

Authentic Christians in an anti-Christian world

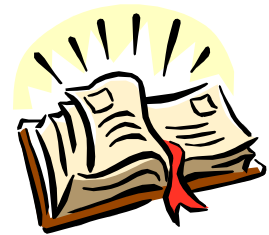
By Ross Callaghan
<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>

In this series we'll explore:

- Some of the forces that influence our Christianity, especially cultural forces
- Our responses to those forces
- The effect of culture on 'being Christian'
- How we can live as an authentic Christian in an anti-Christian world

Key verse: Romans 12: 2

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.
NKJV



The effect of culture

- We are continually being shaped by the culture of the world we live in. We can't help it!
- We need to be aware of the forces shaping our culture (and which are potentially/actually shaping our Christianity, and our lives)

All cultures are shaped by:

- *their history*
- *their established and emerging cultural values*
- *their underlying philosophies/religions*
- *pressure groups*
- *the world economy*
- *globalisation*
- *the media*
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Are the forces shaping our culture pro- or anti-Christian? What are the cultural values of the world we live in? Compare the cultural values of the world your grandparents lived in, to those your children/grandchildren will grow up in!!!

Why are you like you are?

- Your genetic make-up (determining your gender, personality, abilities...)
- Your parents/parenting
- Where you were born
- The culture you grew up in
- Where you live/have lived
- God's calling/choosing (Romans 8: 28-30)
- What you read, experience, listen to, watch, get involved in...
- What you open yourself up to
- Your choices (especially your choice to accept Christ and your ongoing choices to obey God)
- The influence of the Holy Spirit (and satan)
- The Church you are part of
- Your interests
- Your relationships
- Your education
- The way you think (Proverbs 23:7)
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Are you like you are because of

- Fate?
- The sovereignty of God?
- Your own choices?
- The culture you have lived in?
- The culture you live in now?
- Your genes?



Living in an anti-Christian world

- To most people in our culture there is no God (as we Christians know Him).
- If people do believe in a 'god' s/he is not related to Jesus Christ or Christianity. Often 'god' is related to spirituality, new age philosophies, other religions, environmental concerns, pagan practices, or most commonly themselves: a humanistic god. "*Man is god*". These are underpinned by values like *tolerance, freedom, diversity, inclusiveness, imagination, human rights, looking after no 1.....* (and a consistent intolerance for Christianity!).
- There are strong agendas being advanced which are 'politically correct' and which are intolerant of Christian views. Those who don't agree are labeled as sexist, racist, bigoted, homophobic etc. which effectively stops any dialogue. This is undermining democracy and resulting in the loss of conscience and morality in our nation.
- People create and worship their own 'gods' consciously or sub-consciously eg. materialism, sports, heroes, jobs,
- Christianity is becoming more and more irrelevant in our society. Christians have created a sub-culture where we can have God as God; keep ourselves safe from the influences of the world (not possible!), and live as Christians. eg. Church, Christian/home schooling, Christian friends, Christian radio, TV, music, books, newspapers, ministries, organisations.....
- We are to be "*in the world but not of it*" (John 17:13-19, James 1:27; 1 John 2 15, 2 Corinthians 10:3, James 4:4-10, 1 Corinthians 5:9- 6: 2). Rather than being a 'holy huddle' we should be out there as salt and light in a needy world.
- Many Christians are unhappy in, or have left, this sub-culture because they see it is strongly influenced by the world's culture and is not genuine/authentic/real/true to the Bible or to God and His ways.
- Many young people want nothing to do with the Christian sub-culture because its values are so far from those prevailing in the world, and they see hypocrisy in Christians and in the Church.
- Some Churches/Christian organisations/Christians are facing this issue and are seeking to be real/genuine/authentic and to have an effective impact on society (not just on themselves).

