

Being Different

READING

John 13:31-38
2 Corinthians 5
Philippians 2

The stakes are high - either we're different and they know we are Yeshua's disciples, or we blend in and they don't.

Several times in the old testament God tells Israel not to be like the nations around them. He tells them not to eat certain things, not to follow certain practices, even not to have a king. He did this because he wanted his people to stand out. He wanted the nations around them to realise that Yahweh, the god which Israel worshipped, was the one true god.

It's the same now for us. God wants us to be different from the world around us. He wants us to be a light on a hill, the salt of the earth. He wants us to not conform to the culture around us. He wants us to be different - to love one another, so that the world will know that we are his disciples.

Christians are supposed to be different.

But there seems to be a growing trend for Christians to blend in. Somehow we think that helps us be more attractive to non-Christians. But in reality I think it is the opposite. They already live like that and they know it's not working. They want something different. They want answers, not more of the same. The church used to be worried about being infiltrated by wolves in sheep's clothing, but now I worry that it has been filled with sheep in wolves' clothing. It's getting harder to tell which ones are the Christians.

In the Bible Paulus tells us several times that we are ambassadors for Christ, and that our citizenship is not here, but in Heaven. We're not from here. Tourists aren't from here either. But tourists are only interested in having fun. They go around and do all the things the locals do. They try to blend in. But of course the locals can see that they are just tourists. They are only kidding themselves that they blend in.

But ambassadors, while interested in local customs, are focused on business. They want to expose the locals to the customs from their own home country. They only want to know local customs to the extent that it helps them understand this country and how to better communicate the message of how much greater the ambassador's home country is than this one.

If we get drunk like they do, if we sleep around like they do, if we illegally download music like they do, if we gossip and swear like they do, even if we focus on money and prosperity like they do, how will they know that we are different? How will they know that Yahweh our god is the one true god?

In fact, we should be actively looking for ways we can differentiate ourselves. How can we shine like stars in this ever darkening world?

(Btw: it's also important that we focus on our own lifestyle, not on pointing fingers at theirs. We should live holy lives but it doesn't matter if they don't. They don't know God, why should they live holy lives! We should be known for our love and acceptance, not for our judgement and finger pointing.)

Yeshua has told us to be different. And the stakes are high - either we're different and they know we are his disciples, or we blend in and they don't. But then how will they be saved?

How about you? Are you different?

Which one are you - ambassador or tourist?