

It's Okay To Be Different

Introduction. We live in a world increasingly opposed to the laws of God. Christians are looking more and more unusual among their contemporaries (1 Peter 4:4). We teach our children to be very different, but they do not like to be "different," especially adolescents. It is my purpose today to assure you that it is okay to be different.

Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20). As a parent, I sure do not want my children to follow in those footsteps and I do not want you, as a young person, to follow in those footsteps.

No one can escape the fact that other people influence us (cf. John 17:14-15; Ephesians 5:8). But being able to resist the stain of an evil influence takes great strength of character. It is our job to try to develop that character. To do so, we are going to look at the family of Noah, drawing some important lessons from them, and showing to you how it is okay to be different.

I. ***It's Okay To Put The Lord First***

- A. Although God knew the wickedness on the earth was great, Noah found grace (Genesis 6:5-9). This means that of all the people in the earth at that time, God found Noah to be an exception, and it pleased Him. He demonstrated that it was okay to put the Lord first.
- B. After becoming a Christian, God wants you to be faithful and put Him first (Matthew 6:33; 13:44-46; John 6:27; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 17; Revelation 17:14).
- C. There are some great examples of people who put the Lord first in the New Testament. These are worthy to emulate, not pop culture icons.
 1. Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17).
 2. Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21).
 3. Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).
 4. Onesimus (Colossians 4:9).
 5. Silvanus (1 Peter 5:12).
 6. Antipas (Revelation 2:13).
- D. It will be easy and tempting to let matters like work or extracurricular activities (athletics, FFA, 4-H, band, chorus, homework, etc.) become a stumblingblock.
 1. Remember that when you violate your conscience by failing to do what you know is right, such as miss services, you sin (James 4:17).
 2. Balak cast a stumblingblock before the Israelites and caused them to sin (Revelation 2:14). Activities, which are not wrong in and of themselves, can do the same!

II. ***It's Okay To Believe In The Bible***

- A. The friends of Shem and his brothers apparently did not believe that their world was about to be destroyed. Their parents had not taught them this fact (Matthew 24:38-39). If Noah's children, like ours, were in the habit of saying "but everyone else ...," "but no one else ...," then they were speaking a lot more accurately than our children. They had to reject what all their friends thought on the basis of what God told their father.
- B. Noah did not possess inspired writings. But God did communicate directly with him, regarding His intention to destroy man and the rest of creation (6:7). Noah also received very specific instructions for building the vessel which was to save him, his family, and the animals from the Flood. There is no doubt he made his three sons very familiar with this information.
- C. What we have compared to Noah is phenomenal. God's revelation is believable because it has a definite, traceable history, it is a realistic, truth-speaking book, it has great unity of content and thought, it details hundreds of verified prophecies and their fulfillment, It has a depth and a richness that neither time nor study has been able to exhaust, and it has had an incomparable influence on the world. It is simply impossible that this book could have been produced by people unaided by deity.
- D. You may be afraid to stand up for the Bible at school, but the dependability of the scriptures is something of which you never have to be ashamed. It is okay to believe that God created the world (Genesis 1:1-31), and that we are not evolved from semi-apes, but intelligent people (Genesis 4:1-26). It is okay to believe that the Bible explains God's plan and purpose through Jesus Christ for your life. It is okay to believe that the Bible details a standard of morality to which we are accountable. It is okay to believe that the Bible contains principles upon which a happy life can be built.

III. ***It's Okay To Dump Your Friends***

- A. Good friends are worth their weight in gold (Proverbs 27:9). However, friends are human and they can influence us for evil.
 - 1. There are examples of good friends.
 - a) Naaman's servants got him to see his irrational behavior; after their questions he went and dipped in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:13).
 - b) Ruth refused to leave Naomi and was determined to return to her mother-in-law's homeland (Ruth 1:16-17).
 - c) Andrew brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-41) and Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus (John 1:45).

2. There are examples of bad friends.
 - a) Job's friends accused him wrongfully and were no help to him in his terrible plight (Job 6:14-21).
 - b) Though he was sorry, Herod "sent and beheaded John" due to the influence of Herodias and her dancing daughter (Matthew 14:6-10).
 - c) Demas loved the present world, and left Paul and the Lord's work behind (2 Timothy 4:10).
- B. Do not let your friends influence you into drinking, cursing, smoking, cheating, lying, fornication, etc. (Proverbs 13:20). Small numbers can discourage you. Yet you cannot be discouraged if you find yourself thinking differently than most of your friends. The majority is often wrong (Matthew 7:14).
 1. For the first 100 years or so of his children's lives, Noah was building an ark in a world that had never seen such an amount of water. This must have produced a lot of ridicule. There was no way he could protect them from this without abandoning his project. You cannot hide such a huge vessel under a bushel. You will take ridicule from your friends, but you do not have to compromise (cf. Matthew 5:10).
 2. Of all the people on earth in Noah's day, only eight entered the ark, in spite of Noah's preaching (2 Peter 2:5). How could they believe they were right when they were such a minority? Circumstances proved they were right!
 3. How did Noah and his family manage to withstand the enormous pressure of being alienated from most of their peers? They surely must have supported one another in very close family relationships (Genesis 18:19). These days we need to work to keep our families together. It is hard to maintain them if everyone is going in different directions all the time and no one gets to spend any time together.