This involves

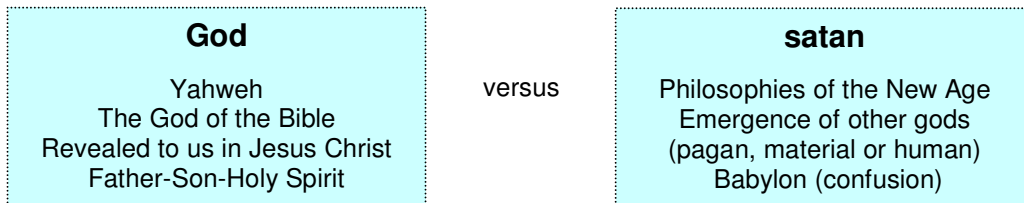
- **identifying what is of God/the world/culture (*being transformed by the renewing of our minds*)**
- **choosing to live God's way (*not being conformed to this world*)**
- **finding God's *good and acceptable and perfect will*. (being focused on what He wants, not what we want!)**

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. Romans 12: 2 NKJV

Cultural influences on our lives

Don't let the world squeeze you into its mould. Romans 12: 2 Philips

It's hard to live as a Christian in an anti-Christian world. Consciously or sub-consciously the world we live in is influencing us. Ultimately the same old battle is being fought:



They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of Lords and King of kings – and with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers. Revelation 17:14

The battle is being fought in all areas of our society:

- News media
radio, TV, newspapers, internet...
 - Business
 - Judiciary
 - Education
 - Environment
 - Economy
 - Religions
 - Drugs
 - Family
 - Terrorism
 -
- Entertainment
music, books, movies, magazines,
videos, computer games...
 - Politics
 - Work
 - Academia
 - Internet
 - Church
 - Sexuality
 - Crime
 - Travel
 -
 -

As always the battle is fought first in the way people think, and this then flows through into the way we act. *As a man thinks in his heart so is he. Proverbs 23:7*

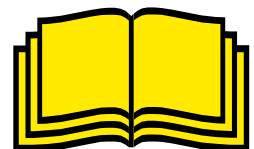
Underlying our culture are philosophies that are strongly influencing the way we think, the way our government decides and what is held to be important in our society. These philosophies are taking control of world thinking, and are consistently attacking the one true God, and core Christian beliefs and values

These philosophies have always been around but they re-emerged strongly in the 60's with a rejection of Christianity and a rebellion against traditional values. They became part of the 'New Age' and then in the 90's were institutionalized and became mainstream: the politically correct ways of thinking/doing things. eg. abortion, homosexuality, feminism, spiritualism, human rights, redefining of the family, mockery of Christianity, idolatry..... They are being strongly promoted through influential people and organisations and through the media.

The underlying philosophies

Rejection of the authority of the Bible

The Bible is undermined, ridiculed, criticised, adjusted and rejected. eg. by 'scholars' removing the Patriarchal God or adding other books supportive of pagan or gnostic philosophies (like the Gospel of Thomas).



*Your Word is truth.
John 17:17*

Rejection of God's authority

In a pluralistic society any god is OK! Man is god, people are gods, things are gods..... Underlying this is a strong return to Gnostic philosophies (as in the Da Vinci Code), paganism and an aggressive rejection of the one true God. *I am the LORD (Yahweh), your God. You shall have no other gods before me.* Exodus 20: 3,4

Free sexuality

Heterosexuality is seen as the backbone that holds patriarchy together so is being consistently undermined. This results in today's acceptance of homosexuality; destruction of male/female and family roles, and free sex with no boundaries.

At the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh". So, they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate. Matthew 19: 4-6

Open spiritual experience

Whatever turns you on is OK! Seek spiritual enlightenment and experience from within and from beyond, often assisted by drugs. The goal is paradise on earth, to be master of your own destiny and reach perfection in death. Sin and guilt are eliminated.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6: 23

These philosophies are now widespread. Often based on old Gnostic ideas many have been introduced into the Church and are affecting people's attitude to the Bible and approaches to faith. More significantly they have become mainstream in society and have become enshrined in law or common practice. (often associated with or focused on an anti-Christian message).



How these philosophies can mould us (and what the Bible says about them)

Our values

If man is god, selfishness rules. *'Look after Number No1'*. This shows up in materialism, greed, violence, crime, hatred, lying, exploitation of the poor, all fuelled by the old selfish nature. Compare these with God's values of righteousness, truth, justice and love.

You desire truth in the inmost parts Psalm 51:6

The Lord loves righteousness and justice, the earth is full of His unfailing love Psalm 33:5

A question for you:

What are your core values?

