



"The church does the most for the world when the church is least like the world."

—Warren W. Wiersbe

27-Dec-01

Dare to Be Different!

Most of us are by nature conformists. We tend to want to blend into the crowd and desire not to stand out as different. Most cultures teach conformity to their children early and often, and this initial training remains with them throughout their lives. Those who stray from conformity are called "black sheep," and are regarded somewhat suspiciously by "normal" people.

Schoolchildren seem to feel this need to conform—to be like everyone else—more than adults. As a preacher's kid whose family did not have a great deal of disposable income to keep up with the neighbors' kids, I felt this desire acutely. How much I envied my pals' Nikes[®], Izod[®] shirts, and Members Only[®] jackets! The shoes and clothing I had were just as nice and serviceable, but they had all the wrong tags. They—and thus I—did not fit in. When I later received an Izod[®] shirt—burgundy, second-hand—I wore it until I nearly burst its seams.

As adults, we feel similar peer pressure, but the stakes are higher. Now it is cars, homes, memberships, investments, salaries, résumés, benefit packages,

and vacation destinations—not to mention all the latest toys, gizmos, and accoutrements. Not running with the in-crowd is not as devastating to an adult as it is to a teen, but the subconscious desire to fit in is certainly present. We may call it "staying in style" or "not wanting to fall behind," but it is the same urge not to stand out as different.

We [Christians](#) have another ingredient to add to the mix: our calling. God's invitation to His Family really complicates matters in terms of fitting in to society. He has called us out of this world ([John 15:19](#)). The purpose of His invitation is to make us different! If we accept His invitation, we agree to spend the rest of our lives as the proverbial sore thumb. We are set apart from other people in [the world](#), and commissioned—nay, commanded—to widen the gap!

Notice Paul's very blunt statement in [Romans 12:2](#): "[D]o not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . . ." John is equally as blunt: "Do not [love](#) the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" ([I John 2:15](#)). As is James: "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with [God](#)? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" ([James 4:4](#)). And God Himself: "Come out of [Babylon, a type of the world], My people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" ([Revelation 18:4](#)).

Perhaps it is during this time of the year that we feel most different. We are among a tiny minority of Christians who do not celebrate [Christmas](#). Our house may be the only one on the block without brilliant and colorful decorations. We must beg off going to the office party or participating in the gift pool. We think of new and clever ways to respond to "Merry Christmas!" or "Happy holidays!" Unlike the rest of the herd of humanity, we avoid the malls, the restaurants, and any other "festive" gathering place. Some of us do not even listen to the radio to avoid the constant, mind-numbing holiday tunes.

Ultimately, if we want to succeed in our calling to be different, we must see our estrangement from the world as a small price to pay for eternal life and the rewards God promises. Being a bit unusual is not so bad, at least not in tolerant America as the third millennium AD begins. Other, far stranger people

attract the public eye today. Although this period of tolerance is bound to end in the persecutions of the coming troubles of the end time, right now we can be different without drawing much notice.

Paul's warning in [II Timothy 3:12](#) can be discouraging: "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ [Jesus](#) will suffer persecution." The last of Christ's [beatitudes](#) offers some balance:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the [kingdom of heaven](#). Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. . . . ([Matthew 5:10-12](#))

Is this enough to dare to be different?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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[Holiness \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Taking God's name in vain is far more serious than swearing or profanity. To appropriate the name of God means to represent His attributes, character and nature. God's names are the signposts or revelators of His nature and descriptors of His activities. The glory of God was revealed through Christ by what He said and did- His entire repertoire of behavior. Our daily behavior, likewise, must imitate Christ just as Christ's behavior revealed God the Father. Behaving in a Godly manner enables us to know God and live a quality life. The third commandment has to do with the quality of our personal witness to everything the name we bear implies. Profaning or blaspheming God's name implies living in a manner inconsistent with God's name.

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by Staff

As God's children, we have no need to become discouraged for long. God has given and done so much for us that we have no reason to get down.

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