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What You Say or What You Do?

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I know many people who claim to be Christians but who live their lives in ways which, literally, contradict what the Bible teaches. Some of these people, for instance, live with another person outside of marriage, promote beliefs which go against what the Bible teaches, or live by ethical principles which contradict the ethics taught in the Bible. So the question becomes: What is the truth about an individual's beliefs? Are people's beliefs defined by what they say they believe, or by the way they live their lives?

Let's look at one prominent example of this – President Obama. He has, from the very beginning, claimed to be a Christian. He points to the fact that he was a member of a Christian church in Chicago and has been baptized. But what do his words and actions say? According to his own pronouncements and policy decisions:

- He is pro abortion.
- He is pro gay marriage.
- He picks sides regarding race relations.
- He puts down Christians and Christianity.
- He doesn't believe the Bible.
- He favors Islam over Christianity in his policy pronouncements.
- He has no problem telling blatant lies.
- He uses the government bureaucracy to oppress Christians and his political opponents.
- He ignores the law he swore to uphold and protect.

This is quite a laundry list of things which go contrary to biblical teachings – and many more

could be listed. But before you react to this based on politics, keep in mind that this article is not really about the president. We are only using him as an example because he is a high profile person who typifies a lot of people who self-identify as Christians but live contrary to that profession. To really get at this topic using the president as an example, we need to begin by identifying the values categories associated with his pronouncements and policies.

- Abortion - Value of life
- Gay marriage - Makeup and meaning of family
- Race Relations - Equality and the value of human beings
- Denigration of Christians and Christianity - Love for Christian brothers and sisters
- Belief about the Bible - The authority source of truth
- Favoritism of Islam over Christianity - An individual's relationship with God
- Lying - Honesty and integrity
- Using power to oppress opponents - Fairness and equality
- Ignoring the law - Honesty, integrity, fairness and equality

Where the President's Values Come From

Our next matter is to lay out the particular values the president's pronouncements and policies are associated with in order to compare them with biblical values. Let's go through the list again and see what is there.

- Pro abortion - The president's position does not see the unborn baby as a human being. This is opposed to the biblical belief that a baby in the womb is a person and that the killing of innocent life is wrong.

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- Pro gay marriage - The president's position assumes that any type of family makeup is acceptable. This goes against the biblical teachings about marriage, sexual relations and homosexuality.

- Race Relations - The president's position promotes the idea that certain groups of people should have precedence over others. This runs contrary to the biblical teaching that all people are equal under God.

- Denigration of Christians and Christianity - The president's words in this regard do not demonstrate the special love the Bible teaches that Christians should have for one another.

- Belief about the Bible - The president's pronouncements indicate that he does not see the Bible as the ultimate authority source for faith and practice.

- Favors Islam over Christianity in policy decisions - The president's belief does not view the God of the Bible as the one true God.

- Telling lies - The president's words indicate a relativistic belief about truth telling. The Bible is very clear that lying is an immoral act.

- Using power to oppress opponents - The president's actions in this arena indicate that personal opinion and preferences override the rule of law. The biblical teaching on this front is that government officials should lead with fairness and integrity.

- Ignoring the law - The president's actions in this arena indicate that personal opinion and preferences override the rule of law. Again, the Bible teaches that government officials are to lead based on principles of fairness and integrity.

So, if a person who calls him or herself a Christian lives by values which contradict the values of the Christian faith, they are, obviously, living by the principles of a different belief system. So in the case of

president Obama, where do these other values come from?

Here, it is pretty easy to determine. The values he expresses in his life are expressions of a naturalistic worldview. Naturalism believes that the material universe is all that exists and that all of reality can be accounted for based on natural laws. There is no God or transcendent moral law giver, so human beings get to make up their own morality. As such:

- Human life is no more valuable than any other life form, and no life form has special value beyond its mere existence.

- Family is nothing more than a social construct which humans design.

- Classes of people are more valuable and important than the individual.

- Religion, of any kind, is nothing more than a social construct which humans design.

- Since there is no personal God who has revealed himself and his ways, there is no transcendent authority source for morality.

- Since religion is merely a social construct, its value is determined based on the needs of the community.

- Since morality is based on human preference, lying can be acceptable if it furthers one's personal goals.

- Since morality is based on human preference, those in power get to set the standards based on their own desires.

- Since morality is based on human preference, those who have appropriate power can override community standards.

Comparison of Naturalistic Values and Christian Values

So, just how do naturalistic standards compare with Christian standards? Let's look at the list again.

- Pro abortion vs. Pro life

- Pro gay marriage vs. Pro traditional marriage and sexual relations are right

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only between a married man and woman

- Favoring one race over another vs. All men are created equal

- Denigration of Christians and Christianity vs. Christianity is the truth about reality

- Does not believe the Bible vs. The Bible is the Christian's ultimate authority source.

- Favors Islam over Christianity vs. The Christian faith is the only true faith.

- Telling lies is okay to further one's personal goals vs. Telling the truth is an expression of the character of God.

- It is okay to use power to oppress opponents vs. There should be an objective moral and legal standard to which everyone is held.

- Ignoring or overruling the law is okay if it further one's personal goals vs. There should be an objective moral and legal standard to which everyone is held.

Of Words and Actions

Here is the bottom line: A label is meaningless if the label does not accurately reflect what is being labeled. So, if a person self-identifies as a Christian but lives as a Naturalist, the person is a Naturalist regardless of the label. President Obama is a Naturalist, not a Christian.

But remember, he was only an example of this principle. You probably know many people who are not in the limelight but who live life based on the same set of principles as our president. I know people who went to church and were baptized when they were young and consider themselves Christians, yet live with a partner outside of marriage. That kind of anti-biblical lifestyle calls into question the personal profession of being a Christian. I know people who attend church and self-identify as Christians (even some preachers) but do not believe what the Bible teaches about God, man, and salvation. This kind of

belief identifies the person as not being a Christian in spite of the fact that they participate in an organization with the word Christian in it.

The profession people make that they are a Christian is important. That said, actions which contradict what they profess indicate that their profession is false. A person is not a Christian because they claim it. A person is a Christian whose life has been changed by Christ. And a person whose life has been changed in that way will live out a lifestyle which is consistent with what is taught in the Bible.

Christian salvation is not accomplished by merely claiming to be a Christian and getting baptized. Salvation occurs when we literally give our life to Christ. And in doing this, our life is changed in a way that makes us love the things God loves and hate the things God hates. It is this changed life that indicates whether or not one is truly a Christian – something a mere affirmation of one's belief can never accomplish.

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