

God has convicted my heart and mind of these truths for many years and has been pruning my life calling me to the high standard that Christ set for his followers. I believe that God has put on my heart to share these things and encourage Christians to take their lives more seriously if they are claiming Jesus as their Lord. We are kingdom citizens in training and we must keep on task and **be prepared for the day of Jesus' coming when he takes back the rightful rulership of this Earth**, as God intended from the beginning. God's glorified man Jesus will sit on the throne in Jerusalem and we have the opportunity to be on team Messiah Jesus. The only question is, are we willing to sacrifice today so to be there tomorrow? Are we willing to sacrifice this life and what we consider the pleasures of this life, to gain immortality when Jesus comes?

So, let's begin...

Thesis:

Christians are called by Christ to walk as Children of light and offer their lives as living and holy sacrifices. There are no exceptions.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living

and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be **conformed** to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your **mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

Fellow followers of Christ, we are not of this world and we should not be conformed to it. Our minds should be renewed with help of holy spirit. Believers should think and act differently than the world thinks and acts. I hope to encourage, inspire and challenge you today.

If we truly have been born again, we should be changed and continually work on changing ourselves to be more and more like Christ. And I will preface this presentation as Paul said, that I have not yet attained the perfection I am striving after.



Walk as Children of Light

(Ephesians 4:17-5:21)


Why should we imitate God? (5:1) The simple answer is because we are told to be imitators of God. But, if this is not enough...

We know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (1 John 1:5-10)
To me that seems to be a pretty good reason to imitate God, because you want to be in His coming Kingdom! We must take this seriously!

If **God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all**, that should be what we strive to say that about ourselves.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him (say we are a Christian) and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we

have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. (Ephesians 5:5)



For you were formerly
darkness, but now you are
Light in the Lord; walk as
children of Light (for the *fruit
of the Light* consists in all
goodness and righteousness
and truth)

Ephesians 5:8-9

We are commanded to walk as children of Light and if we are doing that we should be bearing the fruit of goodness, righteousness and truth. We cannot leave one or the other out if we claim to be a Christian. (Ephesians 5:8-9) **TRUTH is a part of being holy. We cannot compromise any truth if we desire to be holy in God's eyes.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, *“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ.”* **We must ask ourselves if we have truly died to self, and must ask ourselves daily if we are willing to die to self as we make decisions.**

Bonhoeffer also said, *“Every moment and every situation challenges us to action and to obedience. We have literally no time to sit down and ask ourselves whether so-and-so is our neighbor or not. We must get into action and obey—we must behave like a neighbor to him.”* **And I would add, the same ones who asked who their neighbor was back then, are asking who their enemy is today. Everyone is either a neighbor or an enemy and we are told to love both!**



The standard is set high! Be perfect as God is perfect (Matthew 5:48) **Are you up for Jesus' challenge?**

Of course we will never reach this perfection until we are changed at the resurrection, but none the less, we should strive for it daily and encourage each other to do the same.

As a Christian we should not be saying, "Oh I am a sinner..." **We are NOT sinners!** We may sin, but we are not sinners. The sinner dies when they go under the water, and when they come up they walk in the newness of the life Jesus called them to. (Romans 6) We are no longer slaves to sin and we are freed from sin.

Each day we should be sinning less and less as we choose to put to death our flesh. But to do this we must keep our eyes on the author and perfecter of our faith, not on the lusts of the world. You cannot keep your eyes on Jesus if they are fixed on pornography, violence, and other sinful things.

Also an interesting point, Matthew 5:48 is in the context when Jesus was teaching about loving our enemies. What a hard command! But just as a loving parent will

not ask or expect something unattainable from their child, neither will God or Jesus.
The question is, do you want to obey and strive for perfection, or do you want to compromise and settle for less because of selfish desires of your flesh?

