

Christian Living in a Strange New World

What to Do When It's Not Popular to Be a Christian

Acts 17:6-7 ESV *6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."*

Jesus never promised his followers they would be popular (John 15:18). He promised they would be his witnesses (Acts 1:8).

PART ONE: LIVING IN A STRANGE NEW WORLD

1. A World with No Transcendence

For most of history, people believed there was a God above us. Today, many believe only in what can be seen and measured. If there is no God above us, there is no higher authority and no one to answer to. *(Acts 17:23; Romans 1:20)*

2. The Self on the Throne

If nothing is above us, we look inside. My feelings become the final word on what is true. The Bible calls us to deny ourselves and follow Jesus. *(Luke 9:23; Psalm 139:23-24)*

3. Affirmation and Authenticity

The world says the "real me" is what I feel inside, and everyone must celebrate it. So disagreeing now feels like harm, and Christians are seen as dangerous. We answer with gentleness and respect. *(1 Peter 3:15)*

4. Borrowed Values

Dignity, equality, and care for the weak came from the Bible's teaching that every person is made in God's image. Our culture keeps the values but has cut them off from their roots, like cut flowers in a vase. *(Genesis 1:27)*

PART TWO: READING THE BOOK

Acts answers each of these four with a church that lived differently.

1. The Church Lives Under an Open Heaven

God is already speaking through creation, and people are already searching for him.

Acts 7:56 ESV *"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

Acts 14:17 ESV *Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*

Romans 1:20 ESV *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.*

Practical: Start where people are. Be flexible on the starting point and fixed on the destination

2. Identity Received from the Outside

Our identity is given to us by Christ. Our feelings can be sincere and still be wrong (Acts 26:9; Jeremiah 17:9).

Acts 20:24 ESV *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

Acts 24:16 ESV *So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.*

Practical: Keep a clear conscience. Live *coram Deo*, before the face of God. Give no one a true reason to accuse you.

Practical: Soften no truth. Paul told Felix the hard truth with courage and love (Acts 24:25).

3. Recognition Given by Grace

God welcomes people by grace, not performance. He makes no distinction (Acts 10:28; 15:9).

Acts 4:13 ESV *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men... they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*

Acts 16:25 ESV *About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,*

Acts 2:42 ESV *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

Practical: Live a life that raises questions.

Practical: Show the world what it means to live well, and to suffer well.

Practical: Be disciplined by the Word.

4. The Church Shows Where the Values Came From

The early church cared for widows, freed the exploited, and welcomed every nation (Acts 6:1-7; 16:16-18; 13:1; 17:26).

Acts 4:32, 34 ESV *32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ... 34 There was not a needy person among them,*

Practical: Share life together.

We have a better story!

Don't hide, harden, or blend in. Be bold, gentle, and glad.

Acts 4:29 ESV *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,*