Our way of thinking

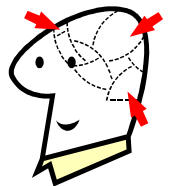
In a pluralistic world you can believe whatever you like. There is no such thing as absolute truth. There are many pressure groups, though, seeking to influence the way you think!! eg. political correctness, human rights, media.

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about these things. Philippians 4: 8

As you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3: 1-3

A question for you:

How much does the Bible/the Holy Spirit influence the way you think?



Our behaviour

With moral boundaries removed and legal boundaries widely ignored there is little to stop us doing whatever we like. Rather than something being the right thing to do or what God wants us to do, actions are based on feelings *If it feels good do it*; what you can get away with; or what's going to be best for me.

If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Matthew 16: 24-26

As you have received Christ Jesus as Lord continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith just as you were taught..... Colossians 2: 6,7

That in everything He (Jesus) might have the supremacy. Colossians 1:18



Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven Matthew 5:16

Some questions for you:

How are you different from non-Christians?

Are these points of difference attractive or repulsive to non-Christians?

So, it's hard to live as a Christian in an anti-Christian world. The world is actively squeezing us into its mould.

But the world desperately needs God, salvation, love, joy, peace, hope, security, friendship, support, comfort, loving relationships,

In other words *the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* Romans 12:2

So, let's be aware of the ways that the world is squeezing us into its mould; be renewed in our minds, and choose to live as authentic Christians bringing light into the darkness around us.

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.

(And perhaps it will be like other dark times in history that God will step in and there will be a great revival!!!).

