

At one time being a Christian meant something. It wasn't just a title to distinguish yourself from those who were hell-bound, it was a description that bore the name of the One you chose to follow, trust, and obey. Saying, "I'm a Christian," communicated to others that Jesus Christ was not only your Savior, He was your Lord. The title had implications.

When someone said, "I'm a Christian", it meant they had made a choice to cut ties with the past and leave their old life behind. It meant they were choosing to forsake the world and its ways. It meant they were seeking to change the way they thought, spoke, and lived. It meant they were endeavoring to treat others differently. It meant that they were putting forth every effort to be distinctively different from those who were not Christians.

Today, the reality is that many individuals are making a claim they can't substantiate. They self-identify as Christians, but their lives reflect a different reality. Instead of putting off their former conduct (Ephesians 4:22), they're donning the world's ways. They are redefining Jesus, questioning the authenticity and authority of His Word, altering core doctrines, and modifying biblical standards and ethics based on personal preferences or majority rule. The result is a lifestyle that is little or no different from those who do not claim to follow Jesus (Barna).

In short, they say they are created-anew, but they look a lot like the world—they're wearing old clothes (Ephesians 4:22).

This is not a new problem in the church, but as Jesus warned it would be, it is an *increasing* problem (Matthew 24:3-5, 11). As Christ's return draws near, there will be a surge of false teachers from within the church who will subtly propagate "new and better" doctrines that will accommodate the lifestyles and consciences of many (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Coupled with unlimited access to self-acclaimed religious experts, and an inflated view of self, the acceptance of the world's ways among Christians will only be exacerbated.

In his first epistle, the Apostle John sought to dispel the untruths that had entered the church through false influencers. With deceptive words, these teachers had convinced susceptible listeners that they could be in fellowship with God while disparaging Jesus and His Word and while living a lifestyle that contradicted biblical truth.

Directly, but lovingly, John challenged the acceptance of these false teachings by providing criteria by which believers could reevaluate their lifestyles, distinguish between truth and falsehood, and with which others could reassure themselves that they were in the truth.

Clearly, we need to revisit his message.

Our study of 1 John will begin by examining how untruths enter the church and why believers are susceptible to them. We will continue by identifying the false ideas that directly affect the way we approach the Bible and implement its truths. As John's letter progresses, we will discuss the conflict between our claims and our actions, and we will distinguish the behaviors of those who are His from the behaviors of those who are not. As John exposes untruths and reiterates Christ commands, it is my earnest prayer that we'll shed our old clothes too.

So, let's talk about what we've got on. Then we'll discuss getting a new outfit.

Seeking His Truth,

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