

Three Traits of an Authentic Christian

Christians are divided on how they view their identity in culture. Some view themselves separate from the larger culture and live accordingly. Some live in the culture and are hard to distinguish from the crowd. Others live separately but alongside, designating themselves as instruments of change in the popular culture.

But however they choose to live out their salvation, there are characteristics that are not negotiable in Kingdom Culture. Below are three such traits.

Purity. In the Old Testament obedience to God's ways was always the ideal. In the New Testament, the theme continues. Jesus taught much about the heart and inner purity. He said a tree is known by its fruit. (Luke 6:43-45 NLT) In other words, if a person says they are a Christian, then their behavior should represent their claim. Yes there is grace, but Paul pleads repeatedly for lives lived worthy of this gift. "We talked to you as a father to his own children— don't you remember?— pleading with you, encouraging you and even demanding that your daily lives should not embarrass God..." (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 LB)

Rage, abuse, addictions, rebellion, theft, adultery, living together, serial sexual partners, hatred, drunkenness, advocating worship to other deities and their beliefs, etc., should not be associated with a Christian who declares they are "living for Jesus". We may live in an anything-goes culture, but it is not a part of Kingdom Culture. In fact, 1 Timothy 1:19-20 states, "There are some, you know, who by relaxing their grip and thinking anything goes have made a thorough mess of their faith. Hymenaeus and Alexander are two of them. I let them wander off to Satan to be taught a lesson or two about blaspheming." *The Message* We probably can list a few, maybe ourselves, alongside Hymenaeus and Alexander who had to live that out before we grew our God-brains. Purity matters.

Growth. Purity is our goal, but that said, no one is perfect. However, a real Christian changes and is ever growing to be more like Christ. Jesus should be more and more at home in our hearts. (Ephesians 3:17) There should be a union between Christ and the believer that results in a relationship and a life lived in love, obedience and thankfulness. It should be a visible transformation and journey. A true Christian is a surrendered Christian— not one holding on to their perspective but fully embracing God's. This is a life-long process. Stale Christians are numerous. But if we are to be the salt, the help in our culture, than we should be quality people showing that we have something to offer.

Moral Assistance. This is a sticky point. All the Bible declares we are to help those in need. It is a Christian view unlike any other religion. Dinesh D'Souza expounds this idea in his book, *What's So Great About Christianity*, and I highly recommend it. But sincerely providing help and just filling a need are two different things. Paul said in Ephesians 2:10 that "we should spend these lives helping others." (LB) But he also said if you don't work you don't eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10 NLT) A balance exists. But above all is mercy. We need to be givers, tithers and open to helping others in whatever way we can.

There are three traits of an authentic Christian. There are more. How many can you list?