

THE BELIEVERS' LIFE

A Living Sacrifice

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THE BELIEVER

Before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He commanded that His gospel should be preached. In **Mark 16:16**, He decreed that only those who believe His gospel and become baptized will get salvation.

In **Acts 2:38, 41, 42 & 47**, We read of how apostle Peter explained Christ's commandment to a crowd in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. He told the crowd to repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins; and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Only about three thousand persons gladly believed the gospel and willingly surrendered themselves for baptism. After being baptized, they became believers (*Christians*).

Galatians 3:27 declared that anyone who is baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Not only putting on Christ but also being made a member of the church (body) of Christ at the same time (**Acts 2:47**).

This means that a believer is one who obeys Christ's gospel, become baptized into Christ and has been divinely added by God, to the church of Christ.

Therefore, a believer is a Christian, in this context.

THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

We will discuss the believer's life in the sense of *living for Christ, in comparison to our lifestyles in school campuses, in social gathering and our dress-styles*.

First, let's understand the concept of the believer's life.

As believers (*as Christians*), we should be marked by amazing changes in every aspect of our lives.

By God's standard of righteousness, our lives as believers must be significantly different *after* conversion than they were *before* conversion.

Careful study of the lives of those who were converted to Christ as recorded in the New Testament, reveal that their conversion was followed by a radical change in the way they lived.

Acts 7, 8 & 9 tells us that before Saul became a believer (*Christian*), he was an accomplice to sin by giving consent to the murder of Stephen (**Acts 7:58**). Saul was a violent persecutor of the Lord's church, arresting believers, even breathing threats and murder against believers (**Acts 8:3; 9:1-2**). He had power, knowledge and connections. When he met Christ, he surrendered to Him through belief, repentance and baptism.

Ananias taught him (Saul) the gospel and he obeyed God's commands (**Acts 22:4.16**).

Saul was willing to let go of everything that would not bring those amazing changes in his life.

In **Acts 9:20-21**, the records show that after Saul's conversion, immediately he began to preach Jesus Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Other noticed the amazing change in his life, after conversion.

All who heard were amazed, and said, *“Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”*

This means that a believer’s life is about total surrender to Christ. It is about consistent repentance. It is about changing the way we think, speak and act to conform to that of Christ. That is what Paul meant when he gave the charge in **Romans 12:1-2** - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

The believer’s life is about letting go of our rights and pleasures that are barriers toward the amazing change needed in our lives.

Apostle Paul in **Philippians 3:7-8**, stated that there are things which were gain to him, but would hinder amazing changes in his life. He counted those things as loss and rubbish, in order to gain Jesus Christ and the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

The believer’s life is about living for Christ. But what does it mean to live for Christ?

TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

In **Philippians 1:21**, Paul said every believer should live for Christ.

What did Paul mean when he said, *to live is Christ?*

The source of the believer’s (emphasis mine) life is Christ.

The believer’s life is about losing our lives in the process by gaining a new one in Christ. It is a spiritual transformation. If we are not willing to

let go of our old life, there is no way, we can experience the amazing changes which the life in Christ brings.

Apostle Paul willingly loses his old life and willingly received the new life from Christ.

Apostle Paul understood this spiritual transformation when he confirmed in **Galatians 2:20** - *that every believer has been crucified with Christ; it should no longer be I or self who lives, but Christ lives in us; and the life which we now live in the flesh, should be lived by faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him.*

Every believer should live for Christ alone. Every believer must think of how Christ can be manifested in his or her thoughts, words, actions.

The believer should be interested in what God wants; not what self wants.

Living for Christ require the believer to accept God’s way as first and top priority.

Justin Martyr, who lived around A.D. 150 wrote certain words to describe the changes that should be seen, that should be obvious, when one becomes a believer or a Christian.

And thus do we also, since our persuasion by the Word, . . . follow the only unbegotten God through His Son. We who formerly delighted in fornication, but now embrace chastity alone; we who formerly used magical arts, dedicate ourselves to . . . God; we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have . . . and communicate [give] to every one in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become

partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all.

