

The Same Kind of Different as He

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I Peter 4

Spend a few moments with Yogi Berra and you will inevitably leave knowing this guy was just different. The iconic hall of fame catcher for the New York Yankees just wreaked of uniqueness, so much so that this contributed to his enduring legacy. For example, these are some of the actual things he said: **You can observe a lot by watching. Baseball is 90% mental and the other half is physical. The future ain't what it used to be. A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore. Always go to other people's funerals, otherwise they won't come to yours. Nobody goes there anymore, it's too crowded. If you arrive at a fork in the road, take it. I never said most of the things I said [FYI, EACH STATEMENT IS A STAND ALONE STATEMENT AND NOT LINKED TO THE OTHERS].** This was one unique dude. The name Yogi Berra is synonymous with different!

Creating the Need

What's true of Yogi Berra should just be flat out true for those of us who are followers of Jesus. In fact, the very name *Christian* was first given to the disciples in a town called Antioch because, well, the culture saw they were different, and decided to call them "little Christ's," or Christians. Our neighbors, co-workers, classmates and sorority sisters should feel a sense that something is just different about us. To be a Christian is to be different.

This is the idea Peter hammers home throughout the book we've been studying. In fact, right out the gate in I Peter 1:1, he calls us the, "elect exiles." Peter is writing in Greek, and the Greek word for exile means the close stranger. Conceptually, it's the idea of what we would call an immigrant. I hate this word has become politicized, and by some even demonized. Some of you are immigrants to the United States. With great courage and dreams, you've come here. What this means is on the one hand you are geographically close to people like me, but on the other hand there's a sense of being different. The way you talk, your cultural preferences and norms, have not only added to the beautiful tapestry of our nation, but they also indicate different. You live here, but you're not from here.

This is why Peter calls us exiles. While we live in this world, there should be a sense where the way we talk, and our actions should indicate we are not from here. Yeh, we are geographically close to our classmates, frat brothers and co-workers, but our behaviors at the same time should communicate clearly we are immigrants. To be a Christian is to have dual citizenship. We are both citizens of heaven and this world. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven. We are different.

If there's one word that I want you to write down which sums up and canvasses the whole of our passage, it's the word *different*. Peter wants us to understand that following Jesus in this world means that we are comprehensively

different: Different in our actions among the world (1-6); different in our affiliations to the world (7-11) and different in our aches in the world (12-19).

DIFFERENT ACTIONS AMONG THE WORLD- I PETER 4:1-6

In the opening six verses of our text, Peter pleads with we spiritual exiles to be different in our actions among the world. We know this to be the case because he talks about the way Gentiles act. If you study the NT you understand that often times the writers use the term *Gentiles* to speak of people who don't know Jesus, people who are of the world. Now this begs an important question? If the world is bad, what exactly is the world? Is Peter and the writers of the NT talking about trees, and dirt and roads? No. In the NT, world is used many times to speak of a system which runs in contrast to the way of Jesus. For example, in John 15, Jesus says to his disciples if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. Or to the Romans, Paul says that Christians are not to be conformed to this world. Writing in his letter to followers of Jesus, John says that we are not to love the world, or the things in the world. What's obvious is in none of these instances are the writers referring to our physical environment, but are speaking figuratively of a system in contrast to Christ and his kingdom.

Okay, okay, I understand what *world* means, but exactly how does this play out? This is the question which has lead the church down some strange paths throughout world history. Some have said Christians should give up completely on the world and to retreat into what we would now call monasteries. In more recent years, with the emerging church movement it was a push to immerse ourselves in the world. So you had churches lead by cursing pastors, who placed a premium on relevance which was code for looking and acting like the world. This would have given the fundamentalist Bible college where I was trained fits. When I went to Bible college playing cards, dancing or literally going to the theater were all seen as worldly. In fact, while we couldn't go to the theater, we could rent Rated R videos from Blockbuster. Okay, if you're under thirty, let me explain...A donor at one of our fundamentalist sister schools donated money for the pool, and then earmarked some extra money that in the case where guys and girls were caught in the pool together it would be filled with concrete. This way of thinking leads to legalism and moralism, where my spiritual value and worth is not placed in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but on whether I don't cuss or chew or date girls that do.

Is this what Peter is getting at when he exhorts Christians to be different among the world? No. The relationship of Christians to the world, is like a boat to water. Boats were made specifically to interact with the water; to be on the water. But while the boat was made to be on the water, it was not made for the water to be in the boat. So it is with we followers of Jesus. We were created, our faith was designed for us to be in the world, just not of the world.