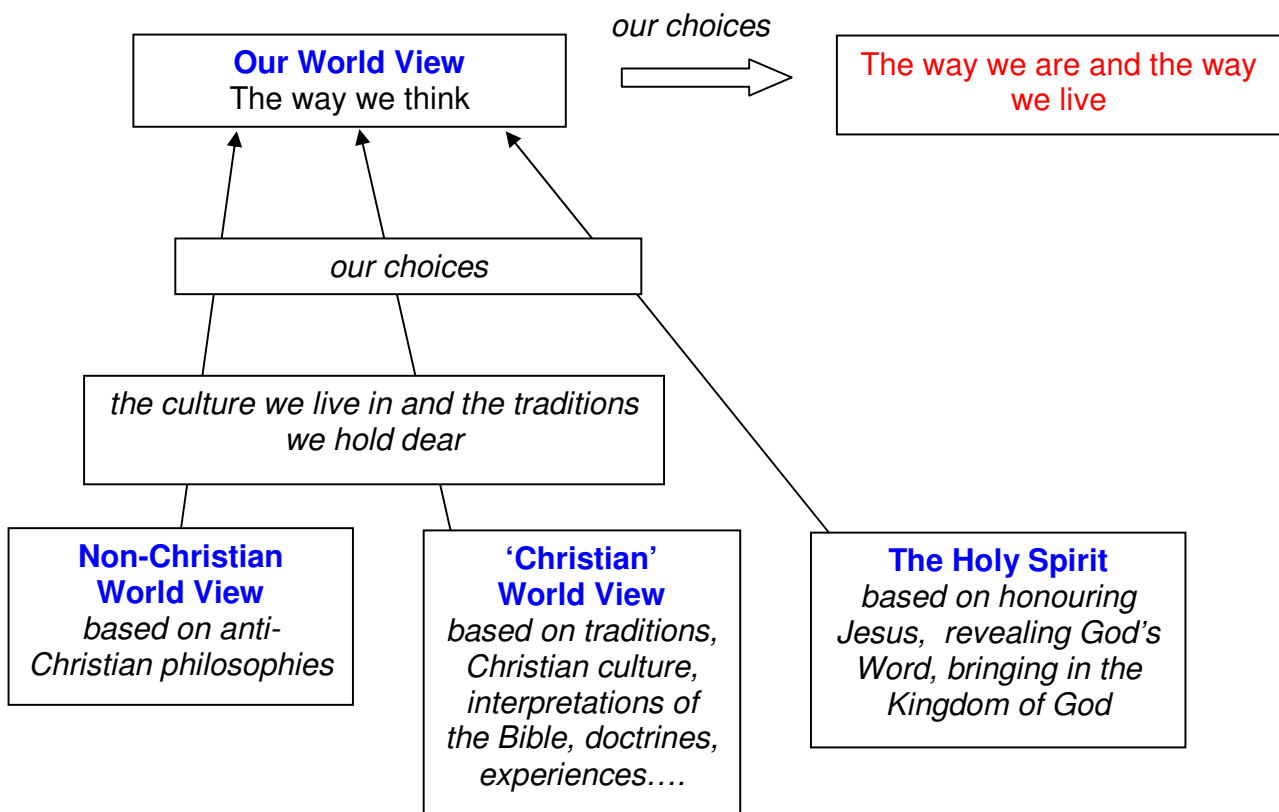


Other influences on our lives

We have seen that there are strong philosophical forces influencing our culture, and that this is a powerful influence on the way we live as Christians.

The culture we live in has many positives (eg. opportunities for learning, freedom to choose, protection, travel ...) but it is strongly anti-Christian. Pretty well anything is tolerated (except for conservative Christianity!).

We'll now explore some other influences on our lives: traditions; the Christian world view, and the work of the Holy Spirit. All of them affect the way we think (influencing our world view) and thus the way we are and the way we live.



If we want to be authentic Christians living in an anti-Christian world we need to recognise the effects of all influences on our lives, and ensure that all we do comes from a renewed mind; so that we are able to do that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

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. Romans 12:2

Some questions for you:

What are the main influences on your life that determine the way you think, act and are?
How do you evaluate these influences to measure their effects on your life?

The influence of tradition

Tradition: *beliefs, opinions, customs and stories handed down from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or in practices*

Greek: *paradosis* a handing down, passing over; from *paradidomi*, to hand over, deliver

Our understanding of the Bible, the Christian life and the Church is strongly affected by tradition. (As is our understanding of who we are and how we live). Our lives are built on traditions!

Examples of traditions

Church on Sunday;
worship songs;
Christmas, birthdays,
dress codes, quiet
times, liturgies,
starting times, Church
services,

Positively These traditions give meaning, purpose and certainty to our lives, and are a very important aspect of what we believe and who we are.

Negatively These traditions can keep us in a rut; hold us back from change, growth and development; make us inflexible, and make life boring.

- Jesus was scathing about arbitrary interpretations of the law that had become 'the tradition of the elders'. These traditions brought people into bondage, not freedom.
Matthew 15:1-9 'You nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition'. v6
- When the Gospels were being written many traditions from the Old Testament were recorded eg. Jesus' use of the term 'Kingdom of God', the genealogies, and the meaning of the events of the Passover. Also the gospel writers used their memory of the events (if they were there) and whatever traditional records were available. Matthew, Mark and John were there for some of Jesus' ministry but Luke based his account on other people's descriptions. John's Gospel was written 60 years after the events he described and reflects the thinking and traditions that had developed over that time. The words he uses are more likely to be the meaning or understanding that had developed rather than verbatim 'tape recordings' of what had been said. That's why John's Gospel is different to the others. It emphasizes the important aspects of Jesus' ministry that had come to be central for an understanding of what it means to be a Christian.
- Paul's authoritative teachings were called traditions:
I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding on to the teachings (traditions), just as I passed them on to you. 1 Corinthians 11:2
For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you ... 1 Corinthians 11:23
So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings (traditions) we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 2 Thessalonians 2:15
- Traditional understandings and interpretations were given authority very early in the Church's life once the Canon of Scripture was recognised eg. through the Creeds. The doctrine of the trinity, for example, was recognised pretty much from the beginning of the Church. Doctrines like this that have stood the test of time have proven and established authority.
- Gradually Church traditions (as compared to Biblical interpretations) became more authoritative especially in the Roman Catholic Church. eg. the infallibility of the Pope, purgatory, importance of Mary, priestly authority etc.
See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ. Colossians 2:8
- Later traditions (eg. Reformed, Evangelical, Anglican, Pentecostal) and denominations within these traditions tended to start because God revealed a new truth or because a group rebelled against the prevailing doctrines eg. Presbyterian (elders), Baptist (baptism).