Christ, who is the
image of God

1 Corinthians 4:4

He is the image of the
invisible God

Colossians 1:15



Jesus Reflected God

Jesus reflected the Father in all he said and did. **Who are we reflecting with our lives, our actions, our words, and our thoughts?** How about with what we watch, play and listen to?

Jesus poses the hard question, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not *do what I say?*” (Matthew 7:21-23) **And he expects an answer.**

Jesus will not put up with this hypocrisy. In fact Jesus says that not everyone who says to him, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...he will tell them, I never knew you. Depart from me.

(Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.’”)

We Are Made In God's Image

Then God said, "Let Us
make man in Our image."

Genesis 1:26

We have come
to share in His
divine nature.

2 Peter 1:4

Jesus was made in God's image, but so were we (Genesis 1:26, 2 Peter 1:4). Ponder that for a moment.

We have more responsibility, and more power, than we often think! Next time you look in the mirror, meditate on that and ask yourself what image you are reflecting.

Imitate ME!

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

We should be imitating Christ or other people who are imitating him. Can you say this as Paul did? . “Imitate me.” **We should be able to do so without feeling conceited or arrogant. It isn’t about us!** It is about who we are imitating.

We should imitate Abraham’s faith. “Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised Abraham received the sign of circumcision, **a seal of the righteousness of the faith** which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them. (Romans 4:10-11)

Do we imitate Abraham’s faith? Do we trust and obey God even when we don’t understand or see where we are going?

We Must Step Up Our Game

In Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, **BE IMITATORS OF ME!**

1 Corinthians 4:15-16

In 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 Paul said, "In Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, **BE IMITATORS OF ME!**"

Again, who are you saying this to? Are you comfortable saying this to those you mentor or preach to as Paul did? **We must step up our game; there is a lot at stake!** People's lives!

As a Christian, a follower of Jesus, and even more so as a leader, teacher, or pastor, we should take Jesus' words seriously. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6)

Jesus was not joking. He did not take unrighteousness, deception and false teaching lightly.

We are warned in Philippians 3

He writes to us as a safeguard – to protect us.

Beware of the dogs, **beware** of the evil workers, **beware** of the false circumcision (that is, false Christians).

Do we count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord, for whom we suffered the loss of all things? **Are you willing to lose all things today, give up all things? Not just during the Great Tribulation or if there is a gun to your head, but TODAY.** Do we count everything we have given up as rubbish so that we may gain Christ, and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of our own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ? **Or do we mourn what we have given up, or have been asked to give up like the rich young ruler?**

Do we desire to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings? Many want to know the power of his resurrection, but we typically do not hear about people praying for the fellowship that comes with his sufferings. **Are we willing to be conformed to His death in order to attain the resurrection from the dead? The ultimate goal of this life should be to be in the first resurrection.**

Be separate, set apart

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Ephesians 5:3

We are called to be set apart. The immorality, impurity and greed of the world should not be in the life of a believer. (Ephesians 5)

Again, quoting from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”

What does that mean for us today? I don’t think it has changed since Christ called his disciples and they began making disciples themselves.

Again, we are to be separate because we are set apart. You can’t be on both sides. You must pick one, and it is a daily decision.

Ungodly things should not even be named among us because it is NOT PROPER for His saints. Again, Jesus set high standards, and he walked them out.

“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example** for you to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, he did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *himself* to Him who judges

righteously; and he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wounds you were healed.”
(1 Peter 2:21-24)

WOW! We really need to meditate on those verses! This is one that God is continually working on in my life. **What is found in our mouths when we suffer, are cursed, or are falsely accused?**

Have NOTHING to do with...

You shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations

We are told to imitate God, imitate Christ, imitate Paul, **and just as forceful is the command to not imitate the detestable things of the world.** In fact, the Israelites were told to have NOTHING to do with those detestable things. I don't think anything has changed for spiritual Israel. What was detestable to God back then, is still detestable to Him today, no matter what the current world view is or which political party is in power.

