

Are You a Cultural Christian?

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In our hurried, task-driven lives, we too often trade reflection for production. We want everything on our own terms, and God is no exception. Here are signs you've bought into a counterfeit Christianity and become a cultural Christian.



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The Unexamined Life

Perhaps the greatest weakness men currently face is that they tend to lead unexamined lives.

To lead an unexamined life means to rush from task to busy task, but not call enough time-outs to reflect on life's larger [meaning and purpose](#).

The price of this hurried pace is peace. As a man who worked 70-hour weeks for several years once told me, "It's been a long, intense run. My life is devoid of any quiet places."

Most men have not carefully chiseled their view of the world around them—or of themselves—by a personal search for truth and obedience to God and His Word. They are not thinking deeply about their lives.

Rather, they are drifting. Buffeted by the whipping winds of daily pressures and tossed about like a bobbing cork by surging waves of change, they long for the sure-footed sands of simpler days, but they don't have a clue about how to reach such a distant shore.

[Lamentations 3:40](#) exhorts, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD." Only on the anvil of self-examination can God shape a man into the image of His son.

Cultural Christianity

When I hit the 10-year mark in my spiritual journey, I realized something was desperately wrong with my life, but I couldn't put my finger on any one problem. I was an active Christian, reading my Bible and praying regularly, immersed in church, a vocal witness, and pursuing a moral lifestyle.

Curiously, I was sitting at the top of my career. Materially, I was taken care of wonderfully.

Yet, when I imagined another man thinking that I was blessed, I would want to grab him by the arms, shake him, and scream, "You don't understand! This isn't a blessing; it's a curse!"

When the intangible pain became too strong to push back, I called a "time out" for reflection and self-examination.

After a long internal struggle, this thought finally came to me:

There is a God we want, and there is a God who is. They are not the same God.

It was suddenly so clear. I realized I had been seeking the God I wanted instead of the God who is. I had become what I refer to as a “cultural Christian.”

Are You a Cultural Christian?

How do you know if you are seeking the God you *want*? There are some hallmark signs of cultural Christianity to look for.

Cultural Christianity is the tendency to be shallow in our understanding of God, wanting Him to be more of a gentle grandfather type who spoils us and lets us have our own way.

It is sensing a need for God, but on our own terms. It is wanting the God we have underlined in our Bibles without wanting the rest of Him, too.

It is embracing God *relative* instead of God *absolute*.

It's allowing the culture to influence us above the word of God. When we try to have the best of both worlds, we exchange the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for idols. Engrossed in the world, we worship created things instead of the Creator.

Instead of wanting to please God by doing what He says is right, we do what seems right in our own eyes.

It's reading our Bible with an agenda, if we read it at all.

It's the credo: “Plan and *then* pray.” Life is shaped more by following the herds of commerce and culture than the footsteps of Christ.

In many ways, a cultural Christian has merely added Jesus to his life as another interest in an already crowded schedule. He practices a kind of “Spare Tire Christianity”—keeping Jesus in the trunk just in case there's suddenly a flat.

Cultural Christians have let the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and make it unfruitful ([Matt. 13:22](#)). They have let the yeast of culture work through the whole batch of dough ([Gal. 5:9](#)). And they are at high risk for a great crash because they built on sand and not the rock ([Matt. 7:24-27](#)).

By default, men become cultural Christians when they choose not to proactively become biblical Christians.

The Biblical Christian

When Steve and his wife went to close the mortgage on a new home, the mortgage company wanted him to falsify some financial information. He decided to walk away. He said the decision was really quite simple: “Who do I put first—my own desires or Christ?”

We all face similar decisions on a regular basis—decisions that force us to choose. Do we interrupt our personal peace and comfort by putting Christ first? Or do we go ahead because it’s culturally acceptable?

Do we put our will first, or the will of God?

In the parable of the sower, Jesus describes a biblical Christian: “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop” ([Luke 8:15](#)).

Cultural Christians can have a saving faith, but they have not obediently made Christ Lord over all their lives. They have not allowed the Holy Spirit to empower them.

A biblical Christian, in contrast, is a man who trusts in Christ, and Christ alone, for his salvation. As a result of his saving faith, he desires to be obedient to God’s principles out of the overflow of a grateful heart ([Romans 1:5](#)). Obedience doesn’t save us; faith does. But obedience from love is the trademark of a biblical Christian.

Turning Point

God is who He is, and no amount of wanting to recreate Him in our own image is going to have any effect on His unchanging character and nature.

The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.

Resist the trap of an unexamined life and take some quiet time *today* to reflect—

Are you tired and frustrated with [chasing after success](#)?

Do you have a lingering feeling that something is not right about your life?

Have you been practicing “spare tire Christianity”?

Are the worries of this life choking out the word and making it unfruitful?

Have you been living by your own best thinking and not by obedience to God’s word?

If you suspect you’ve been living as a cultural Christian, your principal task is to come humbly to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ and there negotiate the terms of a full, total, complete surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. What better time than now?

“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere” ([Ps. 84:10](#)).

THE BIG IDEA: *The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.*

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