- The Christian world view based on our understanding of the Bible has gradually developed over the centuries. This is a corporate activity carried out by the whole Christian community:

No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. 2 Peter 1:20

There have been heresies, corrections, revivals, revelations, renewals etc. as God has led His Church towards truth. Without an appreciation of the traditional understandings from the past it is easy to go off into heresies or cults based on personalities or personal/biased interpretations of the Bible.

- We all have our own personal traditions based on our spiritual life/journeys/ backgrounds/Church involvement/experiences etc. Also we all live in a cultural environment that strongly influences our approach to life. The way we 'do church', for example, is a strongly held tradition, but would be quite different if we were part of another church, especially if it was in a different country or culture.

Complete this table then discuss your responses in groups

Traditions we hold as we gather to worship	What we could do as we gather to worship

Traditions are part of what we believe, and who we are. They give us a background understanding of the Christian faith upon which our lives are built. Knowingly or unknowingly we all defend these traditions strongly (whether or not they are based on good interpretation of the Bible, or are even helpful in our lives!). Sometimes our defence of our traditional understandings can be so strong that we are not open to God speaking to us from His Word, or by His Spirit. It takes a lot of maturity to recognise how much your traditions (biases?) affect your interpretation of Scripture and how you conduct your Christian life.

Change and growth are essential parts of our lives, including our spiritual lives.

We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3: 18

At this time there is a pretty widespread unease about the way we do Church (from Christians), a recognition that we need to be more relevant in today's world, and a strong mistrust or even hatred towards the Church by most people in our society. We need to change if we are to have a future, and if we are to make a real impact for Christ on our society!

Some questions for you:

How much of your Christian and Church life is based on the Bible? How much is based on traditions?

What are some traditions that could hold you up in your spiritual development? Why do you hold on to these traditions?

Why are we resistant to change? Why are we often less open to the Holy Spirit than we are to doing things "the way they have always been done"?



We need to explore our traditions and see whether they are helping/hindering our development in being more like Jesus, and our effectiveness in life and in society.

In doing so let's make these commitments:

- Respect and value traditions held to be important by others. We are not all at the same stage on our spiritual journey, or even going on the same journey.
- Be open to the Holy Spirit and to the Word of God. Allow God to speak into our lives then be submissive and obedient to Him and do what He says. (This is all about the Lordship of Christ, not about having to follow/believe/obey what people say or do).
- Be aware that the changes we are undergoing will be uncomfortable and threatening for us and most likely will be initially resisted. They are also likely to be misunderstood by others. The journey will add excitement to our lives. It will not be boring!
- Love, accept, support and care for each other all the way. Recognise that each one will have their own individual approaches and freedom to respond to God in their own way. Don't let our journey bring others into bondage!
- Continually focus on *that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. Romans 12: 2

The influence of the 'Christian' world view

Most Christians seek to live their lives in a Christian way but there is no absolute definition of what this means. Much of the way we live our lives is cultural, (especially the way we 'do' Church) as it is based on our traditions, local culture, accepted 'Christian' culture, doctrines, theology, interpretations of the Bible..... This is reinforced by our involvement with Christian books, radio, TV, music, websites, groups, newspapers etc.

We all develop our own personal world view as a Christian, which is strongly influenced by the generally accepted 'Christian' world view.

A key question for Christians who are seeking to be authentic/real/genuine is:

What is truly Christian?

(regardless of place, time and culture).

Here's how one group described the Christian World View

God	Creator, Father/Son/Holy Spirit, Love, Spirit, everywhere, source of life
Man	Made in God's image, body/soul (mind/emotions/will)/spirit' sinful. Purpose is to glorify God
Sin	Disobedience to God, separation from God leading to spiritual death, against conscience
Salvation	Eternal life, freedom from sin, forgiveness, received as a free gift by faith, through Christ alone
Relationship with God	Personal, sons/daughters of God, only through Christ, by the Holy Spirit
Relationship with the world	In the world but not of it, witnesses for Christ, making a difference in society, living by God's standards