1 Timothy 4:7 also addresses this. I often wonder which part of NOTHING we don't understand? Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.** Stay away from evil and work on yourself. **Godliness takes work and self-discipline.** We must make the choice to stay away from evil!

Imagine how much easier it will be able to not sin if we don't put on the TV show, open the porn site, or take out the game! We must discipline ourselves! It is easier to walk away from sin if we never enter the room. Keep the doors closed to the sin that you are easily entangled with. Don't think you can open the door or just peek in. The Bible says to FLEE from evil! Flee does not mean to take time to rationalize and dabble.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 tells us to **avoid every appearance of evil**. Avoid and make a conscious decision to stay away from even the appearance of evil. Yet many say, "Oh it is just a game. Or, I really don't believe that."

1 Thessalonians 5:21 exhorts us to **examine everything carefully**. Do you do this with all of your entertainment?

A few verses many today must examine closely are Deuteronomy 18:9-14, which say, "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, **you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations**. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. **For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD**; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. **You shall be blameless** before the LORD your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.

The question for us today is, is there a difference between practicing these things or "just playing or watching?" Something to consider, if you just play with fire, you will still get burnt! We are to avoid the evil, not play with it. We can rationalize all we want, but God's truths don't change and what He considered evil thousands of years ago, is still evil today. What kept them out of the land back then, will keep us out of the Kingdom tomorrow.

Ezekiel 11:18-21 also says that "When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

This is a pretty stern warning. We must continually ask ourselves, what is my heart going after? This day Ezekiel spoke about is coming sooner than many think!

If detestable things will be removed when Jesus comes, it might be wise to remove them now from our own lives, especially since we should be in training!

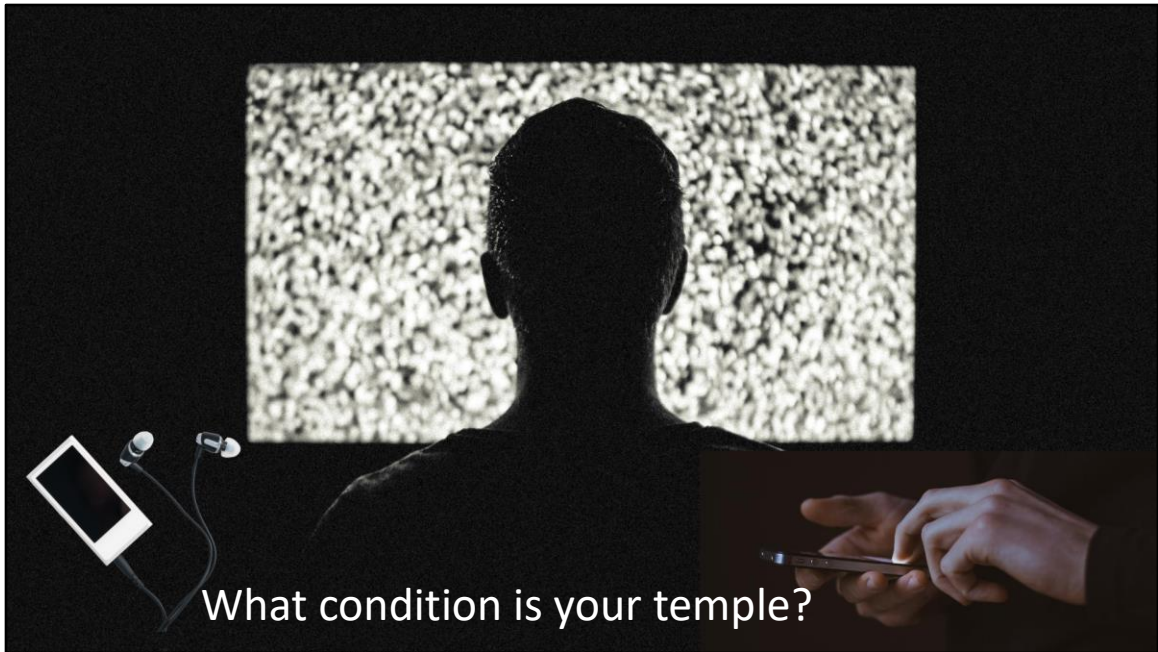


Most of us have seen the bracelets that say WWJD, What Would Jesus Do? This is a good question to ask about anything we think, say or do. We may find it easy to rationalize playing a certain game, reading a book or participating in something that God may not want His children doing. But, if we ask the hard question, what would Jesus do? I think we may find a different answer if we are honest.