What Exactly is Worldliness?

Peter presses in, and takes time to give examples as to what exactly worldliness looks like. Look at verse 3. Now I don't have time to do a line by line audit of each word or phrase here, but I do want to call your attention to the

common denominator to all of these descriptions of worldliness. They all speak to a person whose lifestyle is governed by their appetites in this world. Worldliness, then, is being consumed by the moment. Worldliness, as Peter describes it, is not just enjoyment, but it is a myopic fixation on this life, leading us to exchange God, for God's good gifts.

Kids, and especially teenagers, let me open the door to my home and invite you in. I have three teenaged sons, and Korie and I have always tried to parent from the posture of the default answer is yes, unless we have a really good reason to say no. But there are times when we feel as if the undercurrent behind our kids asks is how close can we get to the world, rather than how close can we get to Jesus? So they ask can we download that song, attend that party or wear that certain outfit? This is what teenagers tend to do- push the limits. And hear me, worldiness is not listening to a song other than Larnelle Harris, or wearing a certain outfit. And also hear me kids, we do want you to push the limits, just in the right direction. Push them for Jesus and his kingdom, not the world. Christians should act different among the world. That's Peter's point.

DIFFERENT IN OUR AFFILIATIONS TO THE WORLD- 1 PETER 4:7-11

Following Christ means that we not only act differently among the world, but that we are different in our affiliations or relationships in the world. This is what Peter now turns to in verses 7-11. See, we have to understand that Peter is writing to a status obsessed society which was very hierarchical in nature, where classes didn't mix. Never was this more clearly seen than who you shared meals with. Rich would never eat with poor. A higher class would never share a burger with a lower class. Meal times were opportunities to either increase or entrench your social status. This is why Jesus was constantly being queried and critiqued for eating with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus refused to relate to people the way people in the world related to each other. He sits with a Samaritan woman at a well. He invites himself over a tax collectors home for dinner. And he's called the friend of sinners. See, what I want you to see is that worldliness navigates relationships through a transactional lens- what can I get out of it- instead of a value lens- seeing everyone as valuable regardless of the payback. This is such an important principle that Jesus said, "But when you give a feast, invite the poor the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just"- Luke 14:13-14.

How do Christians look different from the world? We do not do relationships from a transactional posture. Instead, we share our lives with people who seemingly bring nothing to the table. So, whose in your life that you are in community with, that when other people see you all break bread together it turns heads and raises eyebrows? Who are you walking with that's not in your tax bracket, could not afford to live in your neighborhood? Not who are you writing checks to? Who are you sharing your life with that's turning heads, because it's that odd?

What Does This Look Like?

Peter spells out for us what it looks like for Christians to relate differently to the world. He begins by saying that we should "keep loving one another earnestly". *Earnestly* was a word sometimes used in ancient Greek literature of a

horse who ran as fast as he could, to the point of exhaustion. Peter doesn't just call us to love, but to love to the point of exhaustion. In our love, Christians should have greater stamina, than the world. Love to the point of exhaustion people who hold different political views, are of a different ethnicity and have different quirks and eccentricities. Don't be quick to give up. Keep loving one another earnestly.

Next, Peter says that we should show hospitality. The word for *hospitality* is a compound word which literally means love for stranger. Showing hospitality and entertaining are two different things. Entertaining can become about me. But showing hospitality is leveraging our resources for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Showing hospitality can have a deeply transformative impact on people's lives and souls.

Her name was Marguerite Johnson, and tragically she experienced deep trauma as a child- she was abused. This was so traumatic she actually stopped speaking. She shut down. At the same time, one of the most respected women in her small town- Mrs. Flowers- reached out and invited Marguerite Johnson for some tea and cookies. This turned into a weekly ritual, where Mrs. Flowers would show love to this stranger, ask her about her life and encourage her. Soon Marguerite began to speak, and boy did she speak. You don't know her by Marguerite, but you may know her instead by the name Maya Angelou, a world famous author and speaker who makes her living off of words. What changed this mute into a wordsmith? A little tea and cookies. Showing hospitality has the power to change lives. This is what Rosaria Butterfield was getting at when she said hospitality is one of the most potent witnesses for the veracity of Christianity. When was the last time you served up a little tea and cookies to someone who you seemingly could get nothing from?

