

# Separated Christians

by Donald G. Barnhouse

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*Donald G. Barnhouse emphasizes the importance of living a positive Christian life characterized by faith, the fruit of the Spirit, and the centrality of the Bible in the home.*

**Scripture:** Galatians 5:22, Hebrews 11:6, 1 Peter 2:2

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Donald G. Barnhouse discusses the practical difference between a Christian and a non-Christian, emphasizing the importance of a positive state of mind and action in Christian living. He highlights the need for a Christian home to be characterized by love, joy, peace, and other fruits of the Spirit, as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23. Barnhouse stresses the significance of the Bible as the center of the home and spiritual growth, pointing out that the abandonment of the Bible leads to spiritual anemia. He encourages believers to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit in making decisions and to surrender to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord.

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## Transcript

What is the practical difference between a Christian and a non-Christian? How would a distant observer, regarding the American scene objectively, distinguish between those who are Christians and those who are not?

I was dining with a gentleman whose parents had been born in Scandinavia, and who had come to this country in their late youth. The son had been born in this country and had been brought up in the home environment of very strict and rugged simplicity that marks so many of the Protestant homes of northern emigrants. My friend remarked that such an atmosphere seemed to be lacking in what might be called typical American homes. He had recently been the guest in a home whose members attend church at least two or three times in a month. It is even possible that there was the brief prayer asking God's blessing on the meal that was eaten together. But the conversation, the outlook, the whole atmosphere in the home seemed to be utterly foreign to what he thought the tone of a Christian home should be. The conversation was all of worldly things. The young people in the home talked only of interests that were outside the sphere of Christian life and living. One could detect, in an evening's conversation, social ambition and desire to consider and exalt friendships with those who were marked by the amount of their possessions or by their family connections; but there was no spiritual word spoken, no evidence of any spiritual thought. Yet any one of these people would be shocked, probably, if he were told that his life and

living were far from that which is the ideal for a Christian life. Also, these people would be amazed were they informed that any one would consider all that they were doing to be barren and sterile. Their moral tone and standard in their community is beyond reproach. But their lives are affected with pernicious spiritual anemia. They are not getting out of life all that it is possible for them to have.

How should a Christian live? What should be the things which characterize a Christian home and differentiate a believer from those who have not believed in Christ as Savior? The answer must be a positive answer and not a negative one. There are some people who have an entirely wrong idea about the main factors in Christian living. They think of a Christian as one who does not do this, that or the other thing. The ideal Christian life must be marked by a positive state of mind and by a positive state of action. There can be no true Christian life without a positive faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6).

The positive assignment for the Christian has been very clearly given. It is this that should mark the believer in his daily life. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22,23). We do not need to emphasize the necessity for the presence of these gifts in the lives of followers of Christ in these trying days through which the world passes. The world is quick to recognize the true love of Christ, and we who have Him must not fail to let the world see in us that love for which it is starving without knowing it.

Just as there can be no normal, healthy life without the proper kind of food, so there can be no normal, spiritual growth without the food that God has ordained as the nourishment of the new life. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). If the Bible is not the center of the home, the home cannot be called a true Christian home, even though all the members of the household are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is no spiritual life apart from the Bible, and the tragedy of the American home today is that so many people have abandoned the Book as the source of life and as the center of living.

There are certain, definite practices from which the Christian must abstain. I do not believe in giving a list of things that the Christian must not do. Those things which are expressly forbidden in the Bible are things that we must throw aside in our lives. All other choices must be determined in the light of the principles which are laid down by our God. We must not forget that the Bible is not a set of rules. It is a Book of principles. There are thousands of things in this modern, complex civilization of ours that are not mentioned in the Bible. But there is enough given to us in its pages to illuminate every choice that we shall ever be called upon to make.

Frequently, I have questions put to me by young Christians concerning modern practices which are not touched upon in the Word of God. They want to know if it be proper for them as Christians to dance, play cards, go to the theater, the movies, smoke, drink, and a quantity of other things. My answer is always the same. I refuse to answer such questions. I am not to take the place of the conscience of the Christian. God has told us that all things are to be decided in our lives as under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Everything that you do is the fruit of the old nature of sin, or it is the fruit of the indwelling Christ. I know what occurred in my life when I put these things before my Lord for decision. I took one of these matters to God and asked Him to show me His will. When I understood from His Word that the source of action in my life was either the old nature of sin that was responsible for crucifying Christ, or else it was the new nature, led by the Spirit; I decided that Christ was to have the mastery within my life. There are thousands of people who are really Christians, who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, and yet they have never

taken Jesus Christ as Lord. The question that you have to settle as a Christian is not, "Should a Christian do this, or that thing, follow this or that course of action?" but rather, "Is Jesus Christ to run my life or am I to run it myself?" If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.

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