If you had a negative reaction when you saw this slide or felt defensive, perhaps you are one of those who must seriously ask this hard question, WWJD.

Would Jesus play the games in your closet? Would he read the books on your shelf? Would Jesus watch your movies or listen to your music? If you cannot answer, YES! without hesitation, then it might be time for some housekeeping.

If these games are really so great and not sinful, being on the safe side for a few decades isn't much to sacrifice. If we're wrong and too cautious, no worries, then you can most likely play them forever in the Kingdom with Jesus, Abraham and Moses.



We are told that we must die to self. If we do this it means dying to anything that is not pure, holy and righteous. We should not be afraid to weigh everything against what the Bible says, and ask, WWJD.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16 we are reminded that we are a temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in us.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 also tells us that our bodies are a temple of the holy spirit which is in us, and that we are not our own. We have been bought with a price, a very high price, therefore we should glorify God in our bodies.

What condition is your temple in? Consider the things that you bring in to God's temple. Do they leave a stench, or offer up to God a beautiful aroma?

As we read at the beginning, we are to present our bodies as a **living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, *which is our spiritual service of worship*. He didn't say singing songs is our spiritual act of worship, but how we present our bodies, minds and lives to Him. This should be first! Personally I like offering songs of praise to Him as well, but if my life and my heart are not holy, my words and my songs fall on deaf

ears.

And we were sternly told to not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the **renewing of our minds**. (Romans 12:1-2) **Our minds must be renewed and our lives transformed!** Are you willing?

Be Holy



His divine power has granted to us
everything pertaining to life and godliness

2 Peter 1:3

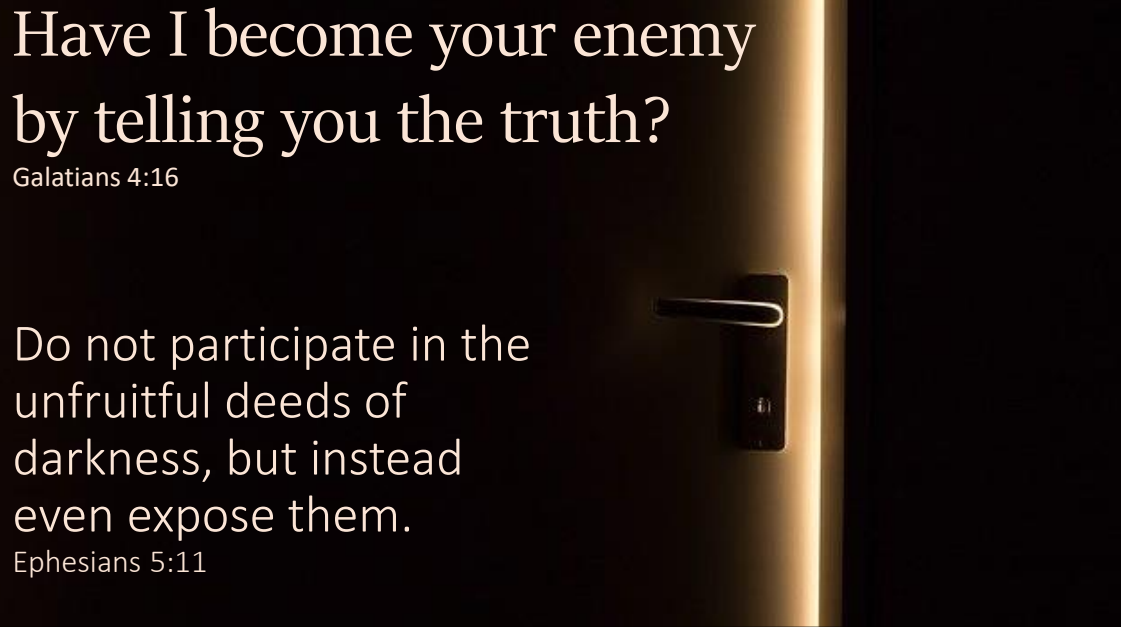
We have a choice to walk as unwise or wise people, and we only have so much time before we die. We aren't given more days and more breaths just to waste. Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Fellow saints, we must make the most of the time that we have been given!

