

# DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

*Rom. 12:2, 2 Cor. 6:17, Dan. 1:1-8*

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We live in a society that wants us to conform to the world, but we are called by Christ to be different. **(Rom. 12:2)**. Human beings are by nature conformists. Nobody wants to be different. We tend to want to blend into the crowd and desire not to stand out as different. We were never meant to live in a world like the one we found ourselves. We were not created to live in a world that has the presence of sin, injustice, wrongdoing and evil. That was never God's intention for us. And so we feel this pressure to conform to the world around us. We are constantly in a struggle not to conform to this world.

However, God has called us out of this world. **John 15:19** states: *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."* God commands His people to be separate from the world. *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Cor. 6:17)*. *We are in the world, but we are not of the world (John 15:19)*. We are set apart from other people in the world, and commissioned - nay, commanded - to widen the gap! Making the choice to be a committed spiritual Christian involves the matter of separation. If we accept His invitation, we agree to spend the rest of our lives as the proverbial sore thumb.

The purpose of His invitation is to make us different. Being different is often being an example. But most of us do not want to be different. Make a difference by daring to be different. *"If you desire to make a difference in the world, you must be different from the world."* - **ELAINE S. DALTON**. The way to change the world, or at least your world, is to dare to be different. When you dare to be different, you step out of the mould.

We want people to like us, and the safest way to do that is to blend. But following Christ has never been about blending. Following Him means to be like Him, to respond to life and relate to people as He did. It is a little risky and uncomfortable to be different. But that is what being an ambassador for Christ **(II Cor. 5:20)** is all about – bringing the wonderful difference of the King to bear on the territory you have been assigned: your home, your office, your friendship.

Notice Paul's very blunt statement in **Rom. 12:2**, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* John is equally blunt: *"Do not love the world or*

*the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). As in James: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (Jam. 4:4).*

Notable men who dared to be different in the past include Noah of the Bible who chose to be righteous when all around him was evil and wickedness (**Gen. 6:7-8**). Equally worthy of mention is Lot who refused to identify himself with the grievous sin that reigned in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Gen. 18:20**). Daniel also stood out by declining to eat the food provided by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in order not to defile his body (**Dan. 1:8**). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego on their part separated themselves from the crowd by not bowing to the image made by King Nebuchadnezzar (**Dan. 3:16-18**).

When you dare to be different, sometimes you stand alone. But alone you must stand. Just because everybody else is doing something does not make it right. Do you ever feel like you do not quite fit in with those around you at work or in your neighbourhood? Are your values and lifestyle different? It is because you are a stranger on earth (**Ps. 119:19**). The apostle Peter writes, *“Live your lives as strangers here” (I Pet. 1:17)*. All the great men and women in the Old Testament were *“strangers on earth” (Heb. 11:13)*. Like the psalmist, as servants of God they were called to be totally different from those around them. You are to be children of light, not darkness; of day, not night (**I Thess. 5:5**). You are called to a life of respect. Always treat people with respect. Always stay peaceful. Kindness should be a distinguishing feature of your life. You are a citizen of a different world. Speak differently.

Do not strive to please anyone. Do not crave for the world’s acceptance and attention. Choose to be separated from the influence of the world around you. Do not follow what the world tells you are desirable, but follow God by becoming more Christ-like.

We need to keep in mind that Jesus never promised that following Him would be a cakewalk. In fact, He made it clear that following Him would often create tension in a world that is going in the opposite direction. Just before His death, He spoke candidly to His disciples: *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. - If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:18-20).*

Today, you will no doubt have opportunities to be different – to go against the flow. Do not be intimidated. Jesus said, *“In this world you will have trouble.”* But then He said, *“Take heart I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).*

Ultimately, if we want to succeed in our calling to be different, we must see our estrangement from the world as a small price to pay for eternal life and the rewards God promises. Damn the consequences of standing out (**II Tim. 3:12, Matt. 5:10-12**). Make a difference by daring to be different for Jesus.