have committed their lives to serve Jesus.

What makes you different?

1. **The Old Walk (17-19)**

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind¹

- ✚ **No Longer implies that the people in Ephesus once walked as all those around them without any differences in behavior or action.**
- ✚ **What does it take to continue to walk as a Gentile? Simply stop being intentional in your Christian walk. It’s the same principle that creates problems in marriages, friendships, and your job. Simply go stagnant and stop looking for ways to serve and improve.**
- ✚ **The old walk means living only for yourselves with no real purpose in your lives.**
- ✚ **It means that your actions are not tied to your reverence and honor for God as instructed in Col 3:23 where it says to do all things as unto the Lord.**
- ✚ **It means that the motives for all your actions serve a selfish purpose which is to make the person feel good about themselves.**
- ✚ **It means that you are led by what you feel and not who you serve! Even if you are doing something for a charity or worthy cause, the motives are self-serving because it is not to honor God.**
- ✚ **It means being pragmatic in the way you deal with adversity and difficult circumstances in your life (emphasis)**

Dealing with so many types of counseling scenarios I have run into a common issue with counselees and their families. The tendency is not to seek Biblical obedience and direction when crisis comes, but simply the best answer to fit with the situation. If a parent sees their daughter or son hurt in a difficult marriage they simply want to protect their loved one from pain when Biblical obedience can hurt. Honoring God can mean you sometimes have to do illogical things from the world’s point of view.

¹ *The New King James Version.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Eph 4:17.

2. What Happens to us if we stay in the Old Walk? (17-18)

Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;²

✚ **We will live in the futility of our mind.**

Our minds are the highway to control our actions. To live in futility of our minds means acting, planning, and performing with no real purpose in our lives. In fact the Bible says we wrestle against spiritual powers trying to control our minds (Eph 6:12)

✚ **When we live in the futility of our minds we become darkened in our spiritual understanding.**

✚ **The more time we spend not reading God's Word, praying, and seeking to honor and obey God the more habituated, conditioned, and tolerant we will become to doing sinful things.**

When I was a police officer I worked a wide array of shifts. When I would get warehouse burglar alarm calls in the middle of the night I used to wear sunglasses on the way to the call. Yes sunglasses in the middle of the night! I did this because by the time I arrived at the warehouse my eyes had become conditioned to seeing things in almost dark conditions. In other words I had become conditioned to thinking the darkness was normal.

Romans 6:12 says it best when it says to not let sin reign in your mortal body because you will obey its lust!

3. The Consequence of staying in the old walk. (V-19)

Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.³

✚ **Romans 1:21-22: because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Professing to be wise, they became fools,⁴**

² *The New King James Version.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Eph 4:18.

³ *The New King James Version.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Eph 4:19.

⁴ *The New King James Version.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ro 1:21–22.

- ✚ **Complete loss of your moral compass: 2 Cor 4:3-6 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ for we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁵**
- ✚ **Ultimately our choice to stay in the old walk ends in death (Rom 6:23)**

Conclusion

So I ask the question of you again.

What's different about you today? Is Christ your inward motivation for all you do or have you come today discouraged, and overwhelmed by life's circumstances today. Maybe it's time you truly died to yourself so that Christ can truly live in your life (Gal 2:20)

Maybe you have heard this message today and have never known the peace of God in your life, but you have understood these conditions from your own life.

⁵ *The New King James Version.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 2 Co 4:3–6.