

The Christian and the Changing Culture

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Times are changing! I don't have to go into all the details. From a Biblical and Christian point of view, ethical standards are changing. It seems like the old lines and borders have been erased. The good old days seem to be gone! Maybe it's just me but when I was growing up things seemed to be a bit simpler. Maybe that was my childlike perspective.

What does a changing culture mean for the Christian? It means that although cultural shifts occur, as they have in the past, the Christian, his beliefs, and lifestyle can remain consistent with God's character and ways. There are two principles to be considered.

First, there is the principle of God's glory. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." To glorify God means to bring honor and praise to God as we display, represent, or reflect His character and attributes in our lives. This means that in the midst of ethical and moral changes the Christian can continue to represent the glory of God through his or her life. It means we can continue to honor and properly represent God's character of holiness, righteousness, mercy, love, and grace while the sands of time are shifting. In a world such as this, we must always seek to glorify God. What is the chief end or purpose of man? The well-known and classic answer has been given in the Westminster Confession. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Now this is keeping it simple! We need more of this today.

Second there is the principle of the new creation. Second Corinthians 5:17 says: "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This means that God gives us new spiritual outlook and a new way of living when He comes to dwell within our hearts. The new creation concept speaks of the new spiritual birth that every person can experience when they place faith in Jesus Christ to be their Savior. Jesus talked about this spiritual rebirth. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

To be born again means that you receive the very life of God within your own human spirit. In other words, you are reborn spiritually on the inside, which results in receiving eternal life and a new way of life, possessing new goals, spiritual desires, and a new value system. Essentially, we become a brand-new creation.

When we become this new creation the Bible says, “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). This is speaking of a change from our old patterns of life to a new way of life because we now possess God’s life and nature within us (2 Pet. 1:4). Our previous life with its old values, priorities, beliefs, plans, and desires is taken out of the way and “in Christ” we now possess a new way of life that includes newfound joy, peace, inward satisfaction, new goals and priorities, holy desires, and a new philosophy for living.

In conclusion, culture shifts are nothing new but based upon the principles of the glory of God and the new creation emphasis we can as Christians continue to glorify God with our personal lives despite the changes occurring all around us. We can agree to disagree over cultural changes. At the same time, in the midst of cultural shifts or changes we must not only defend the character of God’s holiness, but also extend His love and grace toward others who might think differently by seeking to reach them with the good news of the Gospel (Mark 16:15).