Some of the believers in Ephesians were still living their old lives and apostle Paul told them that living such old lives means they have not learned Christ properly - ***Ephesians 4:20*** *But you have not so learned Christ.*

When one becomes a believer, he decides that he will no longer do certain things, speak in certain ways, or attend certain activities, that will give room for Satan and the worldly people to make mockery of and blaspheme the name of God, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit and the purity of the church - ***Romans 2:24***.

New behaviour patterns need to be developed. A conscious, determined and consistent pattern to learn Christ must be practiced.

There must not be comparison with ourselves. The focus and standard are Christ alone.

Every believer must examine his ways if they are pleasing to God. Thoughtful questions need to be asked, which we are all encouraged to meditate on.

How will my actions, words and thoughts affect Christ? Will they make us crucify again Jesus Christ? Will they put Christ to an open shame? ***(cf. Hebrews 6:6)***.

Will our lifestyles hide the reflection of Christ in us?

Will our lifestyles make people to doubt the transforming power of the gospel of God ***(Romans 1:16)***?

Will our behaviours create malice, bitterness, hatred and division in the church?

Will our behaviours create malice, bitterness, hatred and division in the church?

As a believer begins to live for Christ, he must consciously make right

and wise decisions; make new commitment every day to speak the truth in love; put all efforts to encourage unity among Christians; get involved in strengthening the congregation; develop passion in helping sinners to know how he was transformed.

As a believer begins to live for Christ, he should remember that he is God's tool to personally influence others to Christ.

Every believer has this power of influence *(unless you have not realized your own)*. Personal influence is important. Every believer is powerful in his or her influence as salt and light ***(Matthew 5:13, 16)***.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind - ***2 Timothy 1:7***.

The believer should strive to make sure others see an example that will encourage them to obey Christ and the gospel.

The potential for good influence can be destroyed if there is no change in morality, choice of friends, priorities in life, family relationships or behavior at work. Personal influence is a critical matter and the Christian seeks to have the best influence possible.

A story says that in the army of Alexander the Great was a soldier whose name was also Alexander but this soldier was a thief. The emperor was enraged at the soldier's behavior and said, you either change your name or learn to honor it!

Every believer should endeavour to make a remarkable Christ-like impact upon society!

Like the Emperor said, we must wear the name of the Lord of lords, and we must honor it, because the believer's life is the Christ life!

THE BELIEVER'S LIFE IN THE SCHOOL CAMPUSES

The life of the student is demanding especially with our Nigerian

system of education, where you find a student having over ten (10) courses.

With the huge tasks involved in completing these courses, many believers (including those who are students) have been caught up in believing the lie that the believer's life is different from the student life. Some even think that because they are a full-time or part-time student, they should not be living the believer's life.

Many student believers think that, their being a student exempt them from living for Christ as a believer ought to.

This is one reason; many do not bother to look for a congregation in their school location. And if some do find a congregation, they forsake the assemblies of the saints.

Some congregations are located in some school campuses, yet we get records that some student believers refuse to worship with such congregations. They prefer to remain at their lodges, hostels, attend other secular activities or even worship with denominations.

Others join secret cults, palm-wine clubs, live immorally, and engage in malpractices because they separated their student life from their lives as believers.

Don't think that what we do, or don't do, on school campus won't affect the trajectory of the rest of your life and bring consequences that can be hard to shake.

Being a student does not exempt us as believers to live for Christ. It does not exempt us from saturating our lives in the word of God, or continually availing ourselves of his ear in prayer, or genuinely attaching ourselves to the local congregations over there.

In Christianity, there are no vacations, no holding patterns, no

pauses or time-outs, no respites from everyday soul-care.

Our Lord Jesus Christ does not go on vacations; He is ever on His throne. Also, Satan does not go on vacation or have rest periods. Satan is always scheming. A believer cannot be in the neutral – it is either we are living for Christ or for Satan.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, *“There is no such thing as a holiday in the spiritual realm.”*

The temptations which Satan throws at everyone are too numerous to mention. All of them are deadly. Students are not exempted from the attacks Satan will direct towards them.

