

# Our Impression

**W**hat do you think our impression is? By that I mean what impression do you think the world has about us?

Not that we want them to like us, that's not our job. In fact if they do we've probably got a problem.

But there are some things we should be known for.  
Are we?

This is always a tricky question because it is hard for us to see the truth about ourselves. We think that other people think one thing about us, but often they really think something else altogether!

Let me illustrate by asking what you think the world's impression is of people from your country. If you're Australian - what does the world think of Australians? If you're Japanese - what does the world think of Japanese people? Especially if you're American... what does the world think of Americans. (I'll give you a hint... we think that Americans don't have any idea what the rest of the world thinks about anything... let alone what we think about them).

Now, if it's so easy to trick ourselves, what can we do to find out the truth?

Here's an idea... we could look at movies. Most movies are made in America, so they are a good way to see what Americans think about themselves. But check out movies made in Britain, or Australia, or even Italy. Look for movies with Americans in them... you'll get an idea then about what the rest of the world thinks about Americans.

If you're Japanese, look at non-Japanese movies that have people from Japan in them... and you'll get some idea of what we think of you, (as a people).

As Christians we can do this too. Check out non-Christian movies that include Christians. (One time I went to the video store and got every movie they had about Yeshua. It was quite an experience. They obviously don't know him like I do!)

So, get these movies and watch them. Don't just switch your brain off, really look at them, to see what they are teaching you about the world's view of Christians.

You know what... sometimes they respect our devotion to God, but they think we are self righteous, judgemental, religious freaks.

We're famous for hating homosexuals, and for being party poopers - no drugs, no drink, no sex, no fun.

Pretty disappointing isn't it.

Especially when you have a look at the major religions, and you realise that there is one big difference between Christianity and all the others.

In all the others, you have to earn the god's respect/blessing/salvation. You have to please him/her/it to get anything. You have to perform rituals in the right way, or sacrifice animals, (or worse - children), or just deny yourself for the god's pleasure.

But Christianity offers you a free gift. God loves you. Already. Completely. Nothing you can do to earn it. Nothing you can do to lose it. Christianity offers you a free salvation, a gift. From God to you. Paid for by his own son!

Christianity is all about grace. Someone once defined grace as God's Riches At Christ's Expense. A bit corny, but pretty accurate eh. It is only free for you and me because someone else already paid for it.

So if the big difference is that it is actually all the others that are about judgement and works, but Christianity is actually all about free grace, then isn't that what we should be famous for too? Shouldn't that be our impression out in the world? Shouldn't grace, and love, and forgiveness, and acceptance be the first words people, (non-Christian people), think of when they think of Christians.

How different would church be if we were famous for being gracious. For being forgiving instead of for being judgemental. For being accepting instead of for refusing to allow people in who didn't meet our "standard".

Wouldn't you like to be part of a church like that? Why not start one. You might even be

READING

John 15  
Philippians 2  
Matthew 5  
Ephesians 2

able to change the one you're in! What would that do for our impression?

After all, they only have the impression they have of Christians because of how Christians have acted around them in the past. So we can change their minds.

All we have to do is focus on those things: grace, forgiveness, acceptance, love... and bite our tongues when we're feeling judgemental, or self-righteous. Let's forget all that negative rubbish and focus on being like Christ to them.

We can do it.

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