IV. ***It's Okay To Live Morally***

- A. Use pure language.
 1. Cursing means "to make light of something serious, to bring a serious matter into contempt, to show no respect; evil, wicked, or obscene talk" (Romans 3:14; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8). The Israelites were not to profane ("to wound, defile or pollute") the name of the Lord (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; cf. 1 Timothy 1:9).
 2. Other types of language should be avoided too.
 - a) Dirty jokes, coarse jesting, and euphemisms, or indirect profanity, is not pure speech. Another emerging habit is some

tapping out "OMG" in a text message or on Facebook to denote surprise, which dishonors God.

- b) Also, in recent years, the word "gay" has become a favorite adjective among young people, a general term of disparagement to identify something or someone as being stupid, worthless, or strange -- not necessarily homosexual at all.
 - c) The word "suck," which has legitimate usage as a verb, has become a synonym for something negative. What many young people do not realize is that this particular usage is derived from a sexual act and is very crude to use in speech.
 - d) Pure language also means refraining from lying (Mark 7:22; Colossians 3:9) and dishonorable speech toward parents (Ephesians 6:2).
3. There is no excuse for indecent language. You ought to give deep thought to your speech (Matthew 12:36; Ephesians 5:4). It is okay for your speech to be full of grace (Colossians 4:6), and always ready to defend the cause of Christ (1 Peter 3:15).
- B. Dress modestly.
1. Three words in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 dictate how a woman is to be dressed. It must be kept in mind that although Paul is giving instruction as to how women should dress in the public assemblies, the principles will apply in other situations. If modest apparel is appropriate in worship, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is prohibited in dress is wrong in worship services, it would be difficult to show that it is right elsewhere.
 - a) Proper or modest clothing -- this word denotes orderliness, to be neatly arranged. The appearance of a woman will not be offensive to anybody.
 - b) Modestly or shamefacedness -- this word means a demeanor of respect and reverence toward others.
 - c) Discreetly or sobriety -- this word means sober-mindedness or moderation of the desires of the flesh. Immodest apparel exposes the body to the view of others. Such an exposure would have been disgraceful and disrespectful.
 2. True, precious beauty is shown with a meek and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4).
- C. Act righteously.
1. Dating.
 - a) Many young Christians want to obey God, but their bodies get the best of them (Matthew 26:41). Remember not to confuse love and lust. Lasciviousness describes actions that produce lust. In this setting, actions can be taken that are ungodly and therefore condemned (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:17-19).

- b) If you truly have a biblical love and respect for your dating partner, you will not put them in a situation where they will sin (Romans 13:13).
- 2. Dancing.
 - a) Prom season is coming up soon, and dancing promotes the sin of lasciviousness. Like the matters just previously mentioned, dancing arouses emotions that can have a rightful fulfillment only within the relationship of marriage.
 - b) Because dancing arouses sexual desires, it is sinful for persons not married to each other to engage in these actions. Should you go to them? What would you think if I were at a bar but I were not drinking? You would tell me I am wrong!
- 3. Smoking and drinking.
 - a) For a lot of people, their teenage years are filled with unfortunate decisions to begin to use tobacco, abuse drugs, or drink.
 - b) All of these are either outright condemned, such as in the case of drinking (Galatians 5:21; 1 Peter 4:3), or are violations in how we are to treat our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:28-29). These can also destroy your influence and create stumblingblocks for others (Matthew 18:4-7; 1 Timothy 4:12, 16).
- D. Sadly, after the Flood, Noah, like Adam, sinned, and the effects were felt in the generations of sons and daughters to follow (Genesis 9:20-27). He made himself just like the world that was previously destroyed.

Conclusion. No doubt Noah would have reminded his boys that the world in which they were growing up was corrupt. He would doubtless have had to forbid them from participating in sinful deeds, warning them of God's sure judgment. In short, he would have told them it's okay to be different.

Young people, you have to stand apart when something does not measure up to God's standard. It will take special courage and it may involve forsaking some popular music, books, games, videos, and certain friendships. You owe it to God to protect yourself from corruption and keep yourself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). The world will tell you that you will destroy your self-esteem by these decisions, but the world lies because it is corrupt. Your job is to glorify God. Your life should lend credence and respectability to the truths you believe, for you represent God (1 Peter 2:12)!