Satan has used several ways to place many believers who are students in bondage like:

- Losing interests toward God and His word
- Waste and misuse the time God has given.
- Lust and commit adultery through pornography and sexual fantasy.
- Engage in sexual activity before marriage.
- Get drunk or high on illegal drugs.
- Break laws established by the civil authorities.
- Stealing, 419, Yahoo Yahoo.
- Cheat in school

If you're a student full-time or part-time, take your time in school as a special season for growth in the right directions — for study of both God's words and your academic study, for developing godly habits of mind and heart that will benefit the image of God, the name of Jesus Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, you, and others, for a lifetime.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life,

in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

Whatever your course of study is – whether biology, physics, business, chemistry, communications, literature, medicine, philosophy, and political science - God expect believers in school to remain faithful and committed to God's way and work and at the same time, be the best in their academics.

In doing so, we can help create a personal influence on other believers, to confirm that we can be committed to God at schools, take our academic study seriously and still be the best in our academics.

As a believer and as a student, we must not lean on our own understanding and resources, but we must lean on Jesus Christ.

We must be willing to use our energy to “*keep ourselves firm in the love of God*” (**Jude 21**). We must promote Christian ethics in schools.

At our schools, we must identify other believers and the local congregation. With such people, we can find our voice and our purpose in our relationship with God.

Our spiritual flourishing should be one of our top priorities in school campuses.

Let's learn to serve as a model of Christ in our school campuses.

Let's volunteer to facilitate spiritual growth and guide the next generation of leaders.

THE BELIEVER'S LIFE IN SOCIAL GATHERING

In ***1 Corinthians 5:9-10***, we read of apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians brethren. He told them not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

It is possible that some brethren would misinterpret what he meant by

sexually immoral people, to mean every sexually immoral person in this life.

Nevertheless, he clarified what he meant by sexually immoral people. He meant believers who are involved in sexual immorality (*and refuses to repent*).

He was not talking about people of this world. If believers were forbidden to have contact at all, with people of this world who were immoral, we would have to go out of this world—to another planet—to conduct our business! This is true because they are everywhere around us – at school, at home, at our local communities, at work places, etc.

Every day we interact with the people of the world, in various activities – from business transactions to seminars, workshops, marriage ceremonies, burial ceremonies, birthday celebrations, and research programmes.

We cannot physically avoid the people of the world. Every activity, in which we relate with the people of the world, can be termed as a social gathering. There are also social gathering involving only believers – football games, camp meetings, dinner meetings, 'get-togethers', love feasts, skill acquisition programs and so on.

Social gatherings are a great way of engaging with people [including co-believers, unbelievers and mis-believers (*emphasis mine*)].

The question to be asked is what lifestyle do we reflect, when we are in any social gatherings?

As believers, we are to reflect the life of Christ, in any social gathering. In becoming a believer, we lose our old life and gain the life of Christ.

The life of Christ is the only life we have, unless we have returned to our old life.

Another question to ask is what would Jesus do in a social gathering?

Jesus Christ manifested the life of God the Father, in every social gathering he attended.

In **Luke 19:5-7**, he stayed at Zacchaeus' House but used the opportunity to engage with people and teach important lessons.

In **Matthew 9:9-13**, Jesus called Matthew, the tax collector to be His disciple and stayed in his house. In the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him. Jesus used the opportunity to explained the mercy which God has for all sinners and he preached His mission on earth.

In **Luke 7:36-50**, Jesus went to Simon the Pharisee's house for a prestigious dinner, and He used the opportunity to discuss some topics.

In **Luke 9:10-16**, Jesus preached the kingdom to the crowd. Jesus knew they also had physical needs. He fed them.

Meeting the basic physical needs of people often ministers more than words and ultimately gives you a kind of integrity that can lead to a deeper conversation.