And finally, Peter says to serve one another. Here he is speaking specifically of the local church and spiritual gifts. God has given each of us gifts to be used to better those around us. Now why would we love to the point of exhaustion, show love to the stranger by being hospitable, and use our gifts to build up the body? Peter says because the end of all things is at hand. You'll only commit yourself to this selfless kind of lifestyle in this world, if you have the next world in mind. C.S. Lewis writes, "If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven, and you will get earth thrown in; aim at earth, and you will get neither"- C.S. Lewis.

DIFFERENT IN OUR ACHES IN THE WORLD- I PETER 4:12-19

Let's be clear- if by suffering you mean going through hard times, everyone has and will suffer. But Peter has something far more specific in mind. Look at what he says in verses 12-15. See, murder and stealing were capital crimes in the Roman empire. The punishment for these things was suffering. What's clear here is Peter is talking about suffering not as one's just due, or not even to the fact that we live in a fallen world where we are susceptible to

cancer, disease, sickness and evil people. Instead, he's talking about suffering for the cause of Christ. This is what Peter means by fiery trial (12). Now granted, this kind of suffering is the biggest disconnect between the world of the NT and our world in America today. To be a Christian back then was to invite a peculiar kind of suffering. You could be thrown into the coliseum and attacked by wild animals. You could be sewn in bags with wild animals and thrown down the river. Your body could be hung from poles, and set on fire all for following Jesus. And let's not forget, 11 of the 12 disciples were martyrs. They were crucified, sawn in two, run through with spears. Well that's not happening in America today, and we should fight for religious liberty. So how do we apply this to our lives and context today?

Perspective- 12

Well, we need to broaden suffering. Whenever we go through the aches of this world, Peter wants us to know that we should not be *surprised* (12). You know what this means? Don't let it throw you. This is so hard for us as American's because we have this happiness ethic to life. So when the aches or suffering comes, it throws us, it surprises us. Peter says don't do that; have some perspective. Stop, and realize you have an opportunity to display the glory of God (16). This doesn't mean you can't cry or be disappointed. But at some point you should ask the question of perspective, and how can I give God glory? To give God glory means to make God bigger. Well, technically we can't, but it's like a telescope. Telescopes bring far away things into clear view so that we are left in awe and wonder. Your ache, your suffering, can become a telescope to bring a faraway God into clear view so that people are in awe.

Attitude- 13

When my perspective is right, now my attitude is right; now I'm positioned to do what Peter says, and that's rejoice (13). Did you know the word rejoice, comes from the same family of words as grace? When I really reflect on the grace of God on my life, even in the midst of suffering that triggers joy, and joy in the midst of life's aches is a stunning witness. I'm thinking of my grandparents generation marching in the streets for justice during the civil right's movement and suffering, all while singing. It was that joy which became a stunning witness to the world, ultimately changing the world! Joy says I will not be a slave to my circumstances. Can you cry? Yes! But even then may we have tears of joy! REJOICE!

Posture- 19

Finally, Peter says that when we go through aches we should entrust. This word means to turn over for safe keeping. It's actually what we do when we make a deposit. When we take a picture of that check, or go in and fill out the deposit slip and leave the money with the bank, we're not worried about what's going to happen. We are not frantically checking to see if it's there all the time. No! We turn it over, walk away and know it's in safe keeping. You know what worry is? It's going back and trying to take what you've deposited back. Leave the health diagnosis in God's hands. Leave the rebellious kid in God's hands. Refuse to labor under the tyranny of worry.

GOSPEL CONCLUSION

Jesus modeled all of these things for us. No one lived a more compellingly different life than him! He was in the world, but not of the world. He related to people differently, and offered a whole new relational paradigm. And because he suffered well, you and I can have eternal life.

But I don't want you to leave feeling like I have to work really hard to be different. No, if you are a follower of Jesus, you are different, and live into that new nature. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, was concerned because they were allowing the ship of their faith to fill up with the water of the world. So he reminds them in I Corinthians 6:19-20 that their bodies are the temple of the HS. What makes them different isn't ultimately their behavior, but who dwells inside of them- the HS.

Imagine being from a faraway country, and you find yourself standing in line outside of a home in Virginia. And it's a long line. And you ask someone why are all these people here? After all you've seen bigger homes, better homes. So what's the big deal. Someone says, what's the big deal? The big deal isn't the size or looks of the house, but the big deal is who lived there- George Washington. That's what makes the house different. And that's what makes you and I different. It's not our moral strivings, or hard work. What makes us different, Paul tells the Corinthians, is that we are saved by grace, and the Holy Spirit lives inside of us, enabling us to relate differently to the world.