Lordship of Christ	Rules the universe and us, centre of our lives, authority in our lives, to be obeyed
Bible	God's authoritative word, relevant, God inspired, to be understood and obeyed, revealed by Spirit, living word, guide to life
Church	Body of Christ, God's people, gathering of God's people, bride of Christ
Mission	Make disciples, everywhere – locally first then your country then the world, purpose for living
Freedom	Free from law, led by the Spirit
Law	Jewish law fulfilled in Christ, love God and your neighbour as yourself, obey NZ law
Worship	Bowing down before God, loving God, honouring God, obeying God
Service	Sacrificial, meeting others' needs in love
Giving	Give freely, practically
Faith	Believing, being sure regardless of evidence, gift of God, mystery, based on God's word
Love	Based on God's love, a gift, unconditional, sacrificial, motivates all actions
Righteousness	Position in Christ of being right with God, sin forgiven
Justice	Giving what is deserved, including punishment for sin
Judgement	God's role based on justice. Results in destruction/death due to sin
Society	Christians should be light/salt in society
Family	Mum/Dad (and kids), singles, basis for society, modeled on God
Marriage	Husband and Wife, blessed of God, singleness OK
The poor	Care for, advocate for, feed, help, support
Second coming	Jesus will return to establish God's Kingdom
Heaven	Afterlife, eternity with God
Hell	Afterlife, separation from God
Eternity	Forever in God's purposes
Spirit	God is spirit. We relate to God spiritually
Cross	Where atonement made so God/man can have fellowship
Sacrifice	Blood of Christ shed for forgiveness of sins

An exercise for you.

How about doing this for yourself? Identify what you consider to be the key elements of a Christian world view. What are the key elements of your world view?

The influence of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a major influence on your life

- The Holy Spirit is continually seeking to help us you Jesus as Lord. John 14:16,17, 26 John 15:26 John 16: 7-10, 13, 14 The Holy Spirit is counter-cultural!
- He is seeking to bring everyone into the kingdom of God: convicting, influencing, promoting righteousness, honouring Jesus, drawing people to salvation and to relationship with God.
- But.... He always gives us a choice. (God will not take away our free will).
- We can choose to obey/disobey/ignore the Holy Spirit as He seeks to honour Jesus in our lives. We can also open ourselves up and ask Him to search out the cultural/philosophical garbage and replace it with genuine Christian life. (It's a bit risky doing this, because He will!).

Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23, 24

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. Psalm 51:10 -12

- A major way of opening up to the Holy Spirit is to get into the Bible. Again, this is a choice. When you get into the Bible the Holy Spirit has the opportunity to speak to you (rhema) from God's word. That can be mind and life changing (if you believe and obey what God says!).

The unfolding of your words gives light. Psalm 119:130

How the Holy Spirit works in your life

- **He reveals the Word of God from the Bible**

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The unfolding of your words gives light. Psalm 119:130

- **He speaks to your heart**

The spoken word of God is called a *rhema*. You sense the Holy Spirit speaking to your spirit (anointing) and have an understanding of it in your mind (revelation).

The word (rhema) is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart. Romans 10:18.

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14: 26

- It is received in your spirit and results in understanding 1 Corinthians 2:10-16
- It comes with love *God has poured His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us* Romans 5:5
- It honours Jesus *The Spirit of truth . He will testify about me.* John 15:26
- it focuses on truth *But you have an anointing from the Holy One and all of you know the truth* 1 John 2:20
- It is real *As for you the anointing you received from Him remains in you and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing is real, not counterfeit, just as it has taught you, remain in Him.* 1 John 2:27

When you hear a *rhema* you 'just know' that God is speaking!

He (the Holy Spirit) will bring glory to me (Jesus) by taking what is mine and making it known to you. John 16: 14

When this happens you need to hear and obey!

- **He activates your conscience**

The Holy Spirit sets off the alarm bells in your conscience to protect you from trouble.

The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being. Proverbs 20:27

- Keep a clear conscience 1 Peter 3: 16. If you give in to sin your conscience gets de-sensitised.
- The Holy Spirit will gradually re-sensitise your conscience. *How much more will the blood of Christ ... cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God* Hebrews 9: 14

You can choose to obey/disobey/ignore the Holy Spirit as He seeks to honour Jesus in your life. You can also open yourself up and ask Him to search out the cultural or philosophical garbage and replace it with genuine Christian life. (It's a bit risky doing this, cos He will!). When the Holy Spirit speaks to you and/or activates your conscience obey immediately! That way you'll stay in that '*good, acceptable and perfect will of God*'. Romans 12: 2

Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139: 23, 24

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

Psalm 51: 10 -12

Some questions for you:

What are some changes the Holy Spirit has made in your life over the last year?