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, and equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The command is simple...pursue righteousness! (2 Timothy 2:22)

Pursue being like Jesus, not just trying to earn something. **Through obedience now we are being prepared for Kingdom life.**



Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Galatians 4:16

Do not participate in the
unfruitful deeds of
darkness, but instead
even expose them.

Ephesians 5:11

So, have I become your enemy by speaking God's truths? (Galatians 4:16) **We are told to not only not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but we should expose them. It is time for the household of God to make a stand for righteousness. It is time for the saints to get out of the dark and to walk in the light!**

God is calling His people to TRUTH and to RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. (Ephesians 5: 11-12) **Unfortunately quite often, the opposite happens in the church.** We don't expose unfruitful deeds of darkness and then those that do are criticized and looked down upon.

We have a responsibility. Christians must be trained in righteousness.

Preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their**

ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:2-5)

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

1 Timothy 4:16



Teach them to observe *ALL* that I commanded you.

Matthew 28:20

As pastors, teachers and people discipling others, we must heed this command and not fear teaching people ALL that Jesus has commanded. **We cannot pick and choose.** And those who are in the pews should be seeking all that Jesus has commanded, even if they are not being fed from the pulpit.

As Paul encouraged Timothy, we must pay attention to our lives and to what we teach. If we do so, we will receive salvation, immortality, at the resurrection, and so will those who hear us. **This is a stern warning and a hard truth. How we live and what we speak and teach CAN affect not only our own salvation, but those around us, and especially those we teach.** (1 Timothy 4:16)

Our goal should be to finish this race strong.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8) **Do you long for and love Jesus’ appearing? Or are the things of the world choking that Kingdom seed out of your life?**

I heard it said that **righteousness to God is not just modifying your behavior, but more so, transforming your heart.** If we have true righteousness, it will most certainly produce righteous works.

We cannot cover our heart with too much diligence. I would rather Jesus say on that day that I could have played the game, watched the movie or read the book. **No game, movie or book will be remembered with as much regret as hearing Jesus' words at the second resurrection, I warned you and you disobeyed, and possibly, "depart from me, I never knew you."**

The hard truth is that all will not inherit the Kingdom, many will be thrown into the lake of fire. **The way to destruction is wide, but narrow is the way to life, and only few find it.** (Matthew 7:13-14)



You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. (Hebrews 12:4)

In Hebrews we are reminded that Jesus resisted temptation to the point of shedding blood. When he was in the garden wrestling with his own will, he did so to the point of sweating blood. If you have not wrestled with your sin to that point, you have not put in a full effort. (Hebrews 12:4)

It comes down to a choice. **We have a choice to be righteous, or to be wicked. We have a choice to sin or not to sin.** We have a choice as to what words come out of our mouths, and what thoughts we allow to stay in our minds. It does not matter our circumstances or what other people have done to us. All we can do is to control how we think, act and respond.

I will leave you with this encouragement from Hebrews 12...

Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and not lose heart.

We too have the hope of sitting with Jesus on a throne and governing the remaining humanity after his return. (Revelation 3:21, 5:10) **Run this race with endurance. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Consider sacrifice a privilege and a joy. Endure hostility and don't grow weary or lose heart.**

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