In **John 2:13-17**, Jesus went to temple, and he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.

What did he do? He made a whip of cords, drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

Jesus used every opportunity in every social gathering to reveal the kind of life He wants all believers to live. A life of truth, mercy, compassion, holiness, discipline.

In the same way, as believers, we are to reflect the Christ-like life, in social gatherings.

We must adhere to godly and good principles irrespective of the pressures from any social gathering.

Sometimes, out of peer pressure, inferiority complex, desperation to belong to a group, desperation to prove that we are civilized – we find believers behaving immorally in social gatherings – drinking alcohol, engaged in quarrelling & fighting, use abusive words, dress immodestly, engaged in seductive dances, engaged in fornication and so on.

There are cases where believers are unable to hold on to a godly standard in schools, work environments and local neighbourhood, due to fear of being intimidated; our faith becomes compromised and we follow the crowd to do evil.

In **I Peter 3:13-17**, we see the charge on all believers.

Every believer must follow what is good in God's sight and stick to it, in social gatherings.

In doing so, the believer should be happy because God is pleased. Though, there are bound to backlash (from people) against our godly standards. There could be threats and mockery. There is also the possibility that we might lose certain things just because we stand for what is right.

Apostle Peter says that nobody can harm us, if we reflect the life of Christ in social gatherings.

He tells us to be courageous, not be afraid of any threat, but count ourselves blessed, if we suffer for righteousness' sake.

But he charged us to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.

He added that we must have a good conscience, that when they defame us as evildoers, those who revile our

good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

All believers in Christ must reflect the life of Christ, not only in church buildings or programs but in every social gathering.

THE BELIVER'S DRESS STYLE – FOR SELF OR FOR GOD

Our society today no longer has a sense of modesty in dressing. One cannot drive or walk down the street or go into a shopping mall without seeing immodest dressing in various styles.

But what concerns us most is that many believers are going along with the trend.

Many believers have argued that there are no Bible standards to go by - no divine standards. They argue that it is all a matter of custom, or society, or opinion, or personal judgment. Based on this reasoning or argument, it means if one is living in a society where full-nudity or near-nudity is the norm, that is modest.

Such argument does not conform to the Bible.

1 Timothy 2:9 says that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety. **KJV** used the words *with shamefacedness and sobriety*, which are *aidous* and *sophrosunas*. These words suggest a sense of propriety, a wholesome sense of shame, an awareness of what is fit and what would be inappropriate.

The Greek word translated modest in the **KJV** is a word that means orderly, fitting, or proper. It means for one to be restrained by a sense of humility, reservation, and purity. It means the women for their part are to dress modestly and sensibly in proper clothes, as is appropriate for women who are practicing godliness, with good actions (**1 Timothy 2:10**).

Here we can understand that believer's dress style is not for his or her pleasure or satisfaction, rather our dress style should be centered on how the life of Christ can be seen in the dress style.

This applies to men also. Every believer dress style must first be directed toward reflecting the life of Christ. Our dress style should be a voice of the gospel. Our dress style should be one of the amazing changes which the gospel has brought to us.

All believers must think about the impression, which our dress style leave on others. The world is taking a good look at us and the world is drawing its own conclusions.

We must not leave any wrong conclusions by the way we dress. Believers must avoid dress styles which are suggestive and lust-producing any time they appear in public (**cf. Matthew 5:27, 28**).

The rule for all believers in dress styles is that nakedness is wrong in the sight of God. Also, inadequate clothing, (*which reveals intimate parts of bodies*), is the same as nakedness in God's sight.

Putting on clothes that is meant for the opposite sex is the same thing is immodest in God's sight.

Dress styles that compromise our chances of reflecting the life of Christ to others is wrong and sinful in the sight of God.

Our concentration in dressing should be on, *to be chaste* and not to be chasted.

Make sure that what we wear reflects the life of Christ and *Christian* values.

CONCLUSION

The believer's life is the life of Christ. Let's honor the life of Christ in every situation, at every occasion and place.