How open are you to the Holy Spirit?

How does the Holy Spirit work in your life?

So there are many influences on our lives: some positive and some negative.

Romans 12 shows us we don't have to conform to this world; rather we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

That's how we will know what God wants us to do; that's how we can find His 'good, acceptable and perfect will'.



What is ‘God’s good, acceptable and perfect will’?

Do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may approve what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2

We have seen that:

- we are not to be conformed to this world
- we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds
(by understanding the prevailing world view; understanding the influence of the Christian world view and by the work of the Holy Spirit)

Why? - That we may test and approve God’s will. This involves:

Finding, understanding and testing God’s will for your life	We are not brainwashed robots! As we discover God’s will it’s OK to test it. It’s healthy to think through all aspects of your faith and Christian experience.
Approving God’s will for your life	Once you realise that God’s way is much better than the world’s way it’s easy to make this approval. God’s way is the best way! (But there will be a battle for this approval, as there are many deceptive forces trying to lead you away from God and His ways).
Living out God’s will for your life ie. being an authentic Christian	<p>You will find that God’s will for your life, and living it His way is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good (as it is always about what is best for us and what is right) <i>God is light and in Him is no darkness at all</i> 1 John 1:5 <i>I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.</i> John 10: 10 • Acceptable (pleasing) When you live God’s way you find that it really works. It makes sense to live life the way you were designed! It makes every aspect of life better; life has a purpose! <i>I desire to do your will, O my God.</i> Psalm 40:8 • Perfect God’s will is for you to fits with His overall purpose for the Church, nation, world, universe, eternity.... which is perfect! Things fall into place when you are fulfilling God’s purposes. <i>The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His way.</i> Psalm 37:23

So, what is God’s good, acceptable and perfect will for our lives? In other words, “What is authentic Christianity”?

The Kingdom of God	The will of God
Living God’s way	Authentic Christianity
Doing what God wants you to do	Being what God wants you to be
‘Christian’	Having Jesus as Lord
<i>Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Matthew 6:10</i>	

Paul explains what God’s good, acceptable and perfect will is in the rest of the book of Romans.

It involves:

Finding God's purpose for your life and fulfilling it. Romans 12:3-8

Living out your Christian life with integrity. Romans 12: 9 – 13:10

This includes:

- being humble
- taking your place in the body of Christ
- loving with sincerity
- doing good
- keeping your spiritual passion
- being joyful, patient and hopeful
- being compassionate
- practising hospitality
- doing what is right
- not being proud, conceited
- caring for the poor
- not being vengeful
- having a realistic view of yourself
- using your gifts
- hating evil
- honouring others
- serving the Lord
- sharing
- blessing others
- living at peace with others
- associating with anyone
- submitting to rightful authorities
- paying your debts
- respecting others

Understanding the present times Romans 13:11- 15:13

Wake up Christians! The times we live in may be dark and we are being persecuted but:

- our salvation is closer
- God's purposes are being fulfilled
- the coming of Jesus is near
- the night is nearly over, the day is almost here

The New Testament Church was eschatological: expecting Jesus would return soon. We have lost the urgency of this and need to get it back!

The times may be dark but God is in control. Jesus is returning soon to bring in the fullness of the Kingdom of God. So what should we do??

- **Putting aside all deeds of darkness.** In other words 'don't conform to this world'.
- **Putting on the armour of light.** Live as genuine Christians and let our lights shine into the darkness and overcome it.
Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven Matthew 5:16
- **Clothing yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.** After all we will be spending eternity like this!
- **Not getting bogged down with petty and divisive issues and not putting a stumbling block in other people's way.**
- **Being a great example of what it means to live as a Christian.**
- **Bearing with others who are on the same journey as you are.**

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5

May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Some questions for you:

How do you determine whether you are in the centre of God's will? What can you do if you find you are not in the centre of God's will? Why is God's will called "good and acceptable and perfect"?"

Praise God that we can live authentic and victorious Christian lives in the midst of an anti-Christian world. With God's help we can shine His light into the darkness and fulfil His purposes so that all may know His 'good, acceptable and perfect will'.

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. Romans 12:2