



The Christian job description

When I was a young seminary student, I had to read an extensive commentary by a Dutch theologian.

I had never studied Dutch writing before, and I really struggled to understand the syntax.

I asked an older student for help, and he directed me to an annotated outline of another theologian who had dissected the work of my Dutch theologian. But when I picked up this outline, I discovered it was longer and more complex than the original work I was studying!

Keeping it simple

During my years of academic study and pastoral ministry, I've found that it's natural for us to overcomplicate the stunningly simple faith to which we've been called. Is theology and doctrine important? Of course it is — I would never minimize its value — but I think we've interpreted the Christian life as more complex than the Bible describes.

Today, I want to go back to the basics. I'm not suggesting that we do anything radical, like trash all our commentaries, but I just want to read Scripture verse by verse and see what it says about the way we're supposed to live.

The text that I love to go back to again and again is 1 Peter 2:11-12.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (ESV)

How are Christians supposed to live? There are three key attributes to what I call "The Christian Job Description."

1. Exist as Aliens

"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles..."

A sojourner is one on a journey or pilgrimage, moving towards a final destination and temporarily pausing at a location. An exile is a person residing in a location that's not his or her original and desired homeland. That's me and you. This earth is not where we, as Christians, should call home. Eternity is our home. Forever is coming.

But here's the problem: you and I have grown too comfortable in our temporary home. We like the materialism and pleasure-orientation of Western culture. We measure success by the square footage of our house, the number of options on our luxury vehicle, the size of our retirement package, the quality of our cuisine and the letters after our name.

If we want to live like true, Biblical Christians, we'll live like aliens. That doesn't mean we'll be anti-social and live in monasteries, but we'll exist with a different set of values. We'll think long-term — 10,000 years into eternity long term. Our good days will be good days because the Kingdom of God is advancing, not because we're experiencing a little more temporary pleasure than yesterday.

Are you living like an alien? Do you wake up every morning and long for Forever? Or have you grown too comfortable in this temporary sojourn?

2. Fight as Soldiers

"Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul..."

I don't know if you feel it or not, but there's a war of desire raging on the turf of your soul every day. Whether its in your marriage, with your kids, at your workplace, with your neighbor or during the privacy of your personal entertainment choices, there will be two desires competing for control of your heart, which in turn will affect your words and actions.

In the mundane moments of everyday interactions, the passions of the flesh (sin) will fight to control your heart.

Simultaneously, the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God will be battling for the purity of your soul. These battles won't be won in dramatic Hollywood fashion with swords and shields, but by saying "No!" ten thousand times to your sinful desires.

If we want to live like true, Biblical Christians, we'll live like warriors. I don't mean aggressive and violent, trying to overthrow any external authority figure that doesn't believe the Bible. No, with humble and perseverant abstinence, we'll take seriously the sin that exists inside our hearts and not allow it to control of words and actions.

Are you living like a soldier? Do you wake up every morning and get ready to do battle? Or have you grown too passive, surrendering to the passions of the flesh?

3. Represent as Ambassadors

"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable..."

The job of an ambassador is to consistently and intentionally represent a leader who isn't physically present. In the same way, you and I are always "on call" — there's never a moment in life, whether its on vacation, at work, in your neighborhood, shopping at the store, working out at the gym, or whatever, where we aren't called to live with a ministry mentality and an ambassadorial attitude.

We are Gospel plumbers, Gospel teachers, Gospel lawyers, Gospel doctors, Gospel musicians, Gospel salesmen, Gospel moms and dads and Gospel neighbors. We're motivated by a single passion: that somehow and in some way, God would use our lives to accurately depict the truths of the Gospel and lead people to saving and liberating faith.

If we want to live like true, Biblical Christians, we'll live like ambassadors. We'll speak carefully with God-honoring words. We'll live admirably with Christ-honoring actions. We won't treat our lives as our own, but live instead for the King of Kings.

Are you living like an ambassador?

Do you wake up every morning and consider that your words and actions represent Christ? Or have you taken your life in your own hands, representing occasionally and on your own terms?

Not Qualified

Let me confess something to you. I don't always live with a destination mentality; I don't always live with a wartime mentality; I don't always live with an ambassadorial mentality. I indulge too much in the pleasures of this world and measure my success by earthly standards. I grow too comfortable with my sin and think it's not as destructive as it is. I don't step out in faith as often as I should and share the Gospel with those God has placed in front of me.

If I had to apply for the job of Christian, it wouldn't take Human Resources long to see that I'm not qualified! But being a Christian isn't about applying for the job; it's about receiving the gift of grace, living in obedience and following the example of Christ.

In every way, this passage points to Jesus. He was the ultimate exile; foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:58). He was the ultimate soldier, valiantly sacrificing his life to conquer sin and death (Colossians 2:15). He was the ultimate ambassador, coming down from heaven to do the will of the Father who sent him (John 6:38).

What about you this week? Will you live like a true, Biblical Christian?

Paul Tripp

© 2019

www.christianstudylibrary.org