

## Where Do You Draw Your “No” Line? – Part 1: The Christian’s Identity

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk about where you draw your “no” line, which means I want to talk about where (and how) you and I as a Christian determine to say “no” to things.
  - A. There are things that I most certainly must say no to—things that are sinful that will cause me to lose my soul by doing them. But those are not the things I want to talk about today. I will, hopefully, deal with those type of things in another lesson.
  - B. Today I want to address drawing our “no” line on things that are neither right nor wrong in and of themselves, things that by nature are not righteous or sinful.
  - C. In other words, I want to talk about where we draw our “no” line concerning things that are rightfully accepted by the world as being a normal part of living.
2. Now you may be wondering why I would take the one time I have each week and spend it on things that we might choose to do that are not sinful by nature.
  - A. I need to do so because saying “yes” to things is so easy in our current culture.
  - B. I need to do so because as Christians we have a unique **identity** both given and enjoined to us when we are called by the gospel which has a great deal to do with what we choose to **fill our lives with** and **where we draw our “no” line**.
3. So, if you will, let’s take some time to consider who we are as Christians and how that identity in Christ is to affect our daily lives and what we choose to fill it with.

### BODY:

#### **I. My Christian identity:**

- A. I am one **born again** (1 Pet. 1:3-5 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His **great mercy** has caused us to be **born again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> **to obtain an inheritance** which is **imperishable** and **undefiled** and will not fade away, **reserved in heaven** for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”).
  1. So, by God’s mercy I am given a **new life** resulting in a **living hope** based on our resurrected Savior Jesus Christ.
  2. As such I live my life to **obtain an imperishable and unfading inheritance** which is guarded for me **in heaven**, and which will be **revealed when Christ returns**.
  3. So, I need to ask myself how much this **new life** (**not who I used to be**) and this **future inheritance** (**I do not get it in this world**) that I have been **raised with Christ to receive** must affect where I draw my “no” line on worldly things?
- B. I am to **seek things that are above** (Col. 3:1-4 – “Therefore if you have been **raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is**, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** <sup>3</sup> For you have **died** and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”).
  1. The transition from death to life through Christ’s resurrection that **Col. 2:11-12** says comes by baptism and faith in the working of God **completely changes my life’s focus**.
  2. Instead of being fixated on the things of the world around me, I have now **died** to them and am to **seek the things above** where my resurrected Lord sits at God’s right hand.
  3. So again, I must ask myself how much does the fact that I have **died** and now have this **heavenly focused life** is to affect where I draw my “no line.”
    - a. How much of this world must I now say “no” to?
    - b. This is a question each of us is going to have to answer for ourselves.
    - c. I cannot answer for you, and you cannot answer for me! But we must answer it.
- C. I now **live for the one who died for me** (2 Cor. 5:14-15 – “For the **love of Christ controls us**, having concluded this, that **one died for all, therefore all died**; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might **no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**”).

1. As a Christian **Christ's love controls**, or **constrains**, or **applies constant pressure** upon me to **see my life** and **live my life differently** than I did before my conversion!
  2. And, that Christ **died for all** requires that **I stop living for myself** and start **living for Him** who died and rose again on my behalf.
  3. So, how much does “not living for self” and “living for Him who died for me” affect where I am willing to draw my “no” line? For, as a Christian I am no longer living like the person next door, for what I want, but live for **Christ** alone!
- D. I **bear a cross** (Mark 8:34-36 – “And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny himself**, and **take up his cross and follow Me**.<sup>35</sup> For whoever **wishes to save his life will lose it**, but **whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it**.<sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?”).
1. In the three verses before these (31-33) Jesus has just rebuked Peter for rejecting that Jesus **had to suffer and die** and be **raised** three days later.
    - a. Here we see why it was so important for Peter to accept Jesus' coming death.
    - b. For, the conditions of **discipleship** are the **same as Messiahship!**
    - c. In other words, **there can be no crown without a cross!**
  2. To follow Jesus:
    - a. Means that I do not seek to **save my life**, or to live for what gain this world offers.
    - b. Instead, it means I must **deny myself** and live the rest of my days **carrying my cross**, or carrying the reality of my choice to **lose my life for the sake of Christ and the gospel**.
  3. So, how much does the fact that **I must deny myself** and **lose my life** for Christ's and the gospel's sake, which is something most people of this world know nothing about, **influence** where I draw my “no” line? How much must it make me different from the world?
- E. I am an **alien** and a **stranger** in this world (1 Pet. 2:11-12 – “Beloved, I urge you as **aliens** and **strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul**.<sup>12</sup> Keep your behavior **excellent** among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of **your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God** in the day of visitation.”).
- 1. That we live as **aliens** and **strangers** emphasizes our status as temporary residents in a **world that is not our home** (Phil. 3:20 – “For our **citizenship is in heaven**, from which also we **eagerly wait for a Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ”).
  - 2. As such we **refrain from fulfilling fleshly lusts**, or desires related to the flesh, that those around us so mindlessly fulfill, because these lusts **war against the soul**.
    - a. We generally assume that fleshly lusts are desires for evil things.
    - b. But that is too narrow for the reality of life. Desires connected to the flesh that war against the soul can include things not sinful in and of itself which if allowed can **consume my life** and, therefore, war against my soul, or fight against who I am as a Christian!
  - 3. So, how does the fact that I must approach life as an **alien** and a **stranger**, one whose **citizenship is in heaven**, affect where I draw my “no line” concerning earthly, culturally acceptable matters of this world?
    - a. For, aliens/strangers come from a **different culture**.
    - b. And surely that means that how I see life here and what I fill my life with here must be different in some **significant ways** than those that live around me!
- F. I must **make the most of my time** (Eph. 5:15 – “Therefore be careful **how you walk**, not as unwise men but **as wise**,<sup>16</sup> **making the most of your time**, because the days are evil.”).
1. As a Christian I must show care and wisdom to assure **I make the most of my time**.
  2. So, I must not flitter away the moments of my days because that would give the advantage to the evil that lurks about us.
  3. Surely the fact that I must be **careful** and **wise** to **make the most of my time** here for the cause of Christ will have a big impact on where I draw my “no” line?

G. So, here is a nutshell are certain characteristics we have discussed concerning our identity as Christians. I am going to leave that up there the rest of the lesson.

## II. Practical questions for personal application:

- A. I must admit that this subject, and especially the questions that follow, have bothered me since I first heard them presented in a podcast by **Kris Emerson** on the website “**excelstillmore.life**”
1. Tricia suggested it to me as a sermon topic, and I have been deeply affected by it.
    - a. So, not only the concept, but also the questions I will now ask came from it, not from me.
    - b. So, I am not picking on anyone or anything in particular, but instead I am just parroting what was presented because what was presented was relevant and needed.
  2. So, again, this subject has bothered me because I know that here in the United States and in Western countries we live in a “yes culture.”
    - a. We as a people are used to saying “yes,” if possible, to most anything we want to do or get.
    - b. We are encouraged by advertising and the media to believe that **we can HAVE and DO it all**, that we can say “**YES**” to **all that life has to offer**.
  3. As Christians living in this “yes culture,” we can easily fall victim to this mentality.
    - a. And, I hate to say, but this mentality can and often does characterize the modern-day Christian—maybe even you or me.
    - b. It is easy, today, to believe that **as long as it is not sinful** I can serve Christ acceptably while saying “yes” to all these things life offers.
    - c. But here is the thing. Such an approach to life, I am convinced, was **foreign to the thinking of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians!**
      - i. I do not believe they viewed, nor were encouraged by the Holy Spirit to view, their lives this way.
      - ii. You may dismiss this because their world was different, and many were slaves, poor, etc., and did not have the money, the things, or free time we have.
      - iii. And yet, even in what we think to be a very different world, Christians were called upon to live very different lives than what was lived by those around them (**see list**).
        - 1) This Christian identity would have applied to them! There were many attitudes and actions they had to change to make a Christlike impression on the world!
        - 2) If it was true of them, how true must it be of us today?
        - 3) So, no matter when or where you live, as a Christian your **identity is the same and demands the same** things of your life in this world.
- B. So, how much has my identity in Christ affected where I draw my “no” line concerning:
1. My life’s **goals** and whether I should redo them, the **career** I choose or have chosen and where I will work and whether I need a change, or where I will live, or should I move and why?
  2. Does my identity in Christ affect my view of **money** and **things** and how much do I really need to make and have in my bank account, or how nice a car I need to drive, or how big or nice a house I need to live in, etc.? (Lk. 12:15 – “And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”).
  3. Does my Christian identity affect how I spend my **free time**, how I spend my **evenings**, etc., and how important entertainment is to me? Should I have Disney+, or Netflix, or cable, or satellite, or YouTube TV? And when do I need to say no to some or all these things?
  4. Does it affect how I **raise my kids**, how much stuff should I give them, or whether I should have them in this many sports or programs, and **whether these secular things are misdirecting their understanding of who I am and who they should be as a Christian?**
- C. In time past I would and did say yes to much of this, believing that I can do all these things and still serve God the way I should.
1. But as I grow older I know that there is not enough time for all these things and the Lord.

- a. So, what I want us to think about is what it would take for you or me to say **no** to these things, to tell my kid's coach, "No, we are not going to do that"?, or to say "No, I am not going to watch that," or to say, "No, I am not going to buy that," etc.?
- b. I am asking how much our identity as Christians must change our view of worldly things and how much does it demand that I say "no" to some or all these things.
2. Now, I am not really discussing **specifics**, though I mentioned some to get us thinking.
  - a. What I want us to do is ask whether I am filtering these decisions to get this or do that through my Christian identity and what it demands of me.
  - b. Or, do I with little or no real thought say "yes" to so many things simply because I can, or at least believe I can, because I have the money or the time?
- D. We as Christians live with the **requirement** of being **holy like God** [these verses are transitional because they have to do with the next lesson on this subject as well] (1 Peter 1:13-16 – "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, **set your hope fully on the grace** that will be brought to you **at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** <sup>14</sup>As **obedient children**, do not be **conformed to the former lusts** which were yours in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;** <sup>16</sup> because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy.").
  1. As an obedient child of God, I am to seek to be **holy**, which means that I am to seek to live as one **taken out of the world** and **set apart**, or **dedicated, to God's use**.
    - a. Therefore, I am not here as a Christian to be like the world, to make use of everything the world offers, or to have everything the world offers.
    - b. I am here to be different from those living in their lusts and ignorance by **setting my hope in this life fully on God's grace revealed at Christ's return** and **living like my Father**, mirroring His holiness in my sad, feeble way that I might glorify him.
  2. So, am I ready to admit that all these things of the world cannot matter to me while I also claim that God matters most?
    - a. Am I ready to accept that concern for what car I drive, or how good my child is in sports or whatever, or how much money I make, or how much I get to vacation, etc., **can actually work against the identity I have in Christ?**
    - b. That does not mean that any **one** of these things **absolutely does that**. But I want us to think about how much **being holy to God** and my **identity in Christ** must affect, and whether it does affect, where I draw my "no" line.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. The call of the gospel is one holiness, of death and sacrifice of self, of living for the goal of glorifying God, of living not for this life but for the glory to be received in the future—glory that will be worth any and everything we must say "no" to in this life!
2. Will you commit to Christ and respond to the gospel today in F-